

Questions and Comments from the “Chat,” MAFA Roundtable - Building A Guild - March 23, 2021

See the Roundtable video for a full discussion of the questions posed to the panelists. Please note that the following are just comments or questions posted in the chat:

By-laws/operating procedures.

A link to the Operations Manual (in progress) for the Jockey Hollow Weavers Guild was posted as an example:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/15OD1PtTFO6IpRVLNu118NToad2rhAMUsft3qrVXK30w/edit#heading=h.eusdn2ka6m7a>

There were a number of questions regarding voting—whether only Board members can vote or whether committee members have that right as well. Several participants noted that it is the elected officers that have voting rights (President, Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer), but a number of guilds noted that some committee chairs have votes. This all depends on what is written in the guild’s by-laws.

Board members

There were several questions regarding term limits. There were a variety of answers, with some guilds having two-year term limits; two consecutive terms; some with no limits and some with staggered positions for the officers. There was a definite feeling that “positions should not be life appointments!”

Smaller guilds noted that there is a real difficulty filling positions and that impacts the length of time officers serve.

It was emphasized that the treasurer “requires accounting or related financial expertise and/or experience.”

Growing a guild.

A number of guilds use surveys to assess what guild members want to see as programs and activities. This is done in a variety of ways—whether through an online or paper survey, or solicitation of suggestions in the newsletter. Some have general questions on the membership application.

Several participants mentioned their focus on membership—particularly making new members and visitors “feel recognized, welcome, and connected” and on programming—“focus on programs of substance and keep the business portion of the meeting to a minimum.”

Online meetings through Zoom have been a benefit all around, with many guilds increasing their numbers. Several participants mentioned how well “Show and Tell” works and that virtual meetings have in many ways allowed for greater participation in the monthly meetings and events.

Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Ravelry etc.) are very important for attracting new (younger) members. A good website and proper website indexing with Google is also a key for younger members.

Other ideas: Connect with local colleges that have textile programs; 4H programs, etc.

Benefits of becoming a non-profit 501(c)3.

There were a number of questions regarding non-profit status. Be sure to check out the MAFA website—there is a lot of information there:

<https://mafafiber.org/guild-resources/guild-admin/>

One question was whether a guild needs to be incorporated to be a 501(c)3. That varies by State. Several guilds are non-profits but not incorporated and some are incorporated but not 501(c)3s.

It was noted by one participant that taxes are much easier to file and that 501(c)3 status makes a guild eligible for many types of funding—State/Federal/Corporate. One participant related that this status allows a guild to certify with TechSoup and get discounts and free Google for non-profits. Additional advantages are Amazon Smile and discounts on Microsoft for Office licenses.

Insurance

There were a number of questions/comments regarding insurance. What type of insurance does a guild need? Several participants noted the importance of liability insurance even if you don't own property. Some sites where guilds meet require that the guild have insurance.

How many guilds are open to all fiber arts?

There was a flurry of discussion in the chat about this. The following guilds responded:

- Fredericksburg Spinning & Weaving Guild is open to knitters, spinners, crochet as well as weaving.
- Central Virginia Fiberarts is open to all fiber arts.
- Triangle Weavers is open to all—they call their space the Fiber Center.
- Philadelphia guild is welcoming to all fiber folk. (however they try not to compete with knitting clubs. They work in conjunction with their local Philly Knits.
- Waterford Weavers is open to all including those who like to dye, knit, crochet etc.
- Jockey Hollow Weavers is open, but strongly focused on weaving.
- Lancaster Spinners & Weavers is primarily spinning and weaving.