



*****DRAFT*****

**Merchants Meeting
March 2, 2017 at 8:30am**

Westin Portland Harborview Hotel (Top of the East)

Board members present: Suzie Rephan, Matt Veith, Robyn Violette

Others present: Michaela McVetty, Melissa Spoerl, Benn May, Vanessa Pike, Jake Charette, Jon Dow, Steve Corman, Nancy Lawrence, Jenn Thompson, Jordan Simm, Doug Fuss, Marie Stewart Harmon, Susan Driscoll, Megan Perron, Cathy Gore, Jeffery Burrell, Evan Twachtman, Sandra Jones, Kelly Crotty, Sgt. Andy Hutchings, Keith and Constance Bodine

Staff present: Adam MacDonald, Taffy Eaton, Amy Geren

Minute 1. Suzie called the meeting to order and asked for introductions.

Minute 2. Maine Restaurant Week: In an effort to increase restaurant participation in this committee, Suzie invited Robyn Violette (Fore Street) to contact other restaurateurs and encourage attendance. Cathy Gore (Street & Company) joined us today. Doug Fuss and Michaela McVetty attend regularly.

- Sisters Gourmet Deli is offering BOGO until 3/12 and \$100 off a \$300 catering order
- Robyn believes some other restaurants would be interested in being involved with this committee but the meeting schedule is not convenient for them. Doug Fuss will contact Steve Hewins at Maine Restaurant Association to add it to his newsletter.

Minute 3. Review and approval of February 2, 2017 meeting minutes: Benn May made a motion to approve the minutes, Jordan Simm seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Minute 4. Summer Kick-off Weekend is June 10th and 11th: Shop for a Cause Saturday, Walk the Working Waterfront and Old Port Festival Sunday (OPF).

1. Old Port Festival: Adam mentioned that the Board is looking into making the OPF about local vendors only. There is a desire by many merchants to bring back the local feel of the event. At the February meeting we talked about having one section of the OPF "local foods" for local businesses/food trucks only. Michaela suggested considering the cost for local food trucks. Artists category is for Maine based artists only.
 - Suzie addressed the businesses that close during OPF Sunday. Is there a way to help you stay open?
 - Several businesses say OPF is a great way to get their name out. Coupons for future use have worked very well for some retailers, bringing customers back at a future date.
 - It's a good way to sell your "hard-to-sell" items at severely discounted prices
 - Doug suggested to Cathy Gore and Ben Mann who both have many bars in the vicinity of their businesses, to attend the Night Life Oversight Committee meetings due to trouble they have with intoxicated people.
 - Is there increased Portland PD presence at OPF? Sgt. Hutchings said it's an overtime shift so there is some increased presence, mostly foot officers assigned and it's heavier in the evening.
 - Perhaps promote OPF as a family friendly event

2. Shop for a Cause ideas (Sat. June 10th): Friends of Casco Bay, Gulf of Maine Research Institute and The Locker Project (partners w/ Good Shepherd to provide nutritional snacks and food for Portland's most needy kids). Suzie would like to send 3-5 ideas out in the merchant survey.
3. Ideas for looping Congress Street businesses into the weekend: Maine Historical Society might offer Full Moon tours of the house and garden on Friday night. The Art Museum is free Friday nights. Reach out to Creative Portland to encourage galleries to stay open that night even though it's not First Friday.
4. Maybe explore "Foodie Friday" in the future
5. Downtown Worker Appreciation Day (May 4th) is a win-win, positive event. Portland Downtown staff and volunteers fill 1,200 swag bags to be distributed between 7:30 and 9:00am, there is free coffee and snacks and a terrific coupon booklet.

Minute 5. Review of committee goals:

1. Continue work on building on the success of the 2016 holiday events
2. Street Vendor issues – this committee will be updated as progress is made. Suzie suggested taking a sidewalk sale permit for \$89 for the season. You don't have to put anything out but you can and it prevents street vendors from setting up in front of your store.
3. Increase merchant participation – today is a good turnout and Suzie encouraged all to attend. Suzie and staff will continue to look at the calendar to keep the meeting at a convenient time. Anyone who knows a Congress Street merchant, please encourage them to attend.

Minute 6. Panhandling update: Suzie

The ad hoc committee has chosen 11 cities of various demographics, 12 questions to ask each city and is setting up meetings with Portland social service organizations, Portland PD, Maine Med and Mercy. A public forum is upcoming. Portland Buy Local will be sending out a survey soon and would like to work with the ad hoc committee on some questions.

Minute 7. Other business:

1. Sandy thanked the restaurants for creating the draw to downtown/OP for both tourists and locals
2. Even though the boat show is outside of the Old Port this year, it will still draw people downtown
3. Pop-up Macbeth performances benefit Port Fringe this weekend. Perhaps Portland Downtown could involve Port Fringe in Summer Kick-off Weekend.
4. Portland Buy Local reminder – the deadline to be included in their print directory is March 15th
5. The May Merchant meeting will be on Wednesday May 3rd instead of May 4th due to Downtown Worker Appreciation Day

Next meeting: April 6th at 8:30am, Bull Feeney's

Respectfully submitted,
Taffy Eaton, Recorder