



*****DRAFT*****

**Merchants Meeting
November 3, 2016 at 8:30am
Westin Portland Harborview Hotel, Top of the East**

Board members present: Suzie Rephan, Josh Benthien

Others present: Megan Perron, Melissa Spoerl, Michaela McVetty, Chris Cummings, Ashley Baker, Jordan Simm, Steve Corman, John Peverada, Susan Driscoll, Vanessa Pike, Ellen Kanner, Jenn Thompson, Matt Stone, Jean Berg, Erin Hutton, Marie Stewart Harmon, Ilma Lopez, Sandy Jones,

Staff present: Casey Gilbert, Adam MacDonald, Taffy Eaton, Amy Geren

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

Minute 2. Review and approval of October 6th meeting minutes: Chris Cummings made a motion to approve the minutes. Jordan Simm seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Minute 3. Panhandling discussion: Speaking as the Chair of the District and Community Services Committee, Josh Benthien gave some background on the panhandling issue and current ordinance in Portland and described the ordinance in Melbourne, FL. The City does not have a huge appetite for working on the issue. The District and Community Services Committee wants to start the conversation with merchants, property owners, social service agencies, etc, and take the idea of forming an ad hoc committee to tackle the issue to the Board. Josh wanted to come to this group because they are directly affected by panhandlers. Josh needs input on who else should be at the table. It will be a roughly 6-month process, then the committee will present a letter of advocacy to the City. Meetings will start in January. Ken Cianchette, the co-chair of the District and Community Services Committee will lead the sub-committee.

Action items: Please send your impressions and thoughts to Suzie Rephan. Suzie said Merchant Meeting will take this up again in January. There was a request for the ad hoc committee to circle back with this committee with updates.

Minute 4. Street vendors group exercise - Suzie

Susan Heller from Cabot Farmers' Annex met with City Manager Jon Jennings this week. Jon would like input from people concerning their complaints. Susan asked that vendors not be able to set up in front of shops, jury merchandise, add a vendor fee.

Casey added that Portland Downtown will take up 3 Advocacy positions this year: Street Vendors, Panhandling and Graffiti Removal. Last months' Merchant meeting input about Street Vendors was very helpful. Casey meets with Jon Jennings regularly. The CVB also has met with Jon Jennings about street vendor issues. Casey has also heard that First Friday Art Walk contributes to the Street Vendor problem. The end ordinance needs to work for all parties.

Suzie reiterated that this committee will get an update in December and focus on the issue in January.

Minute 5. Holiday events: updates and discussion – Adam

- Business registrations to date:
 - Shop for A Cause Day: 2016 / 40, 2015 / 40
 - Merry Madness: 2016 / 60, 2015 / 60
 - Elfternoon Shopping: 2016 / 28, 2015 / 16
 - Window Display Contest: 2016 / 50, 2015 / 35

- **Shop for A Cause Day** Nov. 26th, benefitting Milestone Foundation. Suzie encouraged merchants to sign up – Portland Downtown is very proud of our involvement. Nov. 26th is also “Shop Small” Day. Portland Downtown will print stickers that customers will receive once making a purchase saying “I Shop for A Cause”. It will make a visual impact seeing stickers around town.
- **Elfternoon Lunchtime Shopping** Nov. 30th, Dec. 7th and Dec. 14th, all Wednesdays. Michaela McVetty offered to do food for anyone interested. Suzie suggested pairing up with a neighbor. Non-merchant businesses are welcome to participate also.
- **Window Display Contest** – Jean mentioned that here are great prizes for various categories: overall, theme, most original, best use of product, merchandise for judges. Voting is also open to the community through the People’s Choice votes in stores and social media. Best decorated buildings also taking part. Windows need to be decorated by the Tree Lighting, Nov. 25th. Exchange Street Dance Studio is offering live dancers or performers to perform in your window on the night of Tree Lighting. Judges will do the window walk on Dec. 9th. Casey mentioned that we will add print ads for Elfternoon Lunchtime Shopping and Shop for A Cause this year.

Action items: Email Adam if want to participate in the Window Display Contest. Please send photos of your decorated windows to Adam so we can get them all on Facebook.

- Erin Ovalle is giving Portland Downtown a spot on her Nov. 26th show
- Portland Downtown will be having stickers made for Shop for A Cause Day and Elfternoon Lunchtime Shopping. Adam will do social media contests for sticker-wearers.
- **Carolers:** Sandy confirmed that the South Portland High School chorus will perform and they are looking for a schedule. This committee decided they should perform on Nov. 26th (Shop for A Cause Day) and Saturday afternoons, wandering through the City.
- **Merry Madness** on Dec 8th, Portland House of Music, 4 – 6:30pm. We are trying snack bags this year and need 1,200 individually wrapped items. We would like to use local food providers but we will purchase bulk food if needed for budgetary reasons. Ilma Lopez offered biscotti or cookies from Piccolo. Casey would like all attendees to have the same experience. Suzie encouraged merchants to have snacks available that night. Suzie suggested Steve Corman share Vena’s non-alcoholic signature mock-tail recipe with Portland House of Music and merchants to use that night.

Action items: Bag stuffing parties are Dec. 5th from 2 – 6pm and Dec. 6th from 9 am – 1pm if necessary.

- **Tree lighting** November 25th. We have performers lined up, Sarah Long will host, the Presenting Sponsor is Hood Egg Nog who will offer their 4 new egg nog flavors and bring a giant inflatable snow globe for photo ops. MEMIC is also a sponsor. The event will be marketed through TV ads, radio, and print.
- The kick off of the Window Decorating Contest is also that night. We need to encourage Congress St retailers to stay open until 8ish that night.

Next meeting: December 1st at 9:00am, Bull Feeney’s

Respectfully submitted,
Taffy Eaton, Recorder