



**Merchants Meeting
October 6, 2016 at
8:30am Bull Feeney's**

Board members present: Suzie Rephan

Guests: Christine Cummings and Curtis Picard with Retail Association of Maine

Others present: Tom Largay, Chris Riccardo, Susan Driscoll, Tom Gangewer, Chris Cummings, Sandy Jones, Jordan Simm, Steve Corman, Max Bangs, Ryan Harding, Jean Berg, Melissa Spoerl, Hannah Jackson, June Usher

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 September 1st meeting minutes: Susan Driscoll made a motion to approve the minutes. Tom Gangewer seconded the motion.

Minute 3. Retail Association of Maine Legislative updates: Curtis Picard

- a) New overtime rules go into effect December 1, 2016 for salaried employees making less than \$47,000.
 - o The threshold currently is \$23,000 which is arguably low and it is doubling
 - o Maine senators are paying attention now but may not be able to recommend changes before December 1st
 - o Refers to employees that work on their own time, it's chargeable time.
 - o For employees who travel for work, travel time and work hours are counted.
 - o Curtis asked those present to reach out to Sen King's office. The Retail Association of Maine is recommending a slower ramp up or to lower the threshold from \$47,000.
 - o The salary threshold will be indexed every 3 years to jumping about \$20,000 – \$25,000 more
 - o Minimum wage indexing will increase to inflation
- b) Swipe fee relief for Maine banks – large credit card companies are working on raising swipe fees again next year which Maine banks have been exempt from until now.

Further information available here: <http://conta.cc/2dpr4rw> (also attached) and

http://www.maine.gov/labor/labor_laws/overtime.html

Also the Blog Post Curtis referenced:

<http://www.retailmaine.org/blog/2016/06/15/four-options-meeting-federal-overtime-rules/>

Minute 4. Street vendors group exercise - Casey

Street vendors are a problem throughout the City. In order for Portland Downtown to make an official presentation to the City to push back against the current ordinance, starting with today's meeting, we will start a Letter of Recommendations to be taken to the City. This is an open forum and Casey hopes that every voice here today will be heard. Casey divided the group into 3 small groups. There are 2 questions to address:

- 1) How are street vendors directly affecting your business?
 - a. Set up in front of our stores, essentially taking money from businesses
 - b. Street Vendors don't charge sales tax
 - c. Visitors bypass that area entirely to avoid street vendors therefore the stores also
 - d. Visitors think the street vendors table is part of store
 - e. Pedestrian safety concerns
 - f. Street vendors are selling the same or similar products that the stores sell

- g. The perception of Portland has changed for visitors
- 2) What are some ideas you would like to present to the City?
 - a. Street vendors should pay a permitting fee/be registered since retailers have to pay fee for sidewalk use
 - b. Street vendors should be required to pay sales tax
 - c. Street vendors should be required to display their permit
 - d. Retailers can rent the space in front of their store annually from the City for \$89.00. Propose a half price rate if many retailers want to rent the sidewalk space.
 - e. Are their parks they can use? The Marketplace fills up. Perhaps the Maine State Pier?
 - f. Define who's issue this is. Arts organization, Economic Development as opposed as Code Enforcement?
 - g. Change the way vendors are contained, have specific limitations
 - h. Vendors permitting fees could help pay for maintenance of the Marketplace or other space
 - i. Require extra space on sidewalks for ADA compliance. Currently there is no allowance for pedestrians when people are crowded around a table.
 - 3) Casey said we will go through the multi-step process of taking this feedback to the Board for discussion and approval. If it is approved at the Board level, we will hold public forums to gather further feedback then write a Letter of Recommendations to be presented to the City Manager.

Minute 5. Holiday events: updates and discussion - Adam

- Tree lighting – November 25th. We have performers lined up, Sarah Long will host, the Presenting Sponsor is Hood 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.
- Retailers can register to participate in the Window Decorating Contest, Shop for A Cause Day, Elfternoon Lunchttime Shopping and Merry Madness until November 1st. The window display judging categories remain the same as 2015.
- Shop for A Cause Day is November 26th – Milestone Foundation (The HOME Team) is the beneficiary. Portland Downtown will have 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.
- Window decorating – Exchange Street Dance Studio is offering live dancers or performers to perform in your window on the night of Tree Lighting.
- Portland Community Chorus reached out to us offering carolers. Sandy's granddaughter in South Portland High School is interested in having the chorus perform at no cost. Sandy will continue to try and reach out to Portland High too.
- Merry Madness – the kick-off party will be at Portland House of Music from 4-6 or 6:30pm. Final touches are being made to the event. Casey and Adam are considering closing on-line registrations early and have a limited number of wine glasses available that night to avoid overselling the event and disappointing late arrivals who won't get a glass. Vena's Fizz House will offer a recipe for a signature mocktail that retailers could use.

Next meeting: November 2nd at 9:00am, Top of the East, Westin Portland Harborview Hotel

Respectfully submitted,
Taffy Eaton, Recorder