



**Merchants Meeting
December 1, 2016 at 8:30am
Bull Feeney's**

Board members present: Suzie Rephan,

Others present: Matt Stone, Susan Driscoll, John Peverada, Nancy Lawrence, Jessica Goodwin, Jordan Simm, Jenn Tomlinson, Steve Corman, Chris Cummings, Nicole Gray, Matt Veith, Marie Stewart Harmon, Kelly Fernald, Sandy Jones, Mea Tavares, June Usher, Jenn Thompson, Doug Fuss

Staff present: Casey Gilbert, Taffy Eaton, Amy Geren

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

Minute 2. Review and approval of November 3rd meeting minutes: Susan Driscoll made a motion to approve the minutes. Jordan Simm seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Minute 3. Holiday events update:

- Elfternoon Lunchtime Shopping - Merchants reported positive experiences with Elfternoon. Casey encouraged retailers to spread the word through their social media. Retailers can still sign up to participate in next 2 Elfternoon events.
- Tree lighting – was the day after Thanksgiving-Hood Egg Nog, MEMIC, Machias Savings Bank were sponsors. Rainy evening but great event.
- Shop for A Cause Day – got great media coverage, it was exciting to see people around town wearing the #SFAC stickers. Machias Savings Bank has involved themselves on the Maine Life show. There were production problems so the segment did not air on Shop for A Cause Day.
- Window Display Contest – there were 50 participants this year. The windows will be judged next week. There are three \$1,000 media ad prizes.
- Horse and Wagon rides have wonderful sponsor banners on them
- Merry Madness is next week at Portland House of Music with a tent, snacks-to-go bags and jazz entertainment. Steve Corman has created a mocktail for the kick-off event, “The Wilbur”, which used to be on their menu. It can be mixed with seltzer or soda water.
 - We still need volunteers for the event if you know of anyone
 - Bangor Savings Bank is doing free gift wrapping from 6-9pm at 180 Middle St
 - Anchor Wellness is doing free foot reflexology massages at Dobra Tea during the event
 - Casey thanked Maine Magazine for supplying the photographer for the Step & Repeat

Minute 4. Discussion of 2017 goals: Suzie

- This year we dealt with street vendors, pumping up the Holiday events and creating a cleaner city environment. Cleaning around individual stores needs to be increased. The City has made a renewed effort and retailers should remember to also clean their areas.
- The street vendor issue was brought to the City's attention. A new festival zone was created on the water side of Commercial St. As a result, the land side of Commercial St was inundated with vendors. City Manager John Jennings is looking for a better solution. He realizes urgency of the issue.

Goal 1: To increase Merchant involvement in the committee. Sub-goal: To explore how the Merchant Committee can bring restaurants into the fold – either by including them as part of the committee, possibly through a by-laws change, or by simply reaching out to them to get them involved in Portland Downtown events.

- It is difficult to get Congress St merchants involved and Suzie would like to improve merchant participation. If anyone has an idea of how to involve Congress St merchants, let Suzie know.
- Restaurants fall through the cracks a bit. Do people have ideas to have merchants and restauranteurs work together? Restaurants' needs are different than retailers' needs. Perhaps outreach to the Maine Restaurant Association to recruit membership in a separate committee, then also overlap with the Merchant Committee. The Merchant Committee model is a good one and things like the minimum wage increase could be addressed. Suzie suggested she and Robyn Violette write a letter to restaurants to invite them to let Portland Downtown help them meet their needs.
- Suzie suggested boosting summer Shop for A Cause Day, which just started in 2016. Summer Kick Off Weekend can be a good weekend for retailers. Perhaps a Shop & Dine Day on Shop for A Cause Day? Partner with an established event, making Saturday a local shopping day.
- Perhaps a large summer shopping event with closed streets

Goal 2: Continue to work alongside the City to draft an ordinance or find a solution to better organize and track street vendors.

Goal 3: Build upon existing Holiday Events to make them streamlined, easy to execute and impactful for attendees, sponsors and business participants. We would like to have Portland become as well known for our holiday events as well as our summer events.

Minute 5. Other business:

- John Peverada – a mobile parking meter payment app is being implemented by the City
 - Parkers will be able to pay from their phones
 - They can add time to their meter after a text reminder
 - Merchants can validate their customers' meters
 - The City will distribute information when the app goes active
 - The app will also work in parking lots
 - The \$5 lot on Commercial St will be open all winter. It is very helpful for merchants.
 - DiMillo's offers 8 hours of parking for \$7 off season
 - Amy explained that there is a large group working together on the parking & transportation marketing campaign.
 - Contractors pay \$15 per day, per vehicle for a permit for doing building maintenance. It's a necessary evil because property owners need to repair their buildings. Tenants and property owners can work together on signage during building construction/maintenance.
 - The City's website has a good, current list of parking lots & garages with contact information.
 - Reminder: If City Hall is closed, parking meters are free

Next meeting: January 5th at 9:00am, Westin Portland Harborview Hotel, Top of the East

Respectfully submitted,
Taffy Eaton, Recorder