



**Merchants Meeting
August 4, 2016 at 8:30am
Bull Feeney's**

Board members present: Suzie Rephan

Others present: Marie Stewart Harmon, Lisa-Marie Stewart, Rick Lowell, Matt Stone, Megan Perron, Patti Chase, James Dufresne, Susan Driscoll, Denise Beck, Nathaniel Baldwin, Megan Roberts, Jordan Simm, Kyle Hersey, Doug Fuss

Guests: Kimberly Charland, Sadie Bliss

Staff present: Adam MacDonald, Taffy Eaton, Amy Geren

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

Minute 2. WCSH6 Sidewalk Art Festival: August 27th from 9:00 – 4:00

- Kimberly from WCSH told the group that this is the 51st year of the festival. Artists only display from High Street to Monument Square.
- Sadie from the Maine Crafts Association said crafters only display from High Street to State Street
- Congress Street and side streets close to traffic at 6am. Emergency No Parking signs will be put up August 26th.

Minute 3. METRO upgrades: Denise Beck updates this group periodically.

- METRO has added the Breeze bus which services Freeport and Yarmouth for \$3.00 per ride. Denise asked merchants to add the Breeze information to their websites if they have a “how to get here” section. There are 4 Portland stops for the Breeze.
- METRO is also partnering with Portland Downtown and Creative Portland for First Friday Art Walk. All rides are free from 4:00pm until the end of the service day.
- Southern Maine Transit Tracker is a new app which gives real-time locations of buses
- There is also Sunday service on all routes except the Breeze
- Portland High School students use METRO now instead of school buses
- Contact Denise with any thoughts on possible future service improvements
- There is no more “Hop on Hop off” bus for cruise ship passengers due to other transportation options.

Minute 4. Police, cadets mid-summer assessment – Amy

- Amy reviewed the distributed charts with stats for June and July cadet activity provided by the PPD
- Occasionally the cadets issue citations to a repeat offender. They don't often go far however because the offenders tend to be transients.
- Cadets are mainly meant to be a friendly face to law enforcement and remind people of the ordinances and laws
- Hopefully gathering this information will be useful in future years so the cadets or PPD can concentrate on certain areas or issues
- Portland Downtown also has 2 foot-beat officers walking the district 5 days a week

Other comments:

- Call the non-emergency number (874-8575) and report concerns so there is a record of the report if you have
 - loitering issues or concerns
 - people sleeping in doorways
 - harassment
 - repeat offenders
- Call the Home Team/Milestone for substance abuse issues (838-8904)

Minute 5. Arts District report

- Flea for All will open in October in the former Paul's Food Center building

Minute 6. Holiday planning - Suzie

- We need to keep holiday planning on everyone's mind
- We had some people volunteer to assist Portland Downtown staff with events at June meeting
- Adam reviewed the holiday events: (see attached event summary sheet)
 - Tree lighting – we will simplify the entertainment slightly this year we have only Rick Charette perform – he's a true crowd favorite! We may add some large screens to improve visibility for the crowd.
 - Window Display contest – this will be promoted at the tree lighting so attendees can look at windows starting that night. Merchants should make sure their windows are decorated by then.
 - The Portland Press Herald gives a \$1,000 grand prize for advertising to the best window decorations. Jean Berg is working on additional smaller prizes.
 - We will rework the categories this year – best use of products, use of lights, etc.
 - Shop for A Cause
 - The Summer Edition raised \$3500 for Portland Trails. The merchant group wanted to reinforce that Saturday is open for business with no street closures.
 - For the November event, this group needs to start the conversation about the beneficiary. It should be a downtown organization. Adam will send out an email asking for nominations, it will be discussed at the September meeting and finalized at the October meeting.
 - It gets the holiday shopping season off to a positive start.
 - Horse & wagon rides – sponsorship opportunities
 - Elfternoon Lunchtime Shopping – the group decided to keep it on Wednesday's. It will start on November 30th and continue on December 7th and December 14th from noon -2:00pm. The initial idea was to take advantage of people already downtown and encourage them to come shopping and have lunch at the same time. Any type of snack is great. Adam sends out reminders right before each weeks' event.
 - Merry Madness, Thursday December 8th, probably at Portland House of Music again. Suggestions:
 - Work on the food this year. Perhaps have catered food rather than self-serve.
 - Consider what attendees get for \$15 ticket price
 - The State regulates how much can be poured – 2 ounces
 - The kick-off event is meant for people to start there and get their glass and then go shopping
 - Shopping and nibble event encourages attendees go to restaurants too. Maybe get restaurants involved with a prix fixe menu.
 - Think of other food items to have in your stores – shoppers are hungry!
 - We are working on the goodie bag idea this year. Thinking of doing a snack bag rather than the magazines and paper items.
 - Might do more raffles
 - Pandora's light are turned on the night of the tree lighting

Adam will send an email for merchants to sign-up for which holiday events they would like to participate in.

Minute 7. Other business:

- Nelle Hanig (City of Portland Business Programs Manager) talked about the Façade Program. There are 3 projects underway in the Arts District: a Szechuan Restaurant is going in on the 600 block, the State Theater marquis will be restored and the Strange Maine storefront are all participating in this program. Washington Street and St. John Street will be areas for the façade program next. Spread the word to fellow merchants.

Next meeting: September 7th at 9:00am

Respectfully submitted,
Taffy Eaton, Recorder