



Merchants Meeting
February 1, 2018 at 8:30am
Bull Feeney's
375 Fore Street

Board members present: Suzie Rephan, Matt Veith

Others present: Steve Corman, Kelly Crotty, Dan Knight, Max Bangs, Marissa Carville, Barbara Meusile, Mary Alice Scott, Jordan Simm, Nancy Lawrence, Teresa Valliere, Jill Finberg, Jim Dufresne, Jenn Tomlinson

Guests: Brian Townsend, Ben Skillings, Mark Perry

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

Minute 1. Suzie Rephan welcomed everyone, asked for introductions and thanked Doug Fuss for hosting the meeting. She mentioned upcoming Board member elections and to please express your interest in being the Retail representative to the Portland Downtown Board of Directors, to her if you are interested.

Minute 2. Jordan Simm made a motion to approve the December 5, 2017 meeting minutes. Matt Veith seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

Minute 3. Amistad Peer Outreach workers presentation: Brian Townsend, Mark Skillings, Mark Perry

Brian introduced outreach workers Mark and Ben. Brian has been spreading the word far and wide about Amistad being chosen as the Shop for A Cause donations recipient and has received a great deal of positive feedback from the Amistad community. Mark said they will begin working with the police department in Spring 2018. Ben, a former Amistad employee, has returned to work there. Amistad seeks to build relationships with Portland's most vulnerable population, those who are in and out of hospitals and/or jail. Mark will leave his card for anyone interested.

Brian is hopeful that as of July 2018, Amistad and PD will be awarded Community Development Block Grant funding from the City to partner with a high emphasis on outreach downtown. The underserved population is the focus. Amistad will provide follow-up work with individuals also, hoping to avoid future interactions.

They are beta testing the work flow now. Brian would like to forge relationships with all downtown businesses, so they can all help to problem solve.

Discussion:

- Suzie asked for an explanation of when it is appropriate to call which agency. Ben said that anyone can call Amistad first if the person they are concerned about is non-threatening. The police department will often contact Amistad, instead of taking a person to the police station. The Hometeam starts patrolling downtown at noon.
- PD will update its "helpful resources" brochure with agency contact information.
- Ben mentioned that Amistad picked up the Sunday shift for Milestone and the Hometeam because they lost some funding and can now only work 6 days per week.

Minute 4. 2018-19 Downtown directory ad sales campaign: Joanne Alfiero talked about the directory project that PD and the Portland Press Herald (PPH) co-manage. The PPH prints 162,000 directories and distributes them to over 90 businesses in the area. Adam added that PD also sends directories to 2,300 people per year. Joanne encouraged everyone present that they will see a return on their advertising costs. The space reservation deadline is February 9th. Billing will go out in May. Nancy Lawrence added that in her opinion, the ad cost is a bargain, with 162,000 in distribution.

Minute 5. Holiday 2017 event review: Adam and Casey

1. Shop for a Cause Day – Saturday November 25th: PD will officially announce the total donation to Amistad at the check presentation ceremony on February 14th at Amistad (all merchants are welcome to join us). With Machias Savings Bank's generous offer to donate \$2,000, it brings up the total to approximately \$10,000, with about 7 merchant checks outstanding. Machias Savings Bank hosted a kick-off event at 193 Middle St where shoppers picked up a shopping bag and map of participating locations. We will think about options for the kick-off event in 2018. Adam thanked the merchants and Machias Savings bank for their support of this event. There is also a summer Shop for a Cause Day.
 - a. Process for choosing a non-profit recipient: Adam does outreach to local 501c non-profits, merchants nominate organizations, and non-profits nominate themselves if their work has a positive impact on Portland and downtown. Adam brings the names to the Merchant meeting where the top 3 are chosen. Adam then sends a survey with the names to the downtown merchant email list for voting.
 - b. Suzie heard from Tree House Toys – they like SFAC but feels it might be being confused with American Express's Shop Small Saturday initiative. Nancy has suggested separating the 2 events in the future so there are 2 great Saturday's for businesses.
 - c. Is it possible to change the holiday SFAC date? Adam will talk to the Marketing & Events Committee today. Casey would like it to work for merchants. This committee will consider the pros & cons of the 3 Saturdays during Light up Your Holidays because we need feedback from businesses.
2. Elfternoon Lunchtime Shopping – Nov 29, Dec 6, Dec 13: reports were mixed about the success of the event. All PD events have varying degrees of impact for individual merchants. Discussion:
 - a. Casey suggested the possibility of moving the event to another day of the week. She wants it to work for merchants.
 - b. The event is still new and will take a few years to get a foothold. Merchants should use their social media channels and email communications to amplify events and share event information.
 - c. Suzie reminded the group that it was originally meant to attract the downtown worker during lunch time. Adam sending reminders with sample menus helps.
 - d. Nancy commented that more participating merchants perhaps reduces the numbers of people in her store because shoppers have more choices of where to shop and eat
3. Window Display Contest: continues to pick up momentum. Adam said that PD revived the event 3 years ago and participation has increased from 40 to 60 businesses. There is lots of activity and voting taking place on Facebook. It is nice to see Instagram involvement too.
4. Merry Madness – December 7th: operationally, PD has streamlined the event logistics, and caps it at 1,200 attendees. Adam announced that all tickets will be sold ahead of time in 2018. There will be no day-of sales. We only sold about 85 day-of tickets this year. Suzie expressed concern about non-online attendees feeling they cannot attend. Adam feels that people who do not purchase tickets also shop, so that shouldn't be a problem. Suzie confirmed that merchants subscribe to "the more the merrier" theme. Joanne commented on what a positive event it was between the attendees and how PD executes the event. Casey commented on the positive feelings she experienced walking down the street later in the evening. One attendee suggested adding a flag or something to mark a participating store, so attendees can easily identify them. Merchants are still concerned about online only ticket sales, and the message that tickets are sold out will discourage people who haven't bought an online ticket from coming down to shop. Please send other ideas to Suzie.

Minute 6. Ad hoc Committee updates: Suzie Rephan

- Street Art Vendor discussion: the committee has been meeting but they have not had much response from local businesses being affected by vendors. The committee is tabled for now and will begin meeting again in June. The issues being discussed are:
 - Enforcing current ordinances including vendor street parking.
 - Origination of merchandise
 - Vendor footprint
 - Non-compete clause
 - Improving the Marketplace

- Old Port Festival 2018: Suzie announced that the PD Board approved one free 10x10 space for merchants in the event footprint. In order to participate, businesses that register with the promo code for a free space will be required to have a staffed, active table in front of their store. Suzie offered some ideas like sell water, give out coupon for a future visit, do a product demonstration, display merchandise, or offer the table to a vendor of yours to display or promote their product. The committee is making an effort to make OPF a reflection of Portland's culture, arts, food, and music, and less of a county fair/carnival. PD will promote the Maine Craft and Maine Food areas and will eliminate carnival rides, with the exception of the ferris wheel in DiMillo's parking lot. Suzie suggested it is working towards being like an urban Common Ground Fair type festival.
- Adam sent a survey to downtown businesses and the overwhelming response was that OPF should be a reflection of Portland's unique local character
- A community survey went out and we have received 350 responses so far
- Adam said it will take a few years to change the culture of the event but we're beginning. Carnival food vendors that have been grandfathered into spaces will not be allowed that option any longer. There will be some push back from vendors, but the committee is excited to make positive changes.
- Suzie requested merchants talk to their neighbors and recommend they reserve and staff a table, so we can really showcase local businesses. It's a way to get involved without much effort. It is a no risk, low staff day.
- Casey reminded everyone that tables and vendors set-up in the street, not on sidewalks
- Casey suggested merchants ask Adam, Casey or Suzie if they need ideas for how to utilize their table
- Joanne offered directories to put on your table

Minute 7. Other business:

1. Amy Geren reported that she did the first PD Job Shadow Day, highlighting the public works crew responsibilities as well as other municipal offices. Amy thanked Suzie for serving the students lunch.
2. Downtown Worker Appreciation Day is May 3rd, the first Thursday in May. PD is working with Portland Buy Local on the event and will be compiling the coupon booklet again.

Next meeting: Thursday March 1, 2018 at 8:30am, Westin Portland Harborview Hotel

Respectfully submitted,
Taffy Eaton, Recorder