



Merchants Meeting
January 16, 2019 at 8:30am
Press Hotel
119 Exchange Street

Board members present: Karen Coffin, Dawn Homa, Megan Doane

Present: Dan Knight, Kelly Crotty, Barbora Mensik, Lisa-Marie Stewart, Marie Stewart Harmon, Marissa Carville, Chris Cummings, Sara Brown, Kevin Kingdon, Maria Wolff, Elsa McGary, Glen McGary, Josh Anderson, Elena Morrow-Spitzer, Melissa Spoerl, Jenn Tomlinson, Nancy Lawrence, Lydia Topp, Joanne Alfiero, Steve Corman, Mary Alice Scott, Mark Foster, Suzie Rephan, Josh Rogers, Beverly Koncenko, Dustin Carson, Nelle Hanig, Eric Pray, Anne Karonis, Denise Cole, Dean Cole, Lisa Buck, Denise Holmes, Eliza Norman, Bob Fowler, Olive Jones, Wendy Hayes, Marissa Glover

Staff present: Casey Gilbert, Adam MacDonald, Taffy Eaton

Minute 1. Casey Gilbert welcomed everyone, thanked Press Hotel for hosting the meeting. Casey explained that Portland Downtown (PD) is a non-profit 501c4 funded by Property Owners. The Merchant representative position on the Board of Directors is open and encouraged those present to consider running this spring and getting more involved. It is a volunteer Board of Directors.

Along with other committees, the Merchant Committee has moved to bi-monthly meetings. This schedule will keep meetings current and informative.

- There is a new Committee Member policy in place, rolled out by the Board. This policy formalizes committee membership and voting members will have more stake in the committee.
- Casey introduced Chair Karen Coffin with Machias Savings Bank. Karen has jumped right in volunteering as Chair of the committee.
- Karen asked for introductions and to keep the sign-up sheet circulating.

Minute 2. Review & approval of November 1, 2018 meeting minutes: Suzie Rephan made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Dawn Homa seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

Minute 3. Light Up Your Holidays review: Adam MacDonald mentioned the informational folders and annual reports available for anyone interested. Adam reviewed the events and asked for feedback from meeting attendees.

- Tree Lighting, Friday 11/23. New this year, a tree topper. The tree was donated by the South Portland Fire Department. Hood Egg Nog sponsored the event and was there giving out free egg nog. We will find a new performer for 2019 due to Rick Charette's retirement.
- Shop for A Cause Day, Saturday 11/24. This event usually raises around \$10,000 for the beneficiary, who is selected by a vote of the downtown merchants each year. Machias Savings Bank sponsored the event and hosted a kick-off party in Post office Park. Carolers from Portland Community Chorus performed at the kick-off event then sang at some of the participating stores. We have raised about \$8,000 thus far and are waiting for about 15 outstanding merchant checks. The check presentation to Boys & Girls Club will be on February 14th – all are welcome.
- Elfternoon Lunchtime Shopping, 3 Wednesday's 11/28, 12/5 and 12/12, from noon - 2pm. Participating businesses offered free snacks while people shopped. Androscoggin Bank sponsored and had a great kick-off event on the first day with about 75 people attending. Adam thanked the merchants who promoted the event through their social media channels.
 - Melissa at MHS Museum Store mentioned that it is a wonderful event and brings in lots of customers
- Merry Madness, Thursday 12/6. The Custom House was the new venue this year, which reimagined attendees' shopping routes. We staggered arrival times and the flow was steady and easily handled. Casey thanked Jeff

Porter with Custom House for being such a wonderful supporter of PD. Maine Spirits sponsored this year, which allowed us to better involve restaurants and bars. We are always trying to improve the event for attendees and merchants. Adam thanked all the sponsors for making the event successful. PD feels very strongly about making sponsors experiences a good one.

- Kevin at Edgcomb said it was a busy, happy evening
- Suzie heard that all the Light up Your Holidays events were very successful
- Casey reminded everyone present that we can't do any of these events without merchant involvement
- Maria Wolff said a big group came to Maine Craft Portland first but that was about it for shoppers that night
- Adam mentioned that we are continually working on trying to promote the Congress Street shops and to get more Congress Street businesses involved
- Casey added that we would like to find a venue on Congress Street for the kick-off event in 2020, should anyone have an idea for a possible location, please let us know
- There are 1,200 attendees, plus many more people simply out shopping
- Kevin suggested having 2 kick-off locations to feed into different parts of town
- Holiday Window Display contest. This event was brought back about 4 years ago. A trio of judges looked at every window to choose the winners. Adam displayed the winner's window displays on the projector screen.
- Horse & Wagon rides. PD and sponsors make it possible to provide the public with free wagon rides throughout the season.
- Pandora's Winter Lights. Adam and Casey will create a map of Pandora's Winter Lights, to better promote the beautiful displays. There were some new and expanded installations this year: Lincoln Park and Pleasant Street Park. Pandora was presented with a key to the City at the Tree Lighting to recognize her for her contributions to Portland through her art.

Minute 4. Discussion: possible date change for Shop for A Cause Day (SFAC): There is some concern with it being on the same day as American Express Shop Small Saturday event. Adam will send an email for Merchants to vote on a date. The choices will be 11/30 (after Black Friday, Tree Lighting and Thanksgiving), 12/7, 12/14 or 12/21.

Points made during the discussion:

- SFAC Day brings shoppers out specifically to support the beneficiary
- American Express changed some of the benefits of their Shop Small event making it less attractive to merchants.
- Adam mentioned that there is more energy when both events are on the same day – they are both about supporting local businesses
- A free parking day might help – or possibly free bus?
- Chris thinks 12/21 might discourage a percentage donation due to high sales levels
- Casey reminded everyone that the goal is to raise as much money as possible for the non-profit the merchants selected
- Elena added that on 12/21 people are shopping anyway and we would not be bringing in new shoppers. She would like to see the event on 12/7
- Megan spoke as an attendee of Merry Madness - she wouldn't be looking to spend more money the Saturday after Merry Madness

Minute 5. New businesses and other news:

- Joanne Alfiero spoke about reserving advertising space in the PD Directory and Map beginning in January. Ad placement closes on February 1st and the directory gets printed in April.
- Casey asked for a round of applause for Karen for running a great meeting. Please get in touch with Casey or Karen with any ideas about future guest speakers or topics.
- We will look forward to a good informational meeting with the Portland Police Department at the March 20th meeting

Casey thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 9:30.

Respectfully submitted,
Taffy Eaton, Recorder