



## **Merchant Meeting**

September 18, 2019 at 8:30 – 9:30AM

Press Hotel

119 Exchange Street

**Board members present:** Karen Coffin, Sara Brown, Gillian West, Megan Doane

**Committee members present:** Karen Coffin, Sara Brown, Max Bangs, Chris Cummings, Marissa Carville, Nancy Lawrence

**Present:** Gudrun Cobb, Jaime Wing, Maria Wolff, Joanne Alfiero, Keith Melanson, Beverly Kocenko, Saroya Wronski, John Peverada, Joyce Mongeau, Bailey Irving, Evelyn Smith, Darrell Bell, Natasha Bowie, Jess Lauren Lipton, Cesar Velez Polit, Kate Frey, Keith Stephens, Mary Alice Scott, Michelle Winchester, Ashley Tucci, James Dufresne, Zoe Miller, Carrie London

**Guests:** Williams Bandoma, PPL Business & Government Librarian; Denise Beck, METRO Manager of Marketing & Community Relations; Max Bangs, Bangor Savings Bank Vice President & Branch Manager

**Staff present:** Casey Gilbert, Adam MacDonald, Taffy Eaton

**Minute 1.** Karen Coffin welcomed everyone and asked for introductions from those present. Casey gave a brief review of the PD mission and thanked the Press Hotel for sponsoring and hosting the meeting. Karen talked about how to become a committee member and passed around the sign-in sheet. Casey said today's speakers are a result of the break-out sessions at a recent Merchant Meeting. We want to be responsive to the needs of our downtown businesses, so he hopes that the speakers will be informative. Please let her know if there are suggestions for future speakers.

**Minute 2.** Review & approval of July 17, 2019 meeting minutes: A motion was made to accept the July meeting minutes. Sara Brown seconded the motion and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Minute 3.** Portland Public Library: Resources and programs for small businesses - Williams Bandoma, Business & Government Librarian: reviewed his presentation.

**Minute 4.** METRO update – improving the Route 8: Peninsula Loop – Denise Beck, Manager of Marketing & Community Relations gave some background of METRO bus service. Many new routes have been added over the past 3 years, including the Breeze and Husky Line. A rebranding and the purchase of new buses took place in 2018. Six new buses are coming in September and automatic voice announcements will be introduced. METRO has doubled the number of bus shelters in the past few years.

- METRO is making changes to Route 8, the downtown peninsula bus. They are reaching out to the public for input on a "Loop Reboot", to make the Route 8 an urban circulator. They have held public meetings at many locations including Seadogs games and farmers markets, in order to gather information. GPMetro.org has surveys available if you cannot attend a meeting. METRO staff will come back next year with the proposed changes to the route to gather feedback before they finalize the route changes.
- Zoe Miller with Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) sees this route change as critically important for improving transit and reducing congestion downtown. GPCOG would love to hear from everyone in the room, as well as their customers and clients, about how the changes are going.

**Minute 5.** Bangor Savings Bank/Buoy Local Program – Max Bangs, Vice President & Branch Manager: Max said that Bangor Savings donates over \$2 million across the state each year and they sponsored Portland Downtown's Summer Shop for A Cause Day in June.

- Kate Frey, of Bangor Savings Bank, spoke about the Buoy Local mobile app. The consumer finds your participating business on the app (using GPS tracking) and uses their Buoy Local card to make a purchase and receive rewards.

It has become a rewards card instead of a gift card. The program has generated over \$2 million in sales. Money spent locally has a multiplier effect. The consumer can connect any bank or credit card to this card.

- Kate offered prizes for those who answered questions correctly after sharing some statistics on the program. It is read as a Mastercard at the point of sale. Kate encouraged people to take cards and sign-up for the program.

**Minute 6. Drive Less, Do More multi modal marketing campaign:** Adam MacDonald displayed the campaign materials on the screen. The campaign is all about what you can do MORE of: for example, What can you do MORE of when you're not driving or looking for parking? This campaign introduces many ways of getting around the city. There will be a website, street banners, and bus shelter wraps to help amplify the message. The launch party is on Tuesday September 24<sup>th</sup> from 8-10am in Monument Square. In addition to a press conference at 9:00am, there will be a 'transportation fair' – a way for people to get information on all of the available transit options.

Casey thanked Megan Doane for her leadership on the Parking & Transportation Committee and with the advocacy letter presented to the City in 2016. Casey also thanked John Peverada with the City Parking Department for his involvement.

**Minute 7. Light Up Your Holidays overview** – Adam MacDonald: There will be an extra Merchant meeting on October 16<sup>th</sup> to go over the 2019 holiday events in depth. Please look for an email invitation to the meeting and mark your calendars.

- Monument Square Tree Lighting, 11/29, 4-6pm. With Rick Charette's retirement, the event will be reimagined and be a more experiential, marketplace style event with a smaller stage and moments with Santa.
- Shop for A Cause Day, 11/30 all day. There are 3 finalists for beneficiary that the Merchant Committee will vote on: Greater Portland Immigrant Welcome Center, Cromwell Center for Disabilities Awareness and Maine Recovery Fund. Adam will send a survey to the merchants, so that they can select the beneficiary for this year's SFAC event.
- Elfternoon Lunchtime Shopping, 3 Wednesdays 12/4, 12/11 and 12/18
- Merry Madness, 12/5, kick-off party at the Custom House with 1,200 available tickets
- First Friday Art Walk, 12/6, a Creative Portland event
- The horse & wagon rides and the Window Display contest will be ongoing throughout the season
- Sponsorships are available – if you are interested, please email Adam for more info.

**Minute 8. New businesses and other news:**

- Keith with CTN Media Group offered information on a free webinar for brochure design
- Cesar with the Portland Harbor Hotel spoke about the first in a series of Chef Dinner events, "Miami meets Maine", interaction with chefs on 9/26
- Mary Alice with Portland Buy Local spoke about the upcoming Indie Biz Awards on 10/17. Voting is online and open until next Friday. Tickets are available for the event.
- Casey mentioned that Gudrun with Uncommon Paws won an award for the United Way window display contest. Portland Downtown also showed their support of UWGP by participating in the contest.
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- Karen Coffin and Sara Brown, the Merchant Committee chairs, will be out introducing themselves to local businesses during the next week. Please let them know if there is a business that they should stop into and pay a visit.

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Taffy Eaton, Recorder