

Marketing & Events Committee Meeting Notes

January 4, 2019 ~ 8:30 a.m.

Meeting Location: Commerce One, Room A ~ 901 Saginaw St.

Members Attending: Valerie Allen, Peggy Rau, Becky Hortop, Michelle Judd, Tyler King, Christine Schwall, Mike Murray, Andrew Heppner

Absent: Laura Horwath

Also Attending: Mike Bacigalupo, Matthew Kowalski

Public Input

The Marketing and Events Committee was set to meet with Steve Zannetti in regards to the 2019 St Patrick's Day Race/Parade. From previous discussions, Steve was interested in finding ways to get the DMB more involved with the day's activities. With Steve's absence, Kowalski will follow up for more information at next meeting.

Sundays in the City Overview

Kowalski and Judd lead the group in open forum discussions of the 2018 Sundays in the City event.

Schwall noted that the Santa Bucks that have been a staple of Sundays in the City may not be as much of a draw as seen in previous years. Judd suggests re-evaluating promotions for next years event, including commercials and mailers.

Bacigalupo cited the absence of snow during most of the event really helped get the foot traffic Downtown. The committee resounded that there was steady business throughout the holiday season.

Schwall brought up dates for seasonal open houses in 2019. Judd discussed coordinating with Downtown merchants (My Secret Garden, G.T. Homestead, etc.) to make sure there isn't overlapping timelines.

Kowalski shares that Downtown Bay City has captured a large number of contacts to be added to their e-mail list. Exact numbers will be explained when finished importing.

Review of Downtown Marketing Plan

Judd began the discussion by narrowing down the target audiences based upon the survey results as "Mature established" and "Young professional". She cited that dining and arts were among the top attractions to Downtown Bay City visitors.

Heppner expressed interest in the creation of a guide on approaching events or personal initiatives for Downtown merchants- a shared knowledge of successful processes from merchants that have completed similar endeavors.

Judd proceeded to highlight areas in question throughout the current Downtown Marketing Plan Situation Analysis threats beginning with whether or not business owners were still in competition with or worried about online sales. Rau responded that

Downtown Bay City shops offer a unique experience with their shopping trips that online forums cannot provide. Murray expanded by noting the great atmosphere of Downtown Bay City.

Judd discussed issues concerning population decline. King spoke of personal experience saying he moved back to Bay City to enjoy a smaller town atmosphere and to avoid traffic and higher cost of living. Murray explained declining enrollment at Delta College as it pertains to the Delta College Planetarium.

Judd emphasizes finding opportunities to showcase our Downtown area to a younger generation to stay or move back to. She references the most popular Downtown events according to the survey and how we can use those to strengthen our marketing efforts.

Heppner shared that he sees Midland as a direct competitor, citing that Midland hosts several family events. Schwall agreed and explained as a Midland Country Club member she regularly attends events. She finds that many Bay City residents go to Midland, but doesn't hear of Midland residents coming to Bay City as often.

Judd discusses targeting the Midland area residents more with social media and web ads to showcase what Downtown Bay City can offer them. Bacigalupo details that he is partnering with Midland Center For the Arts and other Midland leaders to host the Midland Symphony, with hopes to attract more Midland residents to the Bay City area.

Heppner asks the committee for opportunities for Downtown Bay City to capture travelers heading "up north" regularly. Judd suggests a billboard representing Downtown Bay City on I-75 to attract potential visitors. Heppner suggests collaborating with downtown business owners to fund the initiative. Judd emphasizes that no business names would actually be listed on the billboard, it would be a desirable photo with some sort of catchy hashtag to measure results. Creating a concise message and quick catch phrase appeals to a younger demographic. King references Muskegon's "Watch us go" campaign.

Judd explains the billboard should be northbound facing, as a lot of Downtown businesses currently are not open on Sundays, so capturing visitors returning south would not be as incentivized.

Murray would like to see these efforts extend beyond just a social media demographic, need to maintain old plan as well. Schwall agrees there almost needs to be 2 separate plans to reach these drastically different audiences. Murray shares that a large portion of his visitors are of an older generation.

Other

Judd suggests the idea of adding more short-term dining options for events (e.g. food trucks). The intentions being that even though they're Downtown restaurants that people may frequent, changing the setting will make them new and interesting. Judd also emphasizes downtown merchants and their employees to get involved and to keep them involved in new happenings Downtown. The idea of repackaging old ideas in new

ways (beerfest, wellness, outdoor activities) can be additions and resources for future events.

The committee agrees that the Downtown Riverfront is a big draw for visitors so possibly including more centrally located events, in Wenonah Park would be something to consider moving forward with new event creations. Murray explains that visitors love history and charm, Heppner agrees and says we should emphasize our history and architecture throughout Downtown Bay City.

Bacigalupo expressed interest in walking and bus tours to be revisited in the future as a way to get traffic to museums and other points of interest. Murray suggests installation of interactive water features that he's seen successful in other Downtown areas.

Schwall reminds the committee of Sidewalk Sales event and explains that they used to be a very big deal to the town, but doesn't seem to have the same impact as before. Suggests that we find new ways to revive the event to its former glory.

Committee asks for marketing materials of Downtown events to be available in a shared drive for businesses to have access to. Kowalski touches base on wanting to solidify a date and plans for a 5K Run & Expo, as well as New Years Eve event, which will be discussed further at the next meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 am.

Respectively Submitted,



Matthew Kowalski
Administrative/Marketing Specialist