

Marketing & Events Committee Meeting Notes
October 26, 2018 ~ 8:30 a.m.
Meeting Location: Commerce One, Room A ~ 901 Saginaw St.

Members Attending: Christine Schwall, Mike Murray, Erin Riley, Valerie Allen, Peggy Rau, Andrew Heppner, Laura Horwath, Michelle Judd

Absent: Tyler King

Also Attending: Mike Bacigalupo, Suzanne Maxwell, Matthew Kowalski

Open Discussion

Maxwell discussed expectations and overall engagement from the committee, as well as goals to be set, events calendar and adding/removing events.

Murray says previous meetings were more informational, having great suggestions and had a lot of potential, but wants new committee to be more collaborative with action plans.

Rau envisions the new committee playing an ambassador role to fellow merchants not only to downtown, but to all of Bay City.

Judd requested that there be some form of open communication so the committee can discuss and follow up with each other between meetings. Maxwell suggested creating a closed Facebook page for an open line of communication between committee members outside of meetings alone. Kowalski will have page created and invites sent out over weekend.

Horwath reinforced the committees duties to focus on actual marketing strategies and to be more involved in events throughout downtown Bay City.

Heppner noted interest in budget assessments, online promotions, as well as finding our target audience to help coordinate promotional efforts.

Judd wants to support businesses and encourage them to step up and get on board with new initiatives presented by this committee.

Horwath also spoke about assessing Bay City as a whole, its branding elements, as well as figuring out its target audience. Horwath wants to improve branding to in-town audience, as well as out of town audiences alike. Suggests collaboration with Midland Street and other districts across Bay City to unify its message.

Bacigalupo stated that he is currently working with Midland Street District to coordinate an event mid-July.

Judd discussed ways to collaborate with other districts, possibly without spending money on either end such as creating packaged materials that highlight all areas.

Allen suggested a type of "sister city" program, but rather "sister business" with other districts. This could help downtown look great, while still promoting businesses outside of its barriers. Wants to no longer see similar businesses elsewhere as competition, but rather collaboration for greater good of Bay City.

Maxwell stated that according to the DMB Bylaws, tax assessment revenue cannot be spent to promote businesses outside the district.

Judd recommended reviewing the Marketing Plan and update where its needed. Wants to re-evaluate who is the target audience, compare with numbers from CVB local versus travelers. Iterates people value the experience and we need to promote that more. Judd explains that Bay City is the fastest growing area in the region, citing increase in hotel dollars spent.

Allen suggested Downtown Bay City emphasize the uniqueness of its riverfront and the activities associated with it.

Goals

Maxwell asks the new Marketing & Events Committee to share their goals and what they envision could benefit Downtown Bay City.

Horwath suggests the Marketing & Events Committee create and send out a public survey to give evidence and data towards its goals and future initiatives.

Judd asks that the committee communicate through closed Facebook group to establish goals and questions.

Heppner wants to have a clear, consistent message for all throughout the Downtown area to help promote.

Horwath stated that she wants everyone to have an answer to the question "Why would you go downtown?" Need to know the "why".

Judd explained that we also need to carefully evaluate the negative perceptions some may have toward Downtown Bay City and address those appropriately.

Review of Downtown Marketing Plan

Maxwell presented the current Marketing plan for Downtown Bay City for the Marketing & Events Committee to read and evaluate before the next meeting. Maxwell asks that each member study, make notes, discuss, and suggest updates and edits that will be beneficial to future goals.

2019 Calendar of Events

Maxwell presented the committee with a tentative schedule of the 2019 events happening in Downtown Bay City and asked for input on events early in the year.

Horwath suggested the idea of some kind of winter festival, similar to events regularly available in larger cities. Riley detailed her experience with Quicken Loans Winter Fest

in Detroit, saying she planned to go for the day, but ended up getting a hotel room and experiencing more in that area all weekend. A similar event in Downtown Bay City may yield similar results.

Heppner addressed Soups & Sales event first week of January, suggested creating a new event with a better name and more enticing ideas and reasons for participating. Considering the event is early in the calendar year, Heppner suggested focusing more on healthy initiatives coinciding with new years resolutions.

Judd suggested the idea of a "fresh start" event, that does not solely focus on requiring businesses to have a sale to participate. Rather, marketing this event to the experience of Downtown instead of sales and food.

Maxwell presented an idea for a "workshop" type event for the proposed wellness weekend. Judd proposed giving merchants ideas and suggestions when offering the events, rather than just asking if they are interested in participating. Heppner questioned if the "workshop" theme can be daunting for some merchants, as it may be difficult to coordinate an activity to represent their business in a beneficial way.

Horwath noted that this new event could be a bit open-ended; some merchants could have major workshops, where others have some kind of smaller attraction, in the realm of a "pop-up" shop. Believes the marketing efforts should don the "wellness weekend" and the "fresh start" terms can be used to explain what the event represents.

Horwath suggested the idea of an event featuring food trucks for Downtown Bay City, citing positive experiences other cities in a similar fashion.

Bacigalupo presented an idea for having some sort of "distillery walk", similar to our popular "Wine Walk" and "Apps & Ales" events and suggested this event take place during the winter months, as to not conflict or take away from the aforementioned.

Maxwell noted that the Wine Walk event has for the first time become a revenue gain, rather than a wash or loss.

Judd suggested that restaurant owners provide input on whether a weekend would be possible, or if we should continue with the similar events and make it a weekday evening. Maxwell noted that she will email restaurant owners to gauge their level of interest.

Appointment of Committee Chair and Vice Chair

Maxwell explained that past committees did not have a Chair or Vice Chair, but would prefer to have persons champion this committee and dedicate to creating change. Judd volunteers to be Chair, and is unanimously approved.

Horwath volunteers to be Vice Chair, and is unanimously approved.

Other

The Marketing Committee will meet again Friday, November 30, 2018

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 am.

Respectively Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Kowalski". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Matthew Kowalski

Administrative/Marketing Specialist