

Marketing & Events Committee Meeting Notes

March 22, 2019 ~ 8:30 a.m.

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

Members Attending: Becky Hortop, Michelle Judd, Tyler King, Christine Schwall, Mike Murray, Peggy Rau, Laura Horwath (via telephone)

Absent: Valerie Allen, Andrew Heppner

Also Attending: Mike Bacigalupo, Matthew Kowalski, Suzanne Maxwell, Scott Ellis, Shirley Roberts

Public Input

Hortop shared that City Market had a lot of foot traffic on Sunday, March 17th due to the annual St. Patrick's Day parade down Center Avenue. This was especially successful due to their promotion of being open on that Sunday weeks ahead of time. Judd echoed this by saying Bay City Antiques had a lot of people come through their store as well and it was great to see people venturing off of the main road.

Rau shared that while on vacation in Puerto Rico, she visited an alleyway covered with umbrellas that could be something that Downtown Bay City includes as a point of interest for visitors, especially cool for the upcoming summer events.

Tall Ship Celebration - Shirley Roberts

Roberts explained to the committee that she created a schedule of the Tall Ship events to close around 5:00pm to push visitors into the Downtown business districts. In 2016, the event saw over 100,000 visitors, 86% Michigan residents, only 25% being residents from the Great Lakes Bay region. She explained that their greatest economic impact is when visitors are staying at local hotels. However, this year may be especially difficult for lodging due to the LPGA tour happening in Midland during the same weekend.

Roberts explained the DMB previously provided small handouts to pass out to the crowds and wonders if there is something a bit more creative and inspiring we can try this year. Schwall suggested doing some kind of marketing at hotels throughout the tri-cities to cross market with Midland, as well as other Bay City hotels, not just Downtown. Roberts asked about other events happening in Bay City (State Theatre, Planetarium) during Tall Ships to help make this a community event. She explains that last year there was a line up for church tours and she is more than willing to share other events within their program.

Baysail hopes to have entertainment for every corner downtown where the crowd lines Water St. Horwath suggested getting businesses to sponsor each corners entertainment, and possibly work with Hell's Half Mile to help with bands. Roberts plans to ask some of the main performers if they'd be interested in doing small side gigs as a promotion to their main events later on. Murray says he will have a man in a space suit walking around representing the Planetarium.

Maxwell agreed with the idea of creating welcome bags for local hotels. Schwall noted this may be a lot of work to accomplish, but could really pay off in the end. As for handouts at the festival, Hortop suggests targeting the most populated corners first. Rau suggested looking into schools and students to volunteer their time to help these efforts. Maxwell suggests making use of the Downtown Merchants page once there is solid information to share to get the word out easily.

Judd also points out that the Downtown website needs to make this information easily accessible for visitors to find. Judd also suggests making the handouts to the crowds a "treasure hunt" of sorts. Rau reminds that in the past they've done "passports" where visitors go to locations and get stamps on their passport. Could possibly make it so you need a certain number of stamps to be entered into a drawing for a "pirate chest" of prizes. Judd emphasizes making a game out of it, rather than just listing off businesses. The group also agrees an event hashtag could be promoted, as well as set-up photo areas around Downtown to be tagged on social media.

Sidewalk Days

Maxwell explained that the previous "theme" of sidewalk days has been "lemons and leftovers" but received negative feedback regarding the "leftovers" part. The group agreed that an event theme is not necessary. The event could possibly have daily themes (e.g. Food Truck Friday, Sweet Saturday). Rau adds the possibility of "Throwback Thursday" to highlight sales. King suggest dressing in retro clothing, etc. Horwath says 80s/90s is "back in style" which is something that could be elaborated on more. Rau suggests "Sweet Saturday" could be a great way to cross market, where each store may be giving away discounts to any place downtown, not just their own business. Maxwell expressed interest in closing off a block on Washington Ave. for food trucks to park, as well as having merchants hang flags and have tents. Judd points out that merchants will already have tents outside of businesses for tall ships, why not continue using them.

DMB Subcommittees - Updates

Maxwell shares that the Downtown Beautification Subcommittee will have their first meeting on Monday, March 25th. The meeting will be to discuss incentives for business owners keeping their "front porch" looking great while we have "company coming" during our busy summer events. Maxwell shares that they are looking for businesses to sponsor areas throughout downtown to "spruce up" during this beautification endeavor.

Other

Judd asks that the review of the Downtown Marketing Plan be pushed back to the next meeting. This topic deserves a dedicated amount of time to get things accomplished and asked that we set the entire second half of the next meeting solely to that purpose.

Maxwell expressed her desire to see member attendance and engagement heightened to a higher standard. Though this isn't a formal board, which allows for flexibility within meeting times, it is still largely important that we have a quorum that is openly discussing and engaging in the topics at hand.

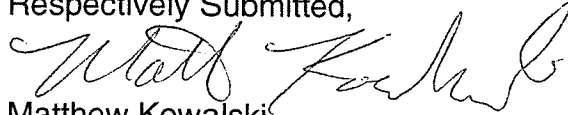
Murray shares that What's Next is hosting a family fun fair at the Delta College Planetarium on Saturday, April 13th from 12:30 to 3:30pm. This is a family-friendly event with many arts organizations having tables to show what's going on this summer throughout Bay City.

Horwath reiterates the board being ambassadors for having as many businesses as possible be open the Sunday of the Tall Ships weekend. She suggests posting to the Downtown Merchant Page on Facebook to get collective efforts on the idea. Judd agrees that it ends up being a "black eye" for the city when everything is closed on a Sunday while we have so many visitors. She asks if there may be other key weekends we can approach similar suggestions to merchants for. Judd also shared that her Marketing class, which is focusing on Downtown Bay City will be doing presentations on April 22nd from 6-10pm at Saginaw Valley State University.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:42 am.

Respectively Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Matt Kowalski".

Matthew Kowalski
Administrative/Marketing Specialist