

Marketing & Events Committee Meeting Notes
September 6, 2019 ~ 8:30 a.m.
Meeting Location: Commerce One, Room A ~ 901 Saginaw St.

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

Absent: Valerie Allen, Christine Schwall

Also Attending: Mike Bacigalupo, Matthew Kowalski, Suzanne Maxwell, Andrew Heppner

Public Input

Maxwell asked for feedback on Sidewalk Days 2019. Horwath, Heppner, and King said it was a successful weekend of business. Maxwell reported there was one food truck that didn't show up, but everything else went smoothly. The group agreed the weekend had memorable themes, giving something new to participate in each day, and can be continued during next years event.

Judd reported that the Princess Wenonah is back in the water and should be back and fully operational within the next couple weeks, hopeful for the Wine Walk event on September 19th. Says overall its been a great summer in Downtown Bay City.

"Open Sundays" Initiative

Heppner shares with the committee his suggestion of getting 90% of Downtown merchants to participate in having open hours on Sundays. He suggests creating a survey to be sent out to the public in order to get statistical data to share with merchants for the desire of Sunday hours.

Heppner explains his desire for unified open times somewhere around 10:00am open and 4:00 closing as a main block of time for visitors to expect open businesses. Bacigalupo agrees, citing a church group that exits the State Theatre around noon, and says Sundays in the City events typically finish around 4pm as well. Horwath says retail shops could possibly stay open later, if beneficial.

Judd shares that Bay Antique Center has been open on Sundays from 12-5pm for the past thirty years. The issue is getting merchants to commit to this initiative, it can't be started and abandoned shortly thereafter.

Bacigalupo suggests creating a flyer to advertise the 'Open Sunday' initiative. Maxwell echoes this by saying the DMB can begin a marketing promotion, including notices to our 14,000+ contacts via e-mail. Heppner agrees that getting the message out to the public would be the key to its success. King iterates that this initiative will take some time to stick, and Rau says merchants need to be informing every customer of the changes as well.

Maxwell suggests having a simple event on a Sunday to kick start the initiative, something similar to the Hot Chocolate Hop event that was highly successful in February. A free event inviting families into Downtown where they can be educated on the regular Sunday hours moving forward.

Heppner reminds the committee that all of Uptown Bay City is open on Sundays, and says Matthew Meehan of City Market has a desire to be open on Sundays if the benefits can be backed up by data. Hortop invites Heppner to attend a City Market meeting to discuss further with merchants within City Market.

Murray shares that the Delta College Planetarium is open on Sundays for one month each year and has previously conducted a survey in which the public said Sunday's were the second most desired day to be open, after Saturday's. King shared that My Secret Garden regularly has its highest revenue density days on Sunday's. Heppner agrees that other stores must have successful revenue days as well and shares that he initially wasn't open on Sunday himself, but realized it was an opportunity since he still pays rent for Sundays.

Heppner suggested putting a survey out to the public as soon as possible to get the ball rolling on this. Maxwell says we could have it sent out next week. Heppner reiterates this will give hard data for the Subcommittee to approach merchants with opposition. Judd suggests capturing data from businesses already open on Sundays and share success stories.

Heppner says business attaching their names to a campaign will hold them accountable to continue the program. Horwath suggests having each of the businesses run sponsored ads promoting Sunday hours. Heppner suggests creating a logo and collective messaging for every participant to use. Bacigalupo suggests creating window signs for merchants that participate as well.

A Taste of Downtown Bay City

Maxwell shared with the committee that A Taste of Downtown Bay City event, held on Saturday, August 24th was a success and had a fantastic turnout. 712 tickets were sold, which was higher than the previous year. Maxwell also explained the Noon-4pm window was a nice "sweet spot" and worked better than previous year. The DMB is excited to see this event continue to grow in the future, and has scheduled next years event for August 22nd.

Sundays in the City

Maxwell wants to begin planning the new Santa's Arrival festival. This event has always had a large audience, and wants to provide more after the lighting of the tree. The current idea is to close water street between 5th and 6th to have food trucks and hot beverages, not having the same cuisine as nearby restaurants. The desire is to have Art Bissonnette stick around to DJ the rest of the night, since he already is there for the tree lighting. Maxwell also suggested games and activities for kids and families, Judd suggests reaching out to Studio 23 for assistance and ideas. The Downtown Management Board will be obtaining temporary liquor licenses for the Drydock bar during the event in Unity Park, to provide additional amenities for adults.

Strong asks about having carriage rides during Sundays in the City going until the advertised 4pm, rather than stopping them sooner. Bacigalupo agrees, citing movie goers let out around 3 and miss their opportunity, assuming it goes later. Maxwell will discuss pricing for another hour with Mid Michigan Carriage Rides.

Other

Bacigalupo shares that DryDock has been successful in its early openings, having around 250 people per night.

Murray asks the board for recent social media marketing trends. King points out that Facebook now charges more for advertising, where Instagram and Google have yielded better results for My Secret Garden. Judd agrees, adding Facebook is still priority for advertising events. King suggests making sure it's a good post to boost, and then targeting a smaller audience. Hortop suggests attending "Community Think Tank" meetings at City Office on Tuesdays, where attendees share best practice advice. Judd suggests hosting an after-hours event to get Merchants together to create sense of community within Downtown. Maxwell will research past formats on what was previously presented, etc.

The Marketing and Events Subcommittee will meet next on October 25th at 8:30am.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 am.

Respectively Submitted,



Matthew Kowalski
Administrative/Marketing Specialist