Visit Portland Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes | May 6, 2026

In attendance: Lynn Tillotson, Dave Page, Kate McDonough, Michael Erickson, Sarah Dobbins, Sam Brown, Topaz Smith, David Turin, Marcin Gorski, Natalie Bogart

Zoom: Dave Largen, Amy Tolk, John Schultzel

Absent: Matt Nolan, Casey Oakes, Dena Libner

Meeting began at 9 am.

Portland Tourism Development District Renewal
Lynn Tillotson reported that the City of Portland's Housing and Economic Development Committee voted unanimously on April 21 to advance the district renewal to the full City Council. The committee recognized Visit Portland's progress on three priorities identified during the prior year's review: publishing Board minutes on the district website, continuing inclusive marketing, and expanding workforce development and industry education. The City Council vote had not yet been scheduled.

Staffing
Visit Portland created a Project Coordinator position to manage project timelines and coordinate work between the Marketing and Partnership teams. Zoe Zimba was scheduled to begin on May 18.

Partnership
Through the reporting date, new partnership revenue totaled $42,925 toward the fiscal year goal of $47,000. The value of partnerships that had not renewed totaled $37,610. The board discussed developing a partner survey.

Destination Summit and Community Engagement
Approximately 250 people attended the April 8 Destination Summit at the University of Southern Maine. During the event, Visit Portland presented Portland's Tripadvisor Best of the Best award to the Mayor. Staff reported plans to move future summits to the fall and devote more time in the spring to community volunteer efforts, including the Greater Portland Pick-Up. The board fully agreed.

Visitor Research and Hotel Performance
The Maine Office of Tourism's 2025 research showed that Greater Portland welcomed approximately 2.7 million visitors. Visitor spending totaled $1.8 billion and supported 19,500 jobs. In March 2026, Portland hotel occupancy reached 58.9%, a 1% increase from the prior year. The average daily room rate declined 7.5% to $122.17, and revenue per available room declined 6.6% to $71.92.

Visitor Services and Publications
The Ocean Gateway Visitor Information Center reported increased weekend traffic and a total of 33

volunteers. Waterfront park construction prompted the cancellation of the annual Frontline training event. Nine partners offered tours so visitor information ambassadors could learn about local experiences firsthand. The 2026 Visitor's Guide was available for distribution. Staff also reported progress on a digital Event Planner's Guide and a redesigned regional map with a QR code linking to an interactive version.

Marketing and Communications
Winter Weekdays concluded on April 30 with more than 100 offers across Maine. Staff planned to survey participating businesses about their experience. Work continued on the Visit Portland website and the Lightkeepers campaign, which featured local artists, business owners and hospitality professionals through film, photography and interviews. The website redesign was targeted for completion by the end of June.

Meetings and International Sales
Visit Portland promoted Greater Portland to meeting planners through targeted advertising and virtual tours that allowed planners to evaluate hotel meeting spaces remotely. Tours had been completed for 16 of the district's 23 hotels. At the Discover New England Summit, staff held 37 appointments with representatives from 17 countries. Portland also hosted eight international media representatives before the summit.

Cruise and Sports Tourism
Preliminary findings from the cruise visitor study indicated that eight in ten respondents were highly satisfied with their visit and nine in ten visited downtown Portland. Respondents identified public restrooms and clearer transportation information as areas for improvement. The economic impact portion of the study was still pending. Staff also reported on planning for Portland's proposed role in the 2028 Clipper Round the World Race, including coordination of hotel room blocks and event venues.

Workforce Development
Visit Portland worked with the University of Southern Maine's advisory committee as the university continued its Tourism and Hospitality program and incorporated business courses into the curriculum. Discussions with Junior Achievement and Workforce Portland focused on hospitality career opportunities and ways to connect employers with regional adult education programs.

Upcoming Meetings
The Finance Committee was scheduled to meet May 22 at 9:00 a.m. The next Board meeting was scheduled for June 24 at 9:00 a.m. and was to include a budget review.

Board discussion
The board discussed evolving the board reports to focus on future efforts rather than reporting on items already completed. A meeting will be scheduled in June to discuss how we want to move forward with board meetings and reporting.

Meeting concluded at 11am