

Visit Portland – PTDD Board

Meeting Minutes – September 24, 2025

Attendance

- **In-Person:** Matthew Nolan, Michael Erickson, Natalie Bogart, Greg Watson, Sam Brown, David Turin, Casey Oakes, John Schultzel
- **Remote:** Topaz Smith, Scott Bourne, Kevin Pagnano
- **Staff:** Lynn Tillotson, Kate McDonough, Dave Page, Amy Tolk

Board Governance

- **Meeting Schedule:** The board voted to shift to **bi-monthly in-person meetings** alternating with Zoom meetings (held at 10:00 a.m. following Chamber meetings). Quarterly finance committee meetings will continue, along with regular marketing committee participation in Madden Media review sessions.
- **Board Terms:** The board reviewed upcoming term expirations for members first appointed in November 2023. It was agreed to maintain the current term structure for now and revisit staggering terms next year.
- **Bylaw Amendment:** The board approved a change redefining “large-capacity hotels” as properties with 130 or more rooms (previously 140). This adjustment allows more properties to qualify for hotel board representation. Lynn will prepare the bylaw update for an electronic vote.

Financial Review

- Visit Portland engaged Philbrook & Associates to conduct a financial review of accounting processes to ensure best practices. A kickoff meeting is scheduled before the end of September, with monthly follow-up check-ins thereafter.

Staffing & Operations

- **Digital Marketing Transition:** Kirstie Archambault continues part-time (10–15 hours/week) to assist with the website rebuild before fully transitioning out.
- **New Hire: Whitney Riley** joined Visit Portland as Media Coordinator and will be mentored by Kirstie through the fiscal year. Whitney recently relocated to Portland from New York after graduating from Hamilton College.

Community Engagement

- **Hearts of Pine Partnership:** Visit Portland and the Portland Regional Chamber co-hosted a successful VIP event during a Hearts of Pine match, with enthusiasm to repeat next year.
- **Hear Here at Merrill Auditorium:** Visit Portland partnered with Creative Portland to provide tickets to staff, board, and underserved community members for the local arts showcase.

Market & Industry Updates

- **Zartico Impact Report:**
 - Lodging occupancy reached 94%, up 3% year-over-year, with ADR at \$329 and average stay value at \$588.
 - Out-of-state travelers represented 86% of visitors, mainly from Boston, New York, and Washington, D.C.
 - Arts and entertainment spending rose 42% year-over-year, reflecting Portland’s growing cultural appeal.
 - The board discussed leveraging these insights through new “creative weekend” experience packages connecting arts and dining.

- **CoStar Trends:** August occupancy reached 91.5%, ADR \$328, and RevPAR \$300. Lynn will explore additional benchmarking tools for expanded trend comparison.

Marketing & Communications

- **Public Relations:** Portland was featured in major national outlets, including *Travel + Leisure*, *National Geographic*, *AFAR*, and *Sierra Magazine*.
- **Brand Research:** The resident brand survey (616 responses) is complete; the visitor survey is underway with results expected mid-October.
- **Website Rebuild:** Madden Media was selected to develop Visit Portland's new website to align seamlessly with the brand refresh, ensuring a cohesive visitor experience. Launch is expected within nine months.
- **Diversity Marketing:** Portland's inclusive marketing work was highlighted by Madden Media's Creative Director in a national client presentation and blog, "*Multicultural Travel Marketing is Broken, and Costly.*"

Cruise & Meetings

- **Cruise Ship Impact Study:** A Maine Office of Tourism grant funded an economic impact study of cruise visitation, conducted by Digital Research Inc. Results expected early 2026.
- **Meetings Marketing:**
 - Campaigns target planners in Boston and New York via digital channels and industry media.
 - Q1 FY26 generated 92 leads and 5 confirmed bookings.
 - Meeting planner newsletter open rates continue to exceed industry averages.
 - Visit Portland has completed 8 of 23 hotel Matterport virtual tours, with more scheduled this fall.

District Communications

- **Annual Report:** Digital copies available at tourismdistrict207.com/reports. Hard copies have been hand-delivered to all district hotels.
- **Public Minutes:** July minutes have been posted online at <https://tourismdistrict207.com/meetings-1>
- **District Newsletter:** A new quarterly newsletter now keeps hotels, city leaders, and stakeholders informed on PTDD activity and marketing performance.

City Council Updates

- Lynn met with Councilor Regina Phillips to review Visit Portland's diverse marketing efforts and clarify misinformation related to recent public comments from Black Travel Maine.
- The Tourism District Renewal was unanimously approved by the City Council on August 11, 2025, following several rescheduled hearings.

Events & Programs

- **Upcoming Events:**
 - Sept 25 – Partner Mixer at Rock Row
 - Oct 16 – Eggs & Issues: "*Seriously, Another Hotel?*" featuring John Schultzel, Jim Brady, and Matt Arrants
 - Oct 29 – Maine Tourism Association Workforce Summit
 - Nov 5 – Sales & Marketing Meeting, Nonesuch Brewing
 - Nov 13 – Partner Mixer at Bissell Brothers
 - Nov 17 – Hospitality Maine Summit
- **Winter Promotion:** The Winter Wednesdays program will return, potentially expanding into Winter Weekdays with hotel packages, entertainment, local radio, and social media campaigns.

Meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.