

Oak Park Farmers' Market Commission – July 14, 2010 Minutes

Present: Chair Melissa Wittenberg; Commissioners Sam Dali, Frank Pond, Rebecca Braslow, Robert Melican, Staff Liaison Mike Charley; Manager Meredith Conn; Assistant Manager Letitia Olmsted; CIC Liaison Annabel Abraham

Absent: Commissioners Nancy Fjortoft, Grant Jones, Warren Bakker; Stacey Jutila; Vendor Liaison Jim Vitalo, Church Liaison Jeff Petertil

Annabel Abraham of the Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC) attended the meeting to observe and report on the activities of the Farmers' Market Committee to the CIC.

Minutes:

The June minutes were unanimously approved; motioned by Rebecca Braslow and seconded by Frank Pond.

Public Comments:

The 4 attendees introduced themselves:

Molly & Simeon Carson. Molly is currently a market volunteer that is considering applying to become a Commissioner.

Craig & Olivia Smith. Olivia is a volunteer at the YMCA and she considering applying to become a Commissioner.

Survey Discussion and Attendance Report:

Robert Melican reviewed a handout on the attendance sampling study conducted on June 12, 2010. The estimated number of attendees was 3,600. The methodology was discussed and as well as the appropriate location to take the count at the back gate. Robert explained the rationale for sampling by the youth selling water at the back gate versus at the gate for the parking lot. He noticed that he was counting persons who entered at the front and went right for donuts. When they returned again to the market they were being counted at the back gate. This was not an issue with low volume of persons at 7:30am but could be with higher volume of customers at 10am or 11am.

Robert handed out a draft version of a customer survey that will be conducted on July 17th with the assistance of the Assistant Market Manager. Additional categories were added to the question of, which vendors customers purchased most from, most often. An additional question was added: "What category of vendor would you like to have more of?" A revised draft will be forwarded to commissioners on Thursday for final comment before conducting the sample.

Manager's Report:

Meredith received a note from a founding member of the Farmers' Market who recently visited the market on a return to Oak Park. He was impressed with the vibrancy and growth of the market over the past 35 years.

Letitia informed the committee that there have been issues with the proper marking of sales on the inventory sheet resulting in the tallies being over and under on some weeks. A discussion ensued on improvements to the process. Sam suggested marking each item sold with a sticker to be placed on the tally sheet when the item is sold. The discussion concluded with the agreement that the tally sheet will be simplified. The sheet will now require Volunteers and Commissioners to only mark quantity of the type of product sold and size, but not the color.

Meredith asked the commission to inform the Village Manager of the need to use the market's approved 2010 budget funds on farm visits. The Village's ban on unnecessary travel has halted visits in the current fiscal year. In past years, the practice was to visit a farm every three years. Approximately five years ago the schedule was moved to farmers receiving a visit every other year. Meredith would not be able to conduct the approximately 13 visits that should have occurred this year. Her estimate is that she could conduct 3 to 5 this year. Farm visits are considered non-essential by the Village administration because visits are not mandated in the Farmer's Market Commission ordinance. A note was made to include this issue in the next work plan. The Commission is considering writing a letter to the Village Board asking to reinstate a limited number of visits for the current fiscal year. Meredith will calculate the cost of conducting the limited number of visits for inclusion in the letter.

TastefulLife asked Meredith's permission to sell brownies and two other pastry items. The Chair reminded everyone that vendors are not allowed to sell items beyond their primary purpose and the most pastry types they could sell are two.

Staff Liaison Report:

A budget update was circulated.

Mike reported on the numerous discussions he has engaged in with Village finance staff on leasing a wireless point of service device from US Bank. Mike will be contacting the Logan Square Chamber of Commerce for advice on completing the LINK process. The Logan Square Chamber of Commerce has used a wireless point of service device for the past few years and has found it to be a vital aspect of their market.

Chairperson's Report:

The Chair is expecting all available Commissioners to assist with the corn roast on August 21st. Meredith informed the Committee that the OP Fire Department will assist the Committee.

The August meeting will discuss next year's work plan.

Church Liaison:

Not present; no report

Merchandise and Sales:

Orders were placed for 200 canvas bags, 82 t-shirts and 100 backpacks. The backpacks will be sold at \$6.

PR Committee:

The advertisement for the Farmers' Market is on the Lake Street Theater marquee this week. Sam is going to develop a work plan for the PR committee on changes to the website and what the market could put out on its own website.

New Business:

Meredith raised the issue of the installation of electricity at the market through the installation of outlets at the base of lamp posts. Vendors have increased awareness of meeting health code requirements for food temperature. The availability of electricity will provide for refrigeration to meet this requirement. The Chair will add this item to the work plan and budget for next year.

Frank Pond reported on his attendance at a Village commission chairperson's meeting. He attended in Melissa's absence on June 30, 2010. The meeting reviewed: the new work plan template, 4th of July planning, Day in Our Village and committee budgets. The Farmers' Market has already converted to the new template. One chairperson made the recommendation that committees explore means of promoting synergies and collaborating on projects. Frank believes this has merit and thought we should explore the suggestion.

Garbage is no longer being pick-up on Saturday afternoon. As part of Village cut backs it is now picked-up on Monday morning.

Old Business: None

Meeting adjourned at 9pm.