

FARMERS' MARKET COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

January 12, 2022, 7:00 pm

Conducted Remotely

Commission Members Present: Chairperson Rachel Hahs, Dominic Cianciolo, Jessica Green, Myndi DeVore, Dina Ross, Jill Stewart, Katie Weaver, Liz Stolfa

Commission Members Not Present: Julia Knier

Staff Liaisons Present: Cameron Davis, Kathy Jacob, Dr. Theresa Chapple-McGruder, Sara Semelka, Cindy Hansen

Others Present: Church Liaison Leslie Sutphen

Call to Order: Chairperson Hahs called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

Agenda Approval: A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Approval of Minutes: For the September 29 meeting, Chairperson Hahs noted that Dandy's Farm should be Vangies Farm and requested tracked changes be removed. With those corrections, a motion was made and seconded to approve the September 29, 2021 minutes. For the October 13 meeting, Chairperson Hahs requested an addition to the pie bake-off that we discussed not to schedule the event on a holiday weekend. With that addition, a motion was made and seconded to approve the October 13, 2021 minutes.

Public Comment: Staff Liaison Davis stated no public comments were submitted.

Chairperson's Report: Chairperson Hahs seeks assistance in reviewing the Market's operating rules to see if any language needs to be updated. Commissioner Ross offered to assist. Staff Liaison Jacob will circulate the rules of operation.

Staff Liaison Davis stated that staffing of the Market will transition from Development Customer Services back to the Health Department. Interviews for the new Market Manager have included Staff Liaisons Chapple and Semelka. Staff Liaison Hansen will take minutes and Staff Liaisons Davis and Jacob will transition off. Our farmersmarket@oak-park.us email will transition over to the Health Department.

Chairperson Hahs thanked Staff Liaisons Davis and Jacob for their work the past two years and their role in moving the Market in 2020. Staff Liaison Davis said it has been a wonderful experience and they will volunteer in 2022.

Committee and Project Reports:

Volunteers: Commissioner DeVore said once we confirm dates for our spring events, it will be good for us to reach out to volunteers earlier than we did last spring.

Communications: Commissioner Stewart reported that we've put together an RFP for redesigning the logo, which we would like to roll out this spring.

Commissioner Knier had suggested the artist be a resident. Commissioner Stewart is in contact with a Facebook group of marketers in Oak Park. We are moving forward with our modest budget and will seek several submissions. We will present our choice to the commissioners and then implement it for the new season. Staff Liaison Davis affirmed that the logo is budgeted in this year's budget.

Children's Events: Commissioner Ross stated that we need a Market Manager and calendar in order to suggest dates, so as soon as that happens, she will follow up.

Sustainability: Staff Liaison Davis reported that the Village has a new waste hauler vendor that will use easily identifiable containers for composting and recycling, which will eliminate the need for us to tape signs to containers.

Pilgrim Church Liaison Report: Representative Sutphen reported they will have a doughnut meeting next month. Their capital campaign to increase the kitchen will not affect this summer but they are planning a full commercial kitchen with a doughnut fryer so doing food at the market will be possible. Pilgrim is a green church that does a lot of composting so it will be good to know the new vendor.

They would like to return to having musicians where people congregate. From the Yelp reviews, it seems everyone likes having the tables and musicians and coffee and doughnuts there.

Jeff mentioned that he would like help analyzing the market because their numbers were a bit down. Staff Liaison confirmed that the statistics and sales tax reports will be coming back from the vendor survey. We will not see individual reports, but we will be able to see what kind of increases occurred.

We expect big increases because price increases affect the sales taxes paid. Most vendors reported a much better year than 2020. Representative Sutphen said the Church did great compared to 2020, but there has been a downtrend since 2017. Staff Liaison Davis responded that sales tax data prior to 2020 was not collected, so we have 2020 going forward. Staff Liaison Davis will send a memo to the Commission.

Village Staff Update: Staff Liaison Davis reported that the vendor application was sent to existing vendors early as promised. Some minor adjustments were made, but much of the information is important for a new Market Manager and staff liaisons to know.

The opening and closing dates are posted online and we will post the vendor application soon, now that existing vendors have received it. Once the application is posted, Health Department staff can direct people to the website and rules of operation. The list of existing vendors is currently posted on the website.

The calls we receive this time of year are not typically from producers. For example, we have a new hardware business who buys plants from a wholesaler and sells them at farmers' markets. We want to give them an opportunity to apply so the new Market Manager and staff can respond accordingly. We ask screening questions and then explain our rules. Staff Liaison Davis will recommend that the new manager create a one-pager for potential applicants and maintain a list of everyone who contacts us.

Regarding the Market Manager search, interviews are complete, Dr. Chapple has made a recommendation, and HR is proceeding with background checks. We hope to have hired a new Market Manager by our next meeting. The position is available to start on January 17th so we hope to start not too long after that.

The applicants all had either direct farmers' market experience or considerable event programming. The new manager will work on agreements, deal with the applications, and establish an events schedule with the commissioners.

Old Business:

New Market Manager: Chairperson Hahs shared the work plan with Commissioners Cianciolo, Knier, and Ross to fill out so we have a record of what they are, who is responsible, if there is equipment needed, and if there are documents that could be helpful. She is putting those responses together to share at the February meeting.

Adjourn: With no new business, Chairperson Hahs adjourned the meeting at 7:42 pm.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 9, 2022