

FARMERS' MARKET COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
February 23,2021- Special Meeting
7:00 PM
Conducted Remotely

Commission Present: Laura Lencioni (Chair), Julia Knier, Jill Stewart, Liz Stolfa, Rachel Hahs, Jessica Green, Myndi Devore

Commission Not-Present: Dina Ross, Katie Weaver, Dominic Cianciolo

Village Trustee Present: Arti Walker-Peddakotla.

Staff Liaison Present: Cameron Davis.

Others Present: Vendor Liaison: Frank Damiano, CIC Liaison: Frank Pond

- 1) Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lencioni at 7:03 pm.
- 2) Agenda Approval: A motion, to accept the agenda as presented, was made, seconded and approved.
- 3) Public Comment: Chairperson Lencioni asked Staff Liaison Davis if any written public comment had been submitted. Davis stated that no public comment had been submitted, per the directions provided on the agenda document.
- 4) Approval of Minutes: A motion was made to approve the January 26, 2021 minutes. The motion was seconded and approved with one adjustment that will be made by Davis regarding attendance.
- 5) Chair Report (Laura Lencioni) – Welcomed new Commissioner Green, Commissioner Green was a volunteer in Aggregation last year. Chair Lencioni asked Commissioner Green to introduce herself to the Commission.

Commissioner Green stated she is excited to be part of the Commission and that she is relatively new to Oak Park, Green stated that she became a volunteer at the market to get to know the community and be more involved. She is looking forward to being part of the Commission.

Chair Lencioni mentioned that the Commission now has ten Commissioners with one additional opening. Chair Lencioni requested that the Commissioners review the Farmers' Market ordinance and current workplan and other documents on the Oak Park website (www.oak-park.us).

Chair Lencioni remarked that the Commission learned a lot during the pandemic especially on how to operate a safe market. She stated that she sees 2021 as a transitional Market year, not fully back to a normal operation. Chair Lencioni stated that the Commission needs to be vigilant and make sure the mission of the Market is maintained. It is the historical character and spirit of the event that makes the Oak Park Farmers' Market such a beloved local institution. Lencioni reiterated the importance of a 24-week market and believes that the 24-week season should be included in the market application.

Chair Lencioni stated that she knows former Market Manager Colleen McNichols will not be taking the Market manager position in 2021. Lencioni stated that she wants to know if there is additional information that the Acting Public health Director needs to know about in order to create the 2021 operational order for the Market.

Lencioni continued that in order for the vendors to be profitable, they need to sell product for a full growing season and that losing one part of the season equals lost profits. In an industry that has low profit margin, high risk due to weather, etc. it can be devastating to lose selling days. Part of the mission of Oak Park's Market is to support local farmers.

Lencioni expressed concern about the delay in getting vendor applications distributed to vendors. Her next point is that it's already late in the year in getting vendor applications out. She stated that farmers have already planted and purchased expensive seed and supplies and they need certainty regarding oak Park's market. She understands that the desire is to wait until all of the correct information is available to be sent out to vendors but encouraged staff to distribute the applications. A simple email to the vendors assuring the market is happening and that Oak Park is preparing for them would mitigate a lot of concern and reduce the chance that they will go elsewhere.

Lencioni then discussed the new Market Manager. She expressed her concern about the lack of institutional knowledge about the Market. She wants to hear from Davis about how the Village insure that the history, culture and structure will be communicated to new Manager. She expressed her opinion that the next Market Manager have training not only in the day to day running of the market but also on Markets' principles.

Lencioni asked if the Assistant market managers from previous years have been contacted to work the Market. They have knowledge on how to set up the Market. As mentioned at the last meeting that it is advantageous to return vendors to their former place in the church parking lot. Lencioni urges the Village to use map shared at the last meeting.

- 6) Farmers' Market Staff Liaison Report (Cameron Davis, Asst. Director, Development Customer Services Department) – Davis addressed the Chairs questions. He stated that no one is currently advocating for a Market shorter than the traditional schedule, per ordinance.

Vendors recently received an email about the 2021 Market along with the 2020 vendor survey. Some vendor survey responses have already been received. Davis hopes to have the tabulated survey results available for the Commission to review in mid-to-late March. It will depend on how quickly the responses arrive. He will send out a reminder to vendors within the next two weeks.

HR just informed Davis that Colleen McNichols will not return as the Market Manager. HR and the Village manager's Office handles hiring for this position not Davis. HR does have the name of the previous Assistant Market Managers. Davis does not get involved in hiring. However, he knows that the hiring of this position is a priority for the manager's office.

Commissioner Knier questioned whether Colleen McNichols was told in December that the position was available. Commissioner Knier stated that the previous Health Director always made sure to let Colleen know in December and get her under contract. She questioned where was the ball dropped that Colleen was not informed, there is a lack of continuity? She asked what happened and feels there is a lack of transparency.

Davis stated that the “ball was not dropped” and this has nothing to do with not being transparent. The previous manager was offered the position and she declined. It was her decision. Again, Davis stated that he is not the person who hires the Manager and is not involved in that process.

Davis did agree that it is important the new Market manager is hired with a quick on boarding, that will need to involve him and closely work with Chairperson Lencioni and potentially other Commission members. Lencioni and Davis can discuss how that can happen as the Village manager’s Office gets closer to hiring a Market Manager. Position descriptions for the Manager and Assistant managers have been updated to include the online ordering and pick-up program.

Davis reported that the dues to the IL Farmers’ Market Association will be paid. Also, the Village Board has an agenda item before it that will codify the online ordering pick-up program, plus establish a \$3 administration fee per order. This fee will help to make the program self-supporting, as requested by the Commission.

Davis stated that vendors have not yet received the Market application but that he hopes it can be distributed by late February or early March. An e-mail will be sent to vendors letting them know the application is coming.

- 7) Church Liaison Report (Jeff Petertil) Not present
- 8) Vendor Liaison Report (Frank Damiano) – Damiano just hear that Colleen McNichols will not be returning in 2021. He mentioned that some vendors had challenges with the manager last year but that he had no issues. Damiano mentioned that he does seven markets a year and so far has only received three applications. Would help vendors to know when the market will start. Cam and Frank will discuss what to communicate to vendors.
- 9) Committee/Project Reports
 - a) Aggregation: Glad to hear Aggregation is part of job description of new manager. Chair Lencioni asked do they anticipate will it be like last year in terms of volunteers Hahs responded that it depends on where the program is located. Hahs would like to make the pickup time shorter for less impact on volunteers. Hahs and Davis will meet at OPRF to discuss on how to potentially streamline the online ordering and pick-up program. Hahs will develop different scenarios for the Village manager’s consideration and report back.
 - b) Communications: Commission Stewart. COVID has changed her mind on the idea to feature vendors and she is looking for new approach. Stewart will report back on March 10th with new ideas
 - c) Volunteers: Lencioni mentioned that the commission needs someone to take on the sub-committee. Everything is set-up by Jen’s system. Commissioner Devore said she

would help as more than one person is needed to share the burden. Commissioner Green volunteered her help along with Commissioner Devore. Davis shared that Mindy Agnew has volunteered to help explain how the volunteer system works.

- d) Sustainability: Commissioner Knier spoke about “Go Green Days” and said further information would be provided at the march meeting. She stated that there is a lot of interest in sustainability. She sees a possible 2021 focus on plastic consumption reduction and composting.

Sustainability: Commissioner Knier has been speaking with different organizations over the last couple of weeks and they are eager to find out if we are able to have “Go Green Days.” Cam it sounds like we will have to wait until the next meeting in March for further information. Davis agreed and hopes to know more by the next meeting. Commissioner Knier will wait until then. She shared that there is a lot of interest by different organizations in sustainability and they are more broadly focused on plastic consumption, which has gone through the roof due to the Pandemic, and also composability. Education and outreach at bins like previous years. Will wait on “Go Green” until more info.

- e) The sales of Merchandise was discussed. The health department order will discuss if the Commission is able to sell merchandise. Davis suggested creating a setup display of merchandise where the customer could order t-shirts and the merchandise is sent to them at a later date.
- f) Arti Walker-Peddakotla stated that the goal of the Village is to return the Market to the church parking lot. She mentioned that she is also advocating for full market season. Earlier in the meeting, Trustee Walker-Peddakotla stated that she put a link to the Farmers’ market ordinance in the meeting chat box.
- g) For future meetings, please respond regarding your attendance after receiving meeting email.

11 Old Business: None

12) New Business:

13) Adjourn: A motion was made, seconded and approved to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Next Meeting March 10 2021, 7:00 p.m.