

Bloomington Community Farmers' Market Advisory Council

Monday, August 20, 2012
5:00 pm

Parks Conference Room

Advisory Council Members Present

Bruce McCallister (Chair), Janice Lilly (Vice Chair), Geoffrey Grodner, Julia DeBruicker Valliant, Sarah Ryterband, Bobbi Boos, Michael Salem, Daniel Young, Susan Welsand.

Market/City Staff

Marcia Veldman, Les Coyne and Robin Hobson.

Public

No members of the public were present.

1. Call to Order

Janice called the meeting to order.

2. Approval of Minutes

The April 2012 minutes were approved.

3. Public Comment

None

4. Old Business

A. Review Changes Made to the 2012 Season

1. Addition of Soap to the Full Season – Three vendors regularly bring soap to Market this season under the new rules. Plans will be to continue as is for 2013.
2. CSA Rule – Three vendors were impacted. Bobbi was one of these vendors. She reported four CSA boxes she distributes contain products not produced by her farm and those shares are given out from her van in the parking lot. She added that she never sees those customers in the Market making other purchases as she used to when they picked up at her stand. Jennie Hoene, another vendor who previously distributed shares from her stand, now only includes items she produces in shares given out from her stall. Teresa Birtles distributes shares from her van in the CFC lot during market as shares sometimes contain products she did not produce. Staff recommended this practice continues in 2013.
3. Info Alley Fee – Sarah expressed that non-profits are often run on volunteer efforts and may find the fees to participate in Info Alley take away from their ability to carry out their activities. Also, the free area is not indicated by signage so visitors know there is more info activity in that area. Her opinion is that there is not the variety of non-profits participating this year compared to years past and that she has fielded some complaints from non-profit representatives about the issue. She requested revisions to the current policy in light of these concerns. Janice asked if staff have received feedback from any groups. Marcia said has not heard directly from anyone, but indirectly has heard that Lotus personnel have expressed concern, the Orchard Board discussed the issue during meetings and Shelli Yoder's representative also gave feedback about fees. In 2011, there were 82 groups signed up and in 2012 there are 81 to date. Of these, 26 have participated in both years. Marcia looked at who did not re-up and none of these seemed to stay away due to fee institution. Revenue is \$6,580 to date; \$3,800 was projected as staff assumed a

drop in participation due to fees. No data is available for past years, but it seems Info Alley is being used more than in the past. Of this season's 81 groups, about 50 are non-business, 23 non-profit and 8 political. Marcia agreed signage would be a good idea directing traffic to the free area and this will happen. Julia recalled the strategy to increase Market revenue via fees and this seems to be working as planned. Sarah appealed that since the Market has exceeded expected revenues from info groups and that non-profit fees could be halved to increase non-profit participation. Variations to current practice were discussed to make non-profit participation cheaper and easier. Geoff commented that staff time will have to increase to manage adjustments. Demand for the reserved component of Info Alley is high for 2013 and there will need to be more process around reservations for next season. Bruce suggested a survey of participants on record. Les said the Park Board is open to considering changes for non-profits.

4. Addition of Home Processed Poultry to HBV Addendum – Two vendors now sell home-processed poultry at Market. Temperature monitoring is not up to staff as determined by City Legal.
5. Busking Policy – Geoff inquired about the policy. Marcia recounted why specific locations and need for policy were identified and that a task group assisted in forming policy. No fees are charged for individual or group busking spaces. If concerns are voiced staff investigates and reiterates policy, otherwise musicians are on the honor system. Marcia requested that vendors with concerns communicate with staff, customers and the musicians.

5. New Business

A . Preliminary Consideration of Proposed Changes for 2013

1. Vendor Point System – Susan received feedback from vendors who do not understand the points system when they lose space reservation ranking. Marcia reviewed the concept that attendance in the three most recent years is valued more than that from years prior. This acknowledges long-time vendors and rewards current vendors. Marcia is happy to go over the system with any vendors who have trouble understanding and to share a sheet to calculate points, which Marcia will send out to the group. Susan repeated her request for vendors who attend every market in a season to be rewarded above the maximum number of points. She proposed they receive one extra point. Janice pointed out that feedback given by vendors about the proposed policy of vendors receiving maximum points for a season while having a specified number of absences was overwhelmingly supported by those surveyed. Sarah voiced two allowable absences seems reasonable as opposed to the 4 or 5 currently in place as some vendors may be working very hard to get to market and others may just want to put their feet up. Geoff proposed that perfect attendance is awarded by one additional point for the following season, but does not carry forward afterwards or that it is used to break a tie with other vendors who have the same number of points otherwise. Marcia presented figures from 2010: 27 days in May-Oct season had 27 vendors attended all days, 34 vendors received the maximum number of 22 points for attending and 91 vendors participated in 21 or fewer markets. In 2012: 26 days in season; 20 vendors attended every market; 41 vendors received the maximum 22 points; and 90 vendors received 21 points or less. There was a discussion about re-surveying the vendors about their feelings about the policy. Marcia noted that changes to the points system, or even a survey question about this may cause concern among farm vendors; Les agreed that caution should be used when approaching this topic. A motion was carried to vote on surveying the vendors' satisfaction about of the number of days able to be missed and still receive the maximum points for the season. Vote was 5 in favor and 2 opposed with one abstention. Marcia and Sarah agreed to cooperate on

drafting the question which would be phrased as originating from the FMAC members and not from market staff.

2. Farm Vendor Fees – Marcia does not plan to recommend a farm vendor fee increase for 2013 given staff anticipate the cost recovery goal will be met, the poor growing year and the number of recent years that fees have increased. Susan brought the question of the reduced senior rate applying to those seniors who wish to bring younger helpers. Probably this would increase the number of vendors who qualify for the senior rate. The policy as it stands today has been in place for at least 16 years. Bruce felt it best if it is left clear cut. Les suggested that this be examined next year. A motion was made to vote on not raising vendor fees in 2013 and it passed unanimously.

C. Farm Investigation Process

Staff and City officials recently received four anonymous postcards alleging that the Market staff has overlooked contract violations on the part of vendors who are not growing what they sell. Amish growers are singled out in particular. Copies of messages were distributed to the group. Marcia recapped the process by which allegations may lead to farm investigation: anonymous complaints are disregarded; vendors may confidentially discuss their concern with staff (they will remain confidential unless the matter proceeds to litigation) and staff warrant it valid to pursue; or the staff notice something to arouse suspicion. Of the 5 Amish produce growers who regularly come to Market, 2 of these have been inspected and were found to be producing more than they bring to Market and one has been visited for other reasons than inspection and was found to have sound operations. The next Market Beet will include a reminder that anonymous complaints are not valid as well past inspection results.

E. Vendor Parking Outside the Market

Two vendors have noted that some vendors and info tablers choose to park close to the Market despite suggestions from staff to leave nearby spaces to customers. Staff cannot enforce this request as the City does not own the parking lots; the only recourse is to ask vendors and tablers to honor it.

D. Dog Signage

There are currently 6 locations where signage is posted about pets not permitted in Market. One will be shifted from its location on the Showers Plaza to the south entrance to Market from the B-Line Trail.

E. Friends of the Market

The Bloomington Parks Foundation will be launching the FOM during the Holiday Market. Premiums will include totes, mugs, heirloom tomato-seeded cards from Twisted Limb for different donation levels. Bruce asks how this money will be spent. The Foundation decides – staff will submit a request for reimbursement for expenses incurred for tastings, educational and entertainment costs. The new logo for the Market and FOM await final approval.

F. Adjournment

These minutes respectfully submitted by Robin Hobson