

**Bloomington Community Farmers Market
Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
September 10, 2018**

Advisory Council Members Present

Kathy Aiken, Carmen Siering, Cortland Carrington, Bruce McCallister, Becky Vadas and Leslie Sommer.

Staff Present

Marcia Veldman, Sarah Mullin and Kiran Singh.

Members of the Public Present

George Hegeman

1. Call to Order:

Kathy called the meeting to order.

2. Approval of Minutes:

May minutes were approved

3. Public Comment:

A. Info Alley Fee Structure – George Hegeman suggested/requested that the BCFM revisit fee structure for Info Alley. Either a reduced fee or no fee was suggested for organizations working in the public’s interest/non-profits. Currently, groups consist of commercial/for profit, as well as political, governmental, educational and non-profit. Many non-profits have very small budgets and are volunteer run. The current rate of \$350/season or \$10/day is high for some groups.

Kiran Singh supplied some supplemental materials with more information on Info Alley groups and fees.

After the comment period, the committee discussed the matter. Limiting Info Alley participation to non-profits has been discussed in the past. Some organizations don’t have an official non-profit status. Historically, for-profits don’t attend too frequently. Currently, all participants pay \$10 registration + \$10 per week. There is also a free area, but there is less traffic in that area. If a group pays for the entire season or for the rest of the season, they can reserve an open spot. Otherwise, spots are reserved on a first come-first served basis the day of the event. The BCFM has a 100% cost recovery goal. That is why the fee was instituted. Also, management of Info Alley takes quite a bit of time. A staff member generally answers various questions during the week, responds to emails, manages registration forms and payment, and has to check groups in on Market day and field questions. It was brought up that regardless of the fee, many groups still attend. This year there have been 80+ that have registered. Tabling registration fees at other

community events can be very costly, even for non-profits. This fee is reasonable in comparison, especially having such a large audience of an estimated 6,000 -10,000 people. When compared to Bloomington Winter Farmers Market, groups pay \$5 to be in front of an estimated 500 people vs. \$10 to be in front of 6,000+ people. The Advisory Council decided to vote on the matter. The Advisory Council voted unanimously to keep the fee structure as is, with no opposition.

4. **New Business:**

A. Introductions - Sarah Mullin, new Farmers Market/Community Gardens Specialist introduced herself to the Advisory Council.

B. Parking Concerns – Vendors have heard complaints from customers about parking. The parking garages are free, but are perceived negatively by some customers. Some customers are upset that the Johnson Creamery lot is no longer available. Available lots include lots at Solution Tree (not advertised), CFC and the County, the IU EM-S Lot, and the North Lot, as well as the parking garage. All lots are within one block of the Market. Quarter page parking maps are available at info table. Vendors need maps to share with customers. BCFM staff should let vendors know they are available. Another factor limiting availability of parking spaces is that vendors are still parking in the North lots even though BCFM staff have asked them not to. If a vendor is in a space for 5+ hours, 0 customers can park there. If the space is free, estimated 8 customers can park there during Market. It was mentioned that we could include questions about parking on customer surveys? Pushing the parking garages might be a good idea. Taking cart to parking garage is a barrier. Having a loading zone would be good. Veggie Valet concept. Signs that indicate Free Farmers' Market Parking – current signs in business lots are intimidating. Parking tickets are really expensive. We'd have to check with Solution Tree to see if we can actively advertise parking in their lot.

C. Potential Changes to Farmers' Market Policy

1. *Innovative Farm Vendor Application* – BCFM proposes that if a Innovative Farm contract is approved two years in a row and there are no significant changes to that contract, we can eliminate having the vendor(s) come before the Advisory Council.
2. *Third space in day-vendor lottery* – Vendors who want to rent a third space through the day vendor lottery system currently have to wait until 7:30 am to choose a third space. BCFM proposes that vendors wanting a third space could choose that space in a third round of the lottery that takes place at 6:30 am. This change makes setup more convenient for vendors and doesn't put a burden on the market.
3. *Prepared Food Vendor Fees* – Eric Schedler of Muddy Fork Bakery has submitted a request that the BCFM consider changing the fee structure for Prepared Food Vendors to make their contribution to the Market more balanced. He acknowledged value in subsidizing farm vendors' spaces at the Market. Currently, PFVs pay 10% of gross sales + a \$10 weekly flat fee. Eric's proposal offered various suggestions for fee structure changes. Muddy Fork currently pays over \$10,000 in fees to the Market annually. Removing the \$10 day stall fee for all PFVs would decrease Market income about \$5,000. BCFM would have to find another way to recuperate those costs. Some

Advisory Council members said that 10% of proceeds seems reasonable for exposure to so many customers. The balance between PFVs and farm vendor payments was discussed. It was mentioned that the PFVs don't have as much competition as the farmers, many of whom have similar products. The concept of switching to an application fee as opposed to booth rental was also discussed. Other organizations that are charged a 10% fee by the Parks Department are not also charged a booth fee. Other vendors seem to be okay with the 10% fee so many Advisory Council members suggested that BCFM continue with the same structure. BCFM may still have to increase farm vendor fees because part-time staffing costs are going to increase. Staffing cost increases will add \$2000 to the budget. BCFM is considering an across the board \$1-\$2 per space per week price increase. This would increase revenue by about \$6,000. Kathy mentioned that, similar to parking meter increases, organizations should not want to wait too long to increase fees because then the next rate increase might have to be a significant one. Incremental hikes are easier psychologically. The Council discussed the possibility of a vendor stall rate increase just during peak season Market (May-October). However, the sense is that vendors do pretty well in April and November, too, when there is less competition. Finally the Council discussed the possibility of increasing fees at Holiday Market to make up some deficits. BCFM currently charges \$30 for a farm vendor to reserve a space at Holiday Market. Marcia let the group know that the first reading of the 2019 price schedule will be at the October Park Board meeting and that the Board will vote on it at the November meeting.

5. Old Business:

There was no old business to discuss

6. Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 6:55pm