

**Bloomington Community Farmers Market
Farmers Market Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes from November 18, 2019 at 5:30pm
City Hall Council Chambers**

Council Members in Attendance:

Bruce McCallister, Cortland Carrington, Suzanne Mann, Leslie Sommer, Robin Kitowski, Kathy Aiken, Rebecca Vadas

Staff in Attendance: Paula McDevitt, Marcia Veldman, Sarah Mullin, Leslie Brinson

Community Members in Attendance: About 25 members of the public

1. Call to Order

2. Season Review by Paula McDevitt

Paula McDevitt, Director of the Parks Department reviewed the following City of Bloomington initiatives: Divided Communities Project Bridge Initiative - discussions related to race and diversity in Bloomington; Building Bridges – where the City aggregates local and national resources to prevent race-based discrimination and to support cultural diversity. Paula also reviewed the following opportunities for input related to the Market: Online comment form where community can share thoughts about Market; comment box in City Hall atrium; a series of public meetings in 2019, many of which were recorded and can be viewed at the City’s website; FAQ that has been updated; Community Justice and Mediation Center (CJAM) and IU Political and Civic Engagement (PACE) program mediators have met twice with Market vendors and once with diverse stakeholders; the creation of the Broadening Inclusion subcommittee of the Farmers’ Market Advisory Council (FMAC); 2019 Community Survey of Bloomington residents conducted by the National Research Center including information related to race, inclusion and the perceived value of the Market; and vendor surveys.

Paula also reviewed roles of the following groups and individuals: FMAC acts in an advisory capacity to the Board of Park of Commissioners; Market staff act as liaisons between the FMAC and the Board of Park Commissioners, Paula is the liaison to City Administration. The Board of Park Commissioners is made up of 4 members appointed by the Mayor who ultimately make decisions after receiving recommendations from Advisory Councils and staff.

3. Approval of Minutes

October meeting minutes were approved.

4. New Business

There was no new business.

5. Old Business

Update on the vendor meetings with CJAM/PACE

When reviewing the notes from the vendor meetings, Bruce saw a lot of people hurting from the season and felt a sense of urgency to address concerns before next season. There were 16 responses to the vendor survey and about 20 vendors at each of 2 meetings. There was some overlap in representation in the survey and the meetings. Kathy reflected that there is a need for farmers to know what is going to happen next year so they can plan. Planning takes place for next season now and so decision making is urgent. Suzanne noted that many vendors indicated that they were not involved in this conversation. As a vendor, Rebecca feels that decisions need to be made now. In her business, they will need to make decisions by mid-December related to possibly downsizing. Suzanne asked if we know when a decision will be made. Marcia said that there isn't a specific deadline, but that the Parks Department and the administration is aware of vendors' need for information and is working diligently to get that in place.

The next FMAC meeting is being moved from December 2nd to December 9th at 5:30pm.

Update on Broadening Inclusion subcommittee

This subcommittee was formed in an effort to find ways to make the Market more accessible, more open and more attractive to a broader segment of the community than is currently the case. The first meeting consisted of getting organized, electing leadership and discussing ways to make the Market more inclusive and how to be successful in that effort. Meetings will be held on the second Thursday of each month. The next meeting will be Thursday, December 12 at 5:30 in City Hall.

Food artisan proposal

The food artisan proposal has 3 main requests – including food artisans in the Farmers' Market mission statement, adding food artisan representatives to the advisory committee, and looking at the fee structure for the food artisans to see if the 10% payment can be reduced/restructured.

Adding food artisan representatives to the advisory committee

The artisans' proposal was to add 4 artisans. Robin thinks it's a good idea to have representation, but she believes 4 artisan representatives is too high. Rebecca would vote for 1 representative. Leslie S. asked if there is a limit to the total representatives on the council. Marcia clarified that the limit is currently 9 representatives, but it can be increased. She recommended keeping it an odd number, and offered that we could consider 2 food artisan representatives. Suzanne supported that. Kathy added that she supports 2 so in case one had to miss there would still be representation. Cortland asked what quorum would be with 11 representatives. Marcia said that quorum would be 6. Other considerations are shifting the start dates for the term to April due to timing of food artisan contract approval. Food artisan terms would also have to be 1 year terms due to the way their contracts are structured but they could reapply.

There was public comment from Eric Schedler of Muddy Fork Bakery in support of adding 2 food artisan representatives.

There was a question from the audience about how to apply to be on the FMAC. Marcia said that she notifies vendors when there are position openings, they submit applications then the Park Board makes appointments from the submitted applications.

A motion was made to add 2 food artisan representatives to the committee for a 1 year term and increase the total number of representatives to 11. The motion was approved.

Updating the mission statement to include food artisans

Marcia drafted a statement utilizing language that the food artisans suggested. It is a draft and is open for edits. Kathy suggested adding “direct positive relationships.” Rebecca asked for clarification on “increasing access to Market products by low income populations.” Marcia explained that the Market has programs in place to improve access to Market products such as Double Market Bucks for recipients of SNAP, the Farmers Market Nutrition Program for qualified seniors and recipients of WIC, partnering with the Farm to Family Fund which purchases food from farmers for Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard, and partnering with the Hoosier Hills Food Bank and the Plant a Row for the Hungry Program. The Market will carry these types of programs forward and looks for opportunities to expand them. Leslie S. commented that there isn’t anything explicit about promoting cultural diversity and she thinks it would be beneficial for the statement to be more direct. A suggestion was “promotes social interaction, cultural diversity and civic growth.”

Public comment on the mission statement:

The first member of the public to speak was Vauhxx Booker. Vauhxx prefers the term inclusion instead of diversity. Just putting the statement there doesn’t make it happen. Diversity and inclusion are born out of practice. Vauhxx asked the committee to look at the membership of the body that is creating a mission statement about inclusion. Vauhxx suggested having the Broadening Inclusion subcommittee look over the statement and provide suggestions prior to finalizing the statement. A second member of the public suggested specific language about safety. “Welcoming” isn’t specific enough. It was also suggested that there be a statement against the inclusion of hate groups. A third member of the public posed a question related to food security. They mentioned PCBs and dioxins and wanted to know what we are doing to address that food security. Marcia commented that that is beyond the purview of this group. A fourth member of the community, Amanda Sheridan, commented that the Market’s mission should include the values of Monroe County. If someone is violating Monroe County values, they’re also violating the Market’s values. Next, Ellen Wu commented that she noticed the all-white council when she came in and she encourages the council to make sure that there is input from different communities, especially minority communities in our town. Kathy asked for suggestions on how the FMAC can get the word out to attract a more diverse group to apply to be a representative on the council. A member of the public suggested reaching out to groups like Black Lives Matter and the Commission on Hispanic and Latino Affairs. Marcia said that we have not reached out in the past, but we certainly will in the future. A member of the public speaking on behalf of Lisa Marie stated that 9 Caucasian people deciding inclusiveness is not

inclusive. She asked, “Where are your marginalized members?” She also made a recommendation to add to the mission statement: “Welcoming an inclusive atmosphere that promotes safety, social interaction and civil and civic growth.” Another member of the public commented that the prices at the Market are really high, so if there’s any way to make the food more affordable, that would make the Market more inclusive. She also suggested that Planned Parenthood and Black Lives Matter should not be at the Market. She said inclusion means inclusion of all including Christians and all kinds of people. Bruce said that he likes many of the ideas shared and he would like to table the discussion of the mission statement until the Broadening Inclusion Subcommittee can review it. Public comment from Anna Lynch, in reference to the prior public comment, was that the implication that Christians are not welcome at the Market was a red herring and should be noted as such. Another member of the public representing Lisa Marie commented, she wants to know who is on the Broadening Inclusion subcommittee. She also suggested that we should include the phrase “safe and civil city,” in the mission statement. The commenter then spoke on her own behalf: “As long as we have neo-Nazi hate groups in the Market vending and recruiting and donating money directly to a vendor who belongs to a neo-Nazi hate group, we will have protests in the Market. They’re not going to stop.” Another member of the public commented that we should verify if hate activity exists by looking at reports by groups such as No Space for Hate. If there is hate activity from Planned Parenthood he’d like to see a report and see it verified. Bruce commented that he has the names of people on the Broadening Inclusion subcommittee and if anyone is interested they can see him after the meeting.

Fee structure for food and beverage artisans

Bruce said that the Board of Park Commissioners expects the Market to cover the costs of the Market. The Market has generated revenues that have met the cost over the last several years. One of the concerns raised by the food and beverage artisans is about the cost that they bear in supporting the Market. Farmers pay a specific amount each week, food artisans pay 10% of sales. That has been the way it has been set up since food artisans started selling at the Market. The artisans’ proposal is to pay a set fee each week for the space and not a percentage of sales. Marcia added that there has been a staff recommendation that farm vendor fees do not increase in 2020. Tomorrow evening the Park Board meets and will make a decision regarding farm vendor fees. She also noted that there is a fee summary from other farmers markets provided by Eric Schedler of Muddy Fork Bakery.

Eric Schedler commented that the Urbana Farmers’ Market is the only market on the summary that is run by a city government. Cortland Carrington noted that none of the markets on the summary charge a percentage of sales to food artisans. Suzanne Mann asked for clarification regarding differentiation between farm vendors and food artisans at these markets. Eric commented that none of the markets differentiate in fees, but some markets categorize their vendors in different categories (ie, growers, bakeries, cheesemakers, confections) and that there may be quotas on numbers of certain types of vendors. He also noted that any difference in fees in this study is based on booth size or access to electricity. Leslie S. asked Eric if he knows if the Urbana Market is subsidized by the City government. Eric does not know. The Dane County

Farmers' Market in Madison, Wisconsin is fully funded by vendor fees. Dane County is run through a vendor cooperative. Cortland suggested looking at budgets of these other markets to see how they pay for staffing, etc. Marcia said that she could follow up with the Urbana Farmers' Market staff to discuss budgeting, etc. Cortland noted that food artisans represent approximately 47% of the revenues and the farm vendors are at 41%. The 47% comes from a much smaller group. Leslie S. asked Marcia to follow up with Urbana to understand their cost recovery/budget. Eric Schedler commented that one element of a proposal to the Parks Board could be to a request to lower the 100% cost recovery goal. If we, as a community, value local food and supporting farmers we might see it as reasonable to have the taxpayers helping to support farmers. Bruce commented that he's not opposed to reducing costs for food artisans, but he would be very opposed to doing that if it meant adding costs to the farm vendors. We need to work together to see if there is a way to make that happen. Eric commented that people are drawn to the Market for the prepared food, not just for the produce, and vice versa. He thinks that bringing prepared food vendors in has been a big part of the growth of the Market. Both kinds of vendors need each other for the Market to be as successful as it can be. He wanted to point out that the food artisan proposal does have food artisans paying more than farmers. Farmers are being offered a subsidized rate for their booths. Artisans don't think it's fair for the 19 food artisans to pay all of that subsidy. The average rent cost for a limited food service restaurant is about 3.5% of sales. Having a 10% of sales cost is a really high amount and makes it hard to do well, especially when there is uncertainty in the Market. Having the fee with no cap on it encourages prepared food vendors to sell out every week. The fee structure discourages growth and it discourages them from bringing quantities that keep customers happy. When customers aren't happy, they may not come back. Cortland noted that the fees that vendors pay at the Market are one of the many pieces that are reflected in the cost of goods sold at the Market. Lowering fees could help make the Market more inclusive. Maria Carlassare of Piccoli Dolci commented that the fee is very high in April and November. A lot of vendors prefer to not come knowing that it's high cost and risky weather-wise. We lose variety to offer customers (in April and November) and therefore we are losing customers. With farms, it is natural that there are less products, but food artisans could stay and bring consistent product, but sales are low and fees are too high to be profitable. It could be full and lively if encouraged with lower fees. Suzanne feels that the artisans are making a very strong case and the fees seem high. Cortland thinks we're on the right track on realigning the budget. Leslie S. thinks we should write a statement, but first we should check in with Urbana to see how their farmers market recovers their costs. If we had more information about that we could ask the City for more actionable steps. Marcia said she can look into it and move this topic to the December 9th FMAC meeting. The minutes will be shared with the Parks Board so they can hear the FMAC's and public's sentiments. Suzanne asked that the research be done about the Urbana Market prior to the next meeting so the FMAC has time to read over it. She also suggested possibly having a subcommittee meet to look into this topic. Bruce also thinks a persuasive case has been made. He just doesn't want the fallout to hit farmers.

Public comment from Shankar Jay representing Shawnee Hill Farms: He suggested lowering the barrier of entry for food artisans, and charge a percentage only if they make over a certain amount. Anna Lynch commented regarding white supremacy in the Market. She wants to

encourage the FMAC and the City to take advantage of the resources that No Space for Hate is delivering. They're doing solid research and making connections that the community isn't hearing. She encourages partnership with them, not conflict with them. Jennifer Karnes of Red Fraiser Bison commented that there are two main hurdles to her decision to attend the market as a vendor next year. One is attendance/drop in sales that's been shared by all vendors. That's a public relations problem with the community. The community needs to decide if they want to support the local food. She asked for action on public relations and marketing for the Market. She noticed in the 2019 budget that was shared in the meeting that there is \$1,200 allocated to marketing. She'd like to see that go up. The room was full of ideas at the last vendor meeting, which Bruce attended. Her second comment is agreeing in February to stay at the Market until October is a tough ask of vendors when there are so many unknowns. She would like us to look at a different payment plan for the fees. Maybe paying 2 months at a time or spring, summer, fall, allowing vendors to decide if they want to continue participating. The City is done collecting most vendor fees in February so there's no skin in the game to make sure customers keep showing up. She doesn't like the idea of percentage of sales but she'd be willing to entertain it because the City makes money when vendors make money. She'd like the opportunity to pay based on how the year is progressing. A member of the public, Amy Countryman, is curious about how much sales and customer counts are down at the Market since white supremacy was made public. She also wants to know what the date is when the city decides what happens with the Market in April. Marcia commented that there is no set timeline, but we are very cognizant that vendors need information and we are working diligently so that decisions can be made and communicated. Amy asked if Marcia could speak to how much the City has spent on increased security, how much has the customer count gone down, what is the real cost of white supremacy at the Market? Marcia commented that attendance is about half. We don't have information on sales from farm vendors, but we do have information on prepared food vendor sales. Comparing 2019 to 2018 with a bit of estimation for information we hadn't collected to date, prepared food vendor sales are a bit higher than they were last year at this point. Amy Countryman then commented that the whole atmosphere at Market can be traced back to one thing and that's what she wants the council to address. Eric Schedler made a comment that he thinks it would be helpful if the Council could make a statement that could be adopted in support of lower fees for prepared food vendors. Bruce said that he doesn't feel that we have enough information to make that kind of statement tonight. Maria Carlassare asked for clarification and asked if there will be a statement written at the December 9th FMAC meeting. Bruce said he wouldn't promise that, but that is the intent. Marcia invited Maria to attend the December 10th Park Board meeting.

6. Adjournment at approximately 7:15pm.