

Farmers' Market Advisory Council Meeting

September 20, 2021, 5:30- 7:00 pm

FMAC Members in Attending: Cortland Carrington, Mike Gleeson, Whitney Schlegel, Lynn Schwartzberg, Rebecca Vadas, Cathy Bayt, Janice Lilly, Nelia Hostetter

FMAC Members Absent: Mara Lee Rosenbarger

Parks Staff in Attendance: Clarence Boone, Leslie Brinson, Sarah Mullin, Rebecca Barrick

Members of the Public: (none)

Call to Order:

Call to order at 5:32 pm by Cortland

Approval of Minutes

After quorum was met, September minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Old Business

- **Aggregate Counts Aggregate Counts:** Saturday Market tallies for the month of August were 8,682 customers with 169 total vendors. Tuesday Market tallies for the month of August were 1384 customers with 40 vendors.
 - General Observations: In large part, numbers generally dipped due to extreme hot and humid temps in mid-August.
- **Harvest for the World Updates:** “Harvest for the World” is scheduled for September 25th at the Saturday Market. It is designed to be an experience of sight, sound, and taste, featuring cross-cultural fashions, dance, and sounds from Bloomington’s international communities. Taste delicious cuisine from food and beverage artisans and gather produce from farm vendors to create your own authentic cuisine at home. This event also coincides with the City of Bloomington’s “Blooming Neighborhoods” event. Blooming Neighborhoods: a celebration of the wonderful, diverse, and eclectic neighborhoods that make up our city. To that end, we've been collaborating with Angela Van Rooy, who is Neighborhood Services Program Manager. As far as entertainment, we'll have music and performers representing a worldwide community. Along with a mariachi band, and a Sitar player, we'll have Aztec dancers from the Mexican community, Asian-Indiana dancers performing “Bollywood” style dancing, as well as Latin, jazz, R&B and soul music performers. Another positive about this event is that it intersects with this year's Lotus World Music & Arts Festival.

New Business

➤ Discussion on Proposed Fee & Pricing Schedule for 2022

- o At the August 16 meeting, council members were asked to begin forming opinions on what 2022 pricing levels ideally might look like for the farm vendors and food and beverage artisans. The proposed levels will be recommended to the Bloomington Parks and Recreation Board in October. A decision is made in November. In 2021, there was an increase of \$3 for farm vendors and food and beverage vendors were kept at the same levels. The previous 5-year projection on where we might be was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We did project a \$1 increase for farm vendors and a ½ a percentage decrease for food and beverage artisans. Our final decision needs to address cost recovery within the Farmers' Market.
- o There are a couple of options going forward. **The first**, is to freeze the fees across the board. This means that vendor fees would remain at:
 - \$21 for a large space
 - \$15 for a large senior space
 - \$13 for a small space
 - \$10 for a small senior space
 - FBA fees remain at 7.5%
- o **Along with that**, we can consider shortening the Market hours from 5 to 4 hours
 - The rationale here is that customer attendance dwindles significantly between 11 a.m. and noon (i.e. average drop has been 50%). Also, the Farmers' Market can reduce seasonal employee cost by about 15%. Additional savings can be realized in the areas of additional program costs, etc.
- o **Another option for 2022**, is to raise fees by \$1 dollar across the board for vendors and reduce the FBA fees to 7%. It was noted that we might see an increase in FBA vendors by 1-3. This is in alignment with an earlier pre-COVID decision to gradually reduce FBA fees over 5-years, and complete re-open the Market. Ultimately, this may increase overall cash flow. Keep in mind that the goal is cost recovery. The City as a continual partner has absorbed significant expenses.
- o [An added point was that there have been some Market Bucks received for redemption that were dated for a previous year. As a result it was shared that a notice will be placed in both the Market Beet and Customer Newsletter indicating *"Beginning October 1, 2021, Market Bucks dated before December 31, 2020, will not be accepted by Market Vendors."*]
- o A discussion on the merits of each option ensued. Several council members agreed with the rationale of shortening the market hours

from 5 to 4. Also, it was noted that not only is this in keeping with several other markets in the city, but there is an observable drop off in customer attendance (average drop is about 50%) after 12 noon. Additionally, a one-hour reduction can reduce seasonal employee costs by about 15%. With a decrease in Food and Beverage fees from 7.5% to 7%, We feel we might see an increase in food and beverage artisans and vendors by 1 or 3 more for 2022. It was pointed out that this is an alignment with an earlier pre-Covid decision to gradually reduce food and beverage artisan fees over five years, and completely reopen the market. Such steps may yield greater cash flow and increase cost-recovery.

- o There were supportive comments pertaining to honoring earlier plans to gradually decrease Food and Beverage fees over the prescribed timeline. An historical perspective was provided by staff and council members, and the over-arching impact of current city council budget talks and COVID-19 was cited on several occasions. Finally, it was requested that financials for the Market be provided to help the FMAC further understand how cost-recovery could benefit under each option. Also, it was shared that a survey will be sent to all vendors asking their opinions on the three main items at hand (fee increase/percentage fee decrease/ and opinions on reducing market hours).

➤ **November Market & Holiday Market (11/27)**

- o Applications continue to come in. At present we have 8 November apps, and 7 Holiday Market apps. After September 27, we'll begin determining priority space allocation.
- o A brief discussion was held concerning a Farmers' Market collaboration with IU residents in the *Avenue on College* apartment complex. They are going to purchase a significant number of canvas tote bags and Market Gift Certificates to educate their residents on how to navigate and purchase healthy fresh food from the Market. This will take place in October.

➤ **Public Comment**

- o There were no other public comments and Cortland motioned for adjournment.

➤ **Adjournment**

- o Meeting was adjourned at 6:23 p.m. by unanimous consent.