

## **Farmers' Market Advisory Council Meeting**

**November 15, 2021, 5:30- 6:30 pm**

**FMAC Members in Attending:** Cortland Carrington, Mike Gleeson, Janice Lilly, Mara-Lee Rosenbarger, Lynn Schwartzberg, Rebecca Vadas

**FMAC Members Absent:** Cathy Bayt, Nelia Hostetter, Whitney Schlegel

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

**Members of the Public:** Sam Dove

**Call to Order:** Call to order at 5:31 pm by Cortland Carrington

### **Approval of Minutes**

After quorum was met, October minutes were reviewed and Janice Lilly proposed including details about the recommended pricing schedule in the minutes. After that recommended change was agreed to, the minutes were approved by unanimous consent. Before a discussion on Old Business, Cortland requested moving the Timeline on Farmers' Market Planning Items discussion to New Business to avoid redundancy.

### **Old Business**

- **Discussion on addition of two different mushrooms to the “approved” wild forage sale list: Turkey Tail & Reishi.** – Cortland shared the medicinal background on both species. He shared the immune-boosting benefits of both and that there are encouraging clinical trials which are confirming the efficacy of these mushrooms. Leslie asked how the interest in these mushrooms was generated. Cortland responded that customers and some vendors have inquired and expressed an interest in purchasing the species.
- **Feedback on Market Financial Report & Survey Results** Clarence began by sharing that the city budget did pass and this will be a tremendous boost to the operations for the 2022 Farmers' Market season. With survey responses from 26 individuals, we were over the 50% threshold. Based on the findings, a decision was made to move forward with the request of \$1 increase for vendor fees; a reduction of food and beverage artists and fees from 7.5 to 7%; and, no change to the operational hours of the Farmers' Market. The Park Board will render their decision on whether or not to accept these recommendations during tomorrow's (11/16) Park Board meeting.

### **New Business**

- **Discussion on Timeline of Upcoming Planning Items:** Beginning with customer and vendor surveys, Clarence presented on task items on the existing timeline. These include updates to the vendor handbook, vendor application, and vendor contracts. Samples of these were previously shared with the FMAC. In an effort to host events on alternating Saturdays,

coordination planning will include preparing to hire new and previous seasonal staff for 2022 and incorporating previous programming like “Info Alley”, “A Fair of the Arts”, “Produce Tastings”, “Roving Naturalist”, nutrition and wellness events, etc. In 2022, we want to promote National Farmers’ Market Week during the first week of August.

Entertainment will be a major emphasis heading into 2022. Even with limited performances due to Covid restrictions and competition for artisans, we plan to double down on enlisting acts for 2022. We plan to focus on events that promote diversity in the Farmers’ Market. This past September, I launched an event focusing on diversity through “sight and sound”. I co-partnered with the Bloomington H.A.N.D. Department and we are planning repeat this next September. Also, there are plans to reintroduce the “Active Living Coalition Health Fair” in April.

Another nutritional/educational event that will be continued is “A Day at the Market”. This year we actually netted \$1,200 in promotional sales from that event. Along with these Market initiatives, we plan to continually enhance the customer and vendor newsletters. Janice Lilly recommended adding a program entitled “Ready, Set, Grow”. Such a program can educate individuals on how to grow their own food, and may help farmers in the early part of the season when they’re selling plants.

Janice posed a question on whether or not any consideration had been given to moving the November Farmer’s Market down to Switchyard Park. Leslie responded that this has been a recurring thought since the construction of Switchyard Park. Due to logistics such as space limitations and the challenge of reorienting customers to visit Switchyard Park as opposed to the Morton Street site, we have not actively moved on this option. However, we do have Switchyard Park reserved for November 2022, and this is certainly something that can be revisited. Another consideration with such a move is the impact it will have on Holiday Market customers. All these variables and factors can certainly be weighed out moving forward. Michael and Mara-Lea also chimed in their support of keeping the Holiday Market at City Hall. A discussion ensued on the merits and contrasts between the various markets (especially Woolery and BCFM) with points being offered ranging from vendor and customer attendance levels to organic and non-organic farm vendors. Moving forward, the points offered will be taken into consideration into future Farmers’ Market planning.

➤ **Updates on October-November Farmers’ Market**

- Aggregate Counts for Farmers’ Market (October)
  - FM October Totals: 5,589 customers / 195 vendors
- Aggregate Counts for Farmers’ Market (November)
  - Combining November 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, we had 1089 people so far with 45 vendors
  - General Observations: Frigid and drizzly weather, a variety of entertainment scheduled for each Saturday and, of course, the season culminating with the Holiday Market on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

- Leslie began a discussion on Market Bucks. She's been preparing a report on Market Buck numbers and grant funding for future years. She shared that we have given out more money this year in Market Bucks and snap funds since 2016. She also intends to ask for additional funding to support 2022 and 2023 so we can keep that program going. She shared that we will be able to roll over the WIC and the senior nutrition grants that were supposed to end this year, but because of Covid, we have spent only about a quarter of the funds. Janice asked where these grant funds originated. Leslie responded by explaining that they came from a matching grant with the Bloomington Health Foundation and there was also an anonymous matching donor.
  
- **Farmers' Market Handbook/Vendor Application/Vendor Contract Updates:**
  - Clarence informed the Council that we are making customary changes and updates that are typically made at the end of each season and, along with additions like the Turkey Tail & Reishi mushrooms, revising the adverse weather policy, and customary updates to the vendor applications and contracts. Leslie added that we will be adding a section back in about the vendor point system for 2022. We've made no adjustments to date, so for now, we will continue with the point system as is. She added that two additional programmatic ideas include developing a mentoring program for first time vendors and some recruitment of diverse vendors.
  
- **Holiday Market (November 27)**
  - Clarence reported that as of now, we have 23 vendors and more than 30 additional artisans and presenters that will take part, on that day. We do have entertainment so from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m., we'll have the Bloomington Chamber Singers; from 11:30 - 12 p.m., will have ballet representatives providing a sneak peek of the Nutcracker; from 12 - 1 p.m., Moving Hips is scheduled to perform; and finally, from 1:30 - 2:30 p.m. Trumusiq will wrap things up. Along with Santa Claus, there will be a Roving Naturalist, and back this year is Chris Vosters with her kettle corn.
  
- **Public Comment**
  - There were no other public comments and Clarence motioned for adjournment.
  
- **Adjournment**
  - Meeting was adjourned at 6:21 p.m. by unanimous consent.