

February 6, 2017

Coventry Farmers' Market at Hale
Operating Committee Special Meeting Minutes

Call to order: 8:08am ~ conference room B

Roll call: Barbara Barry, Jamie-Lyn Fontane Connell, Erica Pagliuco (via FaceTime), Beth Bauer, Michelle Pesce, Jean Nelson, Eric Trott, Bill Hoffman, Anne Marie Charland, Katrina Weaver

Adoption of minutes: A motion was made by Barry and seconded by Bauer to adopt the November 21, 2016 minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial Review:

Beth distributed the current financial synopsis for the Market and it was reviewed by those in attendance. Eric will meet with Beth later this week to finalize where we are as we move towards planning for 2017.

Vendor Survey:

The results of the survey of the full time vendors was reviewed by Jean and Erica.

29 responses were received which is a 43% response rate. There were 8 questions. 83% of the vendors wish to return for 2017, many of those who do not wish to be full time and seeking part time vendor spots.

45% of the vendors reported that their sales were lower in 2016 compared to 2015. However, there are reasons for this situation. For example, there are many more farmers' markets to choose from in the region which creates stiff competition; there is a trend with lower sales overall at other farmers' markets; the confusion that occurred in which many customers still did not know that the Market was in fact continuing; weather impacts; the potential reduction of sales due to tastings which causes customers to not be available to shop as much in the field.

These situations causes for the Market to evolve and expand its programming and offerings to set the bar higher comparably with other markets. Also, more effort needs made to market and advertise the fact that the Market is in fact in operation and help spread the word. Programming of events, tastings and demos will be evaluated to address the comments have been provided by the vendors. The goal is create some new and different events.

87% of the vendors like the vendor mix from last season. The number of food trucks and ways that they can be better incorporated to create a unified experience with the vendors in the field is to be evaluated.

Vendors commented that there needs to be a balanced accountability with respect to how the overall vendors comply with the regulations, as well as the CT Grown products. New events and programming would be welcome and the recipe cards were very popular.

Vendor Selection:

Vendors have great interest in returning to the Market and are looking for the application to be released. Historically, the applications went out in February with a March deadline and we are on target to accomplish that.

Last season's vendor list was reviewed briefly.

Food Trucks:

Feedback from the vendors indicated that there was overall too many food trucks. However, there needs to be a balance struck, since the food trucks are important to the Market experience as well, in providing opportunities for customers to have lunch and linger at the Market. The number of food trucks will likely be reduced for the upcoming season.

The food truck vendors will be asked to create at least one menu items that incorporates a local grown or vendor product in order to create mutual support for all involved.

Communication between the food trucks is important so that they can know in advance the menus of those attending to avoid duplication. The Market newsletter serves to provide those details. But, it underlines the need for all vendors to routinely communicate with the Market Master so the details can be included on a weekly basis.

An idea was offered to have 4 regular food trucks and 2 rotating for a total of 6 trucks at each Market. The idea was generally supported by those in attendance.

Farmers:

It is important to maintain the core/standard group of farmers and include new specialty crops as well to fit in the mix. Some farmers are willing to increase their crops to help fill the gaps with specialty crops.

3 cheese vendors are likely going to be invited for the 2017 season.

Since Fabian's Sugar Shack is not returning, a new maple product vendor needs to be brought in.

A coffee vendor needs to be selected since Quiet Corner Roasters will not be returning.

Prepared items and food vendors need to be evaluated to insure that they remain consistent with the goals and mission of the Market. The emphasis is intended to be a 'producer market', which is a strength for the Market overall.

1 baker is not returning this season. It is important to be careful to avoid saturation and duplication with this type of vendor.

New guest vendors will be considered. Full time vendors need to be set first. Guest vendors will be rotated to maintain variety.

Vendor Application and Regulations:

The new submittal dates needs to be provided on the application.

The 'pasture raised' requirement for meat and dairy products will be struck.

The enforcement of vendors not communicating their lack of attendance or unacceptable reasons being provided for absence has been an issue that creates negative impact to the Market. A 3 strike rule will be enforced this season. However, the Market Master and Committee have the ability to apply discretion.

The liability insurance for non-food vendors will still be required in order to reduce risk and liability.

The reference on the application to 'prior Market affiliation' will be struck.

The fee amounts will be maintained.

The anticipated deadline for the submittal is March 10. The land use office will handle the sending, receiving and collating all received materials.

Market Support Services:

Port o lets ~ A total of 4 will be used. 1 vendor handicap, 1 customer handicap and 2 regular units. CT Portables will continue to be used.

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Traffic Management ~ New England Flaggers will be asked to return as traffic management. Their familiarity with the Market experience is helpful moving forward. It is important for them to be more understanding and familiar with the parking field situation and the flaggers need to use the Market walkie-talkies and be on the same channel as the parking field volunteers to maintain effective communication.

Waste Hauling ~ USA Hauling will be used for the next season. Only one trash unit will be required.

Field Maintenance ~ Bill Hoffman is willing to do the maintenance again. He has the proper equipment and is most familiar with the landscape.

Events:

Once the programming and events are more lined up, the musicians can then be confirmed for the upcoming season. Many musicians are very excited to return to the Market. The goal is to properly pair events and musicians.

DoAG Farm Viability Grant:

Erica, Jean and Eric are going to be having a phone meeting with Jaime from DoAg after the Committee meeting to discuss the budget. It is likely that the grant will be awarded considering the reason for the phone call. This grant will allow for a great deal of financial support for expanded marketing, events, business – vendor – customer connections.

Supplies – Sponsorships will be addressed at an upcoming meeting.

Next meeting ~ February 21, 8:00am or 1:00pm – to be confirmed.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:07am

Respectfully submitted,

Eric M. Trott
Director of Planning and Development