

FARMERS' MARKET COMMISSION
Regular Meeting Minutes

May 13, 2020

7:00PM

Conducted Remotely

Commission Present: Laura Lencioni (Chair), Dominic Cianciolo, Myndi Devore, Rachel Hahs, Julia Knier, Jennifer Purrenhage, Dina Ross, Jill Stewart, Katie Weaver.

Village Trustee Present: Arti Walker-Peddakotla.

Staff Present: Staff Liaison Cameron Davis, Market Manager Colleen McNichols, Staff Member Mindy Agnew, Communications Director David Powers.

Others Present: Vendor Liaison Frank Damiano and Church Liaison Jeff Petertil.

- 1) Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by chairperson Lencioni at 7:02 pm.
- 2) Agenda Approval: A motion, to accept the agenda as presented, was made, seconded and approved.
- 3) Public Comment: Chairperson Lencioni asked Staff Liaison Davis if any written public comment had been submitted. Davis stated that no public comment had been submitted, per the directions provided on the agenda document.
- 4) Approval of Minutes: May 7, 2020.

Commissioner Julia Knier reviewed a list of proposed adjustments, to the May 7th draft minutes, for the benefit of Commission members. Chairperson Lencioni also reviewed several proposed adjustments with the Commission that she would like to see made to the draft minutes under consideration. Commissioner Jill Stewart also asked for the addition of an item in the proposed minutes. Davis thanked the Commissioners for their proposed adjustments to the minutes.

Chairperson Lencioni asked that Staff Liaison Davis make the adjustments to the minutes, as discussed, and place the revised draft minutes on the Commissions next meeting agenda. Davis will make the adjustments and place the minutes on the next agenda.

Commissioner Ross moved, seconded by Commissioner Knier, to table consideration of the May 7th meeting minutes, as amended, and place the amended minutes on the Commissions next meeting agenda. The motion passed.

- 5) Chair Report (Laura Lencioni) - Commission Chair Lencioni

Chairperson Lencioni thanked Commissioner Dominic Cianciolo for helping to take minutes of tonight's meeting. She stated that if the Commission is able to support Davis with additional notes from the meeting it should make his task of completing the minutes easier. At the end of each meeting Chairperson Lencioni stated that she will be asking for a Commissioner to volunteer to be the next meeting minutes person.

Chairperson Lencioni thanked everyone who is doing good work in support of the 2020 Farmers' Market.

6) Farmers' Market Staff Liaison Report (Cameron Davis)

Farmers' Market Staff Liaison Cameron Davis stated that staff has been busy this past week working on Market infrastructure issues. He reported that tomorrow (May 14th) Market Manager Colleen McNichols, staff member Mindy Agnew and himself have a follow-up meeting with the Public Works Department about a host of infrastructure related matters that the Public Works Department will be assisting the Market with in 2020.

- a) Village Staff Support for the 2020 Market. Davis reported that the Village Manager's Office has been able to come to an understanding with the SEIU union regarding how staff represented by that union will be able to assist us on Saturdays during the upcoming Market season. Additional discussions are ongoing with other labor union representatives regarding staff represented by those unions.

Davis reported that he will be an advocate with the Village Managers Office regarding the number of staff members assigned to assist us each Saturday. As soon as Davis has a better understanding of the number of staff members required, he will advocate for that number of staff members on an ongoing basis.

Davis further reported that the Development Customer Services Departments Executive Secretaries will be providing additional administrative support to the Market this year.

- b) Miscellaneous Other General Information. Davis reported that the Public Works Department, with the support of the Village Board, is currently working to ensure that Scoville Avenue, Lake Street to South Boulevard, will be repaved prior to the opening of the Farmers' Market. This is great news because Scoville's current road pavement is quite challenging. Scoville will serve as the entrance to the Market this year so this re-paving project will help to ensure an attractive and fully-functioning pavement.

Commissioner Purrenhage thanked Davis for the news about the repaving of Scoville. She complimented the Village on the creative ways it is seeking to utilize staff to support the Market. She asked Davis to please let her know as soon as he has a better idea on the number of staff members that will be assigned to the Market as this will assist her with scheduling volunteers. Davis will communicate out that information as soon as he has it available.

Staff member Mindy Agnew joined the meeting and reported that she is working on the spreadsheet that is identifying all of the required Market tasks. This list, as stated by Davis, will be used to identify where staff members may be assigned to assist the Market. She hopes to have the spreadsheet completed by the end of this week.

Commissioner Cianciolo informed the Commission that his computer just crashed and he lost all of the notes that he had been taking to assist Davis. Davis stated that he had been taking notes so this should not be a problem.

Commissioner Knier asked when the Commission will know how many staff members will be assigned to assist the Market. Davis responded that he cannot give a specific date that this information will be available but that the goal is to move as quickly as possible.

Davis stated that the goal of the spreadsheet is to determine which tasks will be completed by staff and which will require volunteer assistance. When that is determined, the spreadsheet will be adjusted accordingly.

Chairperson Lencioni asked that when the spreadsheet is adjusted that it be sent to her and she will distribute it to the Commission.

Commissioner Purrenhage asked Colleen if she is increasing her hours as she gets closer to the Market. Colleen stated that she will have to speak to Davis about that but that she usually does increase her hours as she gets closer to the Market's opening date.

7) Farmers' Market Manager Report (Colleen McNichols)

Farmers' Market Manager McNichols stated thanked Davis, Agnew and the Public Works Department for all of the behind-the-scenes work that is going on regarding the new Market infrastructure like barricades, toilets, handwashing stations, etc.

McNichols communicated her excitement about the upcoming Market season. She reported that although Sitka Salmon Shares will not be a vendor at this year's Market, they have pulled out of all farmers markets, the company has agreed to allow the Village to use their eight tents, tables and coolers for the new aggregation program. She stated that this is very good news.

McNichols discussed the upcoming messaging that will be required to get the word out about all of the exciting changes coming to the Market this year.

Commissioner Myndi DeVore asked McNichols if it would be possible to put together a list of answers to questions the public might have about this year's Market. McNichols stated that this was a very good idea.

Commissioner Jill Stewart asked McNichols if she was aware of what the Village's Communications Department was planning in terms of getting information out to the public about this year's Market. Will there be a press release?

Communications Director David Powers joined the meeting to explain that the Village's website has already been updated and the Village has put out information on e-news and social media. Going forward, Powers will be putting out additional information about the new aggregation program as soon as he gets that information from staff. Powers further mentioned that his Department will develop a news story and will push that out to the local newspapers. The Communication Department will figure out the final messaging in coordination with Davis, Agnew and the Commission. Any information that Commission members can provide to the Village, through McNichols, Davis and Agnew, will be helpful for the Communications Department.

McNichols updated the Commission about how the "WhatsGood" app works in other locations. This is a pilot program so she reported that we will be starting with 50-60 slots for the first Market event and then building additional capacity as we move forward.

McNichols mentioned that we have lost some vendors but we have added a new vendor who lives in Oak Park on East Avenue. Vendors are very excited about the upcoming Oak Park Market.

Chairperson Lencioni asked how many vendors have indicated their interest in the “WhatsGood” app in terms of participating. McNichols answered approximately twenty.

Chairperson Lencioni asked McNichols how we are going to put interested Commissioner’s in touch with vendors who need help with the “WhatsGood” app? McNichols responded that the Chairperson and her can figure that out together.

McNichols expressed her hope that a Commissioner would take on the responsibility of immersing themselves in the details of the aggregation program. Chairperson Lencioni asked if McNichols was asking for volunteers to take on that responsibility. McNichols responded yes, she wants to ensure continuity week to week.

Commissioner Knier commented that she believes that the role of the point person for aggregation is vital and has to be a staff member. She stated that a volunteer does not have the same commitment as a paid staff person. She asked how we would handle it if a volunteer said, on a day it’s 90 degrees, that they are not showing up? She would urge the Commission not to support the point person for aggregation to be a volunteer. Commissioner Purrenhage agreed.

Chairperson Lencioni stated that the Commission can go on record as strongly urging the Village to assign a staff member to serve as the point-person for aggregation. Commissioner Knier stated that the minutes should note that if the lead-person for aggregation is not a Village staff person the whole program will be set up to fail.

McNichols reviewed the time commitment required on Saturdays for individuals working in aggregation. Commissioner Dominic Cianciolo stated that this is not a one-person job. Further, he stated that the task would require eight to ten people who know what they are doing. McNichols mentioned she felt it would take five or so people to run the aggregation program.

Chairperson Lencioni summarized the discussion by stating that as a Commission, it seems clear that we are recommending that a full-time paid staff person be ultimately responsible for running the new aggregation program.

Commissioner Purrenhage commented that the new aggregation program is a huge opportunity for the Market. This is an opportunity to serve a more diverse population of people who cannot physically, or for safety reasons, attend this years’ Market. Maybe the Commission can build something with the new aggregation program that can go on for years. She added that whomever is in charge of aggregation will have to play close attention to the program.

Commissioner Katie Weaver raised the issue of hiring of the part-time Market Assistants. Trustee Arti Walker-Peddakotla mentioned that the Village Manager had announced her intention not to hire the Markets’ part-time assistants. The Trustee stated that if that action was going to become a blocker to the Markets success then that is an issue that we should get back to the entire Village Board so that the Board can discuss it at their

meeting next week. She communicated her desire to ensure that the Market runs successfully.

A Commission member asked Communications Director David Powers what part of the website had been updated with Farmer's Market information. Powers responded by saying the page on the Village's website dedicated to the Farmers' Market at www.oak-park.us/farmersmarket. The Commissioner stated that the map on the website still had not been updated and inquired when that would occur. Powers stated that he would work with McNichols with making that adjustment. McNichols does not yet have the completed vendor map but when she does, she will forward it to Powers.

Commissioner Hahs brought up the issue of the part-time Market Assistants. She asked what the process was for making a recommendation to provide the Market Director with her part-time Market Assistants.

Chairperson Lencioni commented that the Commissions concern about not having the two assistants has now appeared in the minutes several times and she, herself has mentioned the issue in her own communications to the Village. It is the Commissions role to advise and the fact that the Commission has spoken about it and communicated our concerns is on the record. Commissioner Hahs expressed her concern regarding the added work for McNichols. Whatever the Commission can do to help McNichols and try to get the Village Board to give her back her part-time assistants, Commissioner Hahs thinks that the added help from assistants will be critical towards making the Market a success.

McNichols commented that staff met and that both Davis and Agnew now have more details about the critical tasks that must be filled by staff.

8) Church Liaison Report (Jeff Petertil)

Jeff Petertil communicated his appreciation for everyone's work. He reported that Sally Olsen, head of the Church's Donut Committee, and himself have split up tasks regarding the Market. He communicated that he had sent Davis a list of questions today and that Davis and Health Director Charley responded to the questions quickly and to his satisfaction. He ended his report by again communicating his appreciation. There were no questions for Mr. Petertil.

9) Vendor Liaison Report (Frank Damiano)

Frank Damiano briefly commented on the "WhatsGood" application and said he had spoken to Ms. Ellis about the details of the aggregation program and all is well. There were no questions for Mr. Damiano.

10) Committee/Project Reports

a) Volunteer:

Commissioner Jennifer Purrenhage reported that several Commissioners met with staff this past week to gather information to put on a spreadsheet regarding who needs to be doing what where during the Market. She mentioned that a lot of the

volunteer work will move to the aggregation program and that there will be a number of volunteer opportunities.

Commissioner Purrenhage reported that she is pulling together a volunteer list. She is also drafting a communications piece for volunteers. She stated that she hopes to get a message out to volunteers and Commissioners within the next several days. The next message after that would include information on 2020 Market rules and volunteer sign-up opportunities.

Commissioner Dina Ross asked if there would be “low-touch” volunteer opportunities for those Commissioners or volunteers who may not be able to attend the Market. Purrenhage stated that that was a very good question. She has not yet identified “low touch” tasks but stated that she would keep this in mind as opportunities are identified.

Chairperson Lencioni suggested that one opportunity for involvement by Commissioners or volunteers would be to assist vendors with the set-up of their on-line presence for the new aggregation program.

Staff member Mindy Agnew interjected that she is also currently working on identifying all of the Markets volunteer roles. She too will seek to identify any possible “low touch” opportunities that may be available.

Commissioner Purrenhage asked Colleen McNichols if she could send out information about the “WhatsGood” application so that anyone interested can get up to speed on how it functions. McNichols stated that she will e-mail out information about the app.

b) Communications:

Commissioner Jill Stewart spoke about attending the recent Evanston Farmers’ Market and said that it made her optimistic about what can be achieved in Oak Park. She reported that she is currently writing a cheese communication feature. She reported that several other Commissioners have signed-up to write additional features for the Blog. She mentioned that the Village’s Communications staff has also uploaded these features on the Village’s website, which she is happy to see. Commissioner Stewart stated that she is always available for copy editing, as needed.

Colleen McNichols mentioned that the best time to reach vendors is on rainy days as this is one of their busiest times of the year.

Commissioner Stewart also suggested that if writers cannot engage vendors on the telephone, you may be able to create a communications piece by engaging the vendors in an e-mail question and answer session. Chairperson Lencioni stated that she thinks the question and answer format is excellent.

McNichols further suggested that another volunteer writing opportunity would be to help vendors create content for their “WhatsGood” sites. Chairperson Lencioni suggested that if you are interviewing a vendor for a communication piece you might

ask them if they would like what you have written to be a part of their “What’s Good” profile.

Commissioner Stewart ended her report by stating that she thinks the communication focus should be on what’s new and different at the Market, what’s changed and what people who attend should expect to see when they arrive.

Chairperson Lencioni thanked Commissioner Stewart for both her report and her efforts.

Commissioner Julia Knier asked if customers will be able to bring their own re-usable bags to the Market. McNichols stated that this question was addressed by the Village’s Health Director. Customers will be able to bring their own re-usable bags to the Market but they will not be allowed to touch the produce. They can point to the produce that they want and it can be placed into their re-usable bag(s) for them. Commissioner Knier stated that this will need to be communicated out to customers through local news media and our social media opportunities.

Commissioner Knier suggested that an NPR interview would be a great way to get the word out about the Market. Chairperson Lencioni stated that the Commission’s role is to provide ideas and the staff knows what they have resources to accomplish.

A Commission member asked if vendors will supply bags for those customers who do not bring a re-usable bag with them to the Market? McNichols stated that the vendors will have bags. She stated that she expects customers to adapt quickly to any changes.

Commissioner Katie Weaver asked if this would be the time to establish specific Oak Park Farmers’ Market social media accounts. She stated that it might be helpful to disseminate all of the information being discussed from one location. She knows that the Village has a website and a Facebook page but mentioned that it is sometimes hard to find Farmers Market posts. Commissioner Rach Hahs agreed with Weaver’s observation.

Davis interjected that he knows that David Powers, Village of Oak Park Director of Communications, is managing the virtual meeting so he is hearing your comments. He mentioned that the Communications Department is currently very busy working to support the Health Department in getting out information about the COVID-19 emergency.

Director of Communications David Powers joined the meeting. Powers stated that the Farmers’ Market Commission is one of twenty Village Commissions. His goal for all Commissions is to build audiences through existing communication tools. The Director explained why the Village doesn’t have individual, separate platforms for each Commission. All Commissions share the Village’s social media platforms that already exist.

Commissioner Hahs mentioned that she listened to the Illinois Farmers’ Market Association webinar that was put on today. She learned that the Association does provide a toolkit and a customer guide that may be useful to Oak Park. She will find the link to the webinar and send it to Chairperson Lencioni so she can share it with

the Commission. The Association mentioned today that many vendors are having their best season ever, in terms of sales.

Commissioner Dina Ross asked McNichols if when people walked through the Market, if there would be a "Drive-Through" lane, a lane not for cars but for people who want to by-pass a certain vendor? McNichols said that there will be a middle lane that will let people by-pass vendors that they do not want to visit.

Commissioner Hahs again shared information from today's webinar that she watched regarding appropriately separating the vendors and marking the street to assist with Market flow.

11)Old Business:

Commissioner Dina Ross wanted to confirm with everyone that she has cancelled all of the children's activities. Chairperson Lencioni thanked the Commissioner for following-up on that task. She mentioned that she hoped we can have those activities again next year.

Commissioner Purrenhage asked if anyone could confirm that the Library would not be doing what they normally do at the Market. Commissioner Ross responded yes, the Library has cancelled everything.

12)New Business:

Davis asked Chairperson Lencioni if there was a desire to have an additional Commission meeting this month.

A motion was made by Lencioni and seconded by Knier to hold a special meeting of the Farmers' Market Commission on Wednesday, May 27th at 7:00p.m. The motion passed.

13)Adjourn:

A motion was made by Stewart and seconded by Ross to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m. The motion passed.

Prepared and submitted for consideration by Cameron Davis, Staff Liaison.