

**FARMERS' MARKET COMMISSION**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**

**August 12, 2020**  
**7:00PM**  
**Conducted Remotely**

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

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

**Others Present:** Church Liaison Jeff Petertil,

- 1) **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by chairperson Lencioni at 7:00 pm.
- 2) **Agenda Approval:** A motion was made by Commissioner Ross to accept the agenda, as presented. Commissioner Knier seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- 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:** Minutes we're held over to the next Commission meeting to give Commissioner's additional time for their review.
- 5) **Chair Report (Laura Lencioni)**

New Commissioner Recruitment. Three Commissioners (Purrenhage, Ross & Robinson) have terms expiring this year and two Commissioners (Lencioni and Cianciolo) have terms expiring in 2021. Chairperson Lencioni stated that the recruitment effort would need to begin. Please let the Chairperson know if you would like to stay on the Commission or if you will be ending your service. Also, if you know someone who would be a good Commissioner, please have them contact Frank Pond. Commissioner Purrenhage inquired if the Citizen Involvement Commission was currently meeting. Chairperson Lencioni answered "no," however, she has been in contact with Mr. Pond regarding the issue of commission membership and will keep the Commission updated on any new information.

Chairperson Lencioni mentioned that she has been thinking about ways to keep the Commission members all connected, given that not all Commissioners have been able to attend the Market in 2020. She encouraged Commissioners to think about ideas over the next couple of months, regarding this issue, for future discussion.

2021 Budget and Work Plan. Commissioner Lencioni asked if the 2021 Village Budget had already been approved by the Village Board. Staff Liaison Davis informed the Commission that the FY 2021 Annual Budget was currently under development at the departmental level. The Farmers Market budget is one of the Village's "Special Revenue Funds" and will still be developed by the Health Department, under the direction of Director Mike Charley. Davis mentioned that he will extend an invitation to Director

Charley to attend the Commission's September meeting and if he is able to attend he can address their 2021 budget questions.

Meetings for the Remainder of the Season. Chairperson Lencioni asked Davis if there is a way that the Commission can establish a list of definitive future meetings. Davis mentioned that the Village is gearing-up to have more Commission meetings across the organization. Davis will check into the future meeting schedule situation and get back to the Chairperson but he does not foresee a problem with the dates for the regularly scheduled September (9<sup>th</sup>) or October (14<sup>th</sup>) Commission meetings.

Passing of OPFM Founder, Marge Gockel. Chairperson Lencioni announced that Marge Gockel, founder of the OPFM, has made her transition. The Chairperson asked if the Commission wanted to make a statement about this or memorialize Ms. Gockel's contribution to the Market in any way.

Colleen McNichols announced that she had passed in July and the Village had dedicated the most recent Farmer's market to Ms. Gockel, through announcements and various social media. The Chairperson suggested doing a blog or displaying a poster at a Market to honor her contributions. A Commission member suggested getting Ms. Gockel's husband involved in any recognition that occurs. Outside the meeting, Chairperson Lencioni and McNichols will discuss a potential opportunity to honor Ms. Gockel and then report back to the Commission

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

Village Staff Support for 2020 Market. Village staff support for the Village Farmer's market has not exceeded 1,000 hours just from the staff members in the Development Customer Services Department. David reported that this does not count the hundreds if not thousands of hours of support provided by the staffs of the Public Works and Police Departments. He mentioned the staff support is a testament to the Mayor and Village Board's, and Village Managers support for the Market.

Miscellaneous Other General Information. Davis reported that he will be distributing a Market update memorandum, to the Commission, several times per month. This update is similar to the one he sends to the Village Manager weekly. The Commission should look for one or two memorandum updates in August and then again in September and October. Davis hopes that this Market memorandum update will help to keep everyone connected.

Update Regarding Recommendation to the Village Manager. Davis will be forwarding a staff generated Village Board action item to the Village Manager, suggesting that a \$3 administration fee be added to each on-line order placed as a part of the Market's new pilot program (aggregation). The money raised from this administration fee could be used to pay for bags, tents, coolers, etc., all items that will need to be purchased if the pilot-program is to be continued in 2021. The idea is to get the fee established in 2020, potentially October, and then to continue it 2021.

Colleen McNichols pointed out that the bags that are needed for the aggregation program are expensive and that it would be great to have a revenue source that could pick-up that cost. Commission members discussed if it should be a flat fee or a percentage, the amount cannot be called a donation. There was general support from

the commission regarding the establishment of this fee in order to support the extraordinary expenses associated with the aggregation program. The staff generated recommendation will be sent to the Village Board for consideration at some point in the form of an ordinance. The Commission took a pole and was supportive of this initiative in an attempt to generate revenue to support the Markets ongoing expenses.

7) **Farmers Market Manager Report (Colleen McNichols)**

McNichols thanked everyone from the Commission to staff and the volunteers for their effort to make the market a success.

Vendor Update. Certified organic vendor Iron Creek has decided not to participate in the market but they have been replaced with another certified organic vendor called Wholesome Harvest, a smaller farm from Wisconsin. She stated that she was excited to have this new vendor. Ellis Farms, Michigan, have also left this years' Market. Vendors are reporting to McNichols that they are happy with their current Market locations.

McNichols stated how impressed she is with the blog posts and all of the good work that the Village's Communication Department is doing to support the Market.

McNichols reported on her initial efforts to potentially bring a certified organic Asian specialty vendor to future markets. There was support from the Commission that was communicated for this initiative, especially in terms of bringing in more diverse products.

McNichols commented that she believes the vendors are as happy as they can be given the fact that they are not doing the same numbers that they have in the past. She stated that she feels that everyone knows the Village is doing the best that we can in 2020.

8) **Church Liaison Report (Jeff Petertil)** - Petertil thanked everyone on the Commission for their continued support. Several of the Churches traditional partners have not been able to participate this year so Petertil reported on how the church has filled those voids. In addition, he reported that sales are 50-70% of last years' totals. Since the Church has not sold coffee with the donuts, the Church may speak to Colleen and/or Health Director Mike Charley about the possibility of selling the bags of coffee beans they have at a booth in the Market. Colleen stated that she would need to check on this and will discuss it with Petertil.

9) **Vendor Liaison Report (Frank Damaino)** – Not present at the meeting. McNichols pointed out that Damiano usually does not join us for meetings in the summer because he is at other Farmers' Markets.

10) **Committee/Project Reports**

a. **Volunteer.** Volunteer Thank You. Commissioner Purrenhage expressed her thanks to every volunteer that has been contributing. She mentioned that the Market has consistently has over twenty volunteers per week. Purrenhage expressed a special thank you to Robin and Rachel for their outstanding assistance.

Purrenhage updated the Commission on discussions she has had with Commissioner Knier and Vendor Representative Damaino about holding a volunteer

appreciation event in early October. Mr. Frank Pond has also been included in the discussion.

Currently, Purrenhage is thinking that in early October, a booth would be set up, close to the Information booth, where volunteers could check in and receive some type of pre-packaged thank-you bag that would have a variety of items from vendors and potentially "Market Bucks" that could be used to purchase more produce. She estimates that we would need to prepare bags for 50-55 people. She mentioned that Village staff could also be included, per feedback from McNichols and Davis. The committee will continue to discuss this potential idea and bring back some low-cost ideas to thank this year's volunteers and staff. Any other Commissioners that want to participate in this effort should contact either Julia or Jennifer. Commissioner Ross and Cianciolo both expressed interest in assisting with this effort. Commissioner Purrenhage stated that she had a list of tasks to complete regarding the initiative. Chairperson Lencioni asked Purrenhage to distribute the list to Commission members and then Commissioners can look at the list and offer assistance, where possible.

- b. **On-Line Ordering & Pick-Up Pilot Program.** Shopper Survey. Commissioner Hahs discussed the results from a survey regarding the pilot on-line ordering & pick-up program. She reported a 50% response rate from 300 customers who have participated in the pilot-program. The responses indicate that a majority of the approximately 150 respondents used to attend the walking-market in previous years, many weekly. Half of the survey respondents (Approximately 75) have utilized the pilot-program 2-5 times with 30% of respondents (Approximately 45) utilizing the service "most weeks." The survey results indicate that 50% of respondents (Approximately 75) do not attend the walking-Market and that 40% of respondents (Approximately 60) also attend the walking-Market. The survey results indicate that 66% of respondents (Approximately 99), who are utilizing the pilot program, are residents of the Village of Oak Park. Finally, the survey indicated that 66% of respondents (Approximately 99) are utilizing the pilot program because someone in their household is at "High-Risk" during this Covid-19 emergency.

Chairperson Lencioni thanked everyone involved in performing and tabulating the survey. She described the results and "enlightening" and she mentioned how much she likes the fact that the survey shows how local residents find the pilot program to be useful.

- c. **Communications.** New Blog Posts. Commissioner. Chairperson Lencioni mentioned that we need more people to write more blog posts. Commissioner Stewart mentioned that there are several individuals who are working on pieces to post. She mentioned that the goal was at least one per month and she believes that we currently have three or four.
- d. **Vendor Appreciation.** Chairperson Lencioni asked Commission members to brainstorm ideas on what the Commission could do to show appreciation to the market vendors. This will be discussed at the next Commission meeting.

## 11) Old Business

- a. **Research/Increase Diversity of Vendors.** Chairperson Lencioni mentioned that the Commission will be discussing vendor diversity in the off-season. If any Commissioner is interesting in leading this effort please contact the Chairperson.

## 12) New Business

- a. **WBEZ Interview to Promote Market.** Chairperson Lencioni stated that she believes there are still people who do not know the Market is occurring this year or know about the new pilot-program and she is wondering if we could get a WBEZ interview to promote the Market. Commissioner Knier stated that she feels we need an all-out media campaign to make everyone aware that the Market is happening. Chairperson Lencioni stated that maybe she will contact the Wednesday Journal to see if they are interested in doing articles. This is an item we can address more during the September Commission meeting. Commissioner Purrenhage and Chairperson Lencioni stated that maybe everyone could consider posting on their own social media to generate additional awareness regarding the Market.

- 13) **Adjourn.** A motion was made by Commissioner Hahs and seconded by Commissioner Purrenhage to adjourn the meeting at 8:25pm. The motion passed.

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