

FARMERS' MARKET COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
April 14, 2021
7:00 PM
Conducted Remotely

Commission Present: Julia Knier, Jill Stewart, Rachel Hahs, Myndi DeVore, Dina Ross, Katie Weaver, Julia Knier and Dominic Cianciolo, Liz Stolfa

Commission Not-Present: Jessica Green

Staff Liaison Present: Cameron Davis.

Others Present: Vendor Liaison - Frank Damiano, Vendor Liaison; Jeff Petertil, Church Liaison and Frank Pond

- 1) **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Staff Liaison Davis at 7:01 pm. There is not currently a Chairperson of the Farmers' Market Commission. The Mayor will make an appointment of a Commission Chairperson at some point.
- 2) **Agenda Approval:** A motion to accept the agenda, as presented, was made, seconded and approved.
- 3) **Public Comment:** Staff Liaison Davis stated that no public comment had been submitted, per the directions provided on the agenda document.
- 4) **Approval of Minutes:** The February 23, 2021 minutes, as requested were updated a motion was made to accept, seconded and approved. March 10, 2021 minutes motion was made to accept, seconded and approved.
- 5) **Farmers' Market Staff Liaison Report (Cameron Davis, Development Customer Services Department)** – Davis informed the commission that Kimball Ingram, Market Manager would begin his part-time employment with the Village on Wednesday, April 23. Kimball moved to Oak Park from Florida, where he owned a business. He has a strong background in management and is a welcome addition to the Market team.

The Commissioners will be contacted by Executive Secretary Kathy Jacob to schedule Zoom introduction meetings with Kimball, if you individually want to meet Mr. Ingram. Offers have been extended to two candidates for Assistant Market Manager positions. The Village's Human Resources staff is still looking for a candidate to fill the third Assistant position. Davis shared that the Village Manager had agreed to hire additional

Market Assistants, if necessary, to help staff the online ordering pick-up program. Davis reported that there has not been a lot of interest in the available Assistant Market Manager positions. Davis will work with Commissioner Hahs to see if the additional Assistants would be enough to staff the on-line ordering pick-up program, along with the volunteers we're able to secure. Commissioner Ross asked if the positions are posted on the website and Davis confirmed they were.

Mr. Pond asked Davis how many total employees for the market. Davis reiterated one Market Manager, three Assistant Market Managers (walking Market) and possibly three additional Market Assistants for the online ordering pick-up program. The Market Manager will work at the Market and at Village Hall during the week and the Market on Saturdays. Assistant Managers will mainly work the Market on Saturdays. The Market Manager will determine if any of them would be needed to work on administrative work at Village Hall during the week.

Commissioner Hahs expressed concern about the number of hours the Market Assistants, if we are able to find them, would work at the online ordering pick-up program Aggregation on Saturdays. Also, she asked Davis who would do the weekly administrative work. Davis said the Kathy Jacob, Executive Secretary for DCS and Kimball would be able to assist with any online ordering and pick-up program administrative work. Davis and Hahs will have a further discussion about the available hours of Assistants on Saturday again, assuming we are able to hire any.

Davis shared that he had been informed that as of today, there would be no special events at the market through the mid-to-end of June. Commissioner Knier asked if that includes Go Green Days. She pointed out the first two markets (May 22 and May 29) are lean on vendors and that these dates are the best time, in terms of available space, to schedule the Go Green Day event. Knier stated that Go Green Days is about community outreach and education and had, prior to 2020, become an important piece of the Market. Davis stated that his best advice is for the Commission to plan special events to potentially return in July, potentially the weekend following the 4th holiday. At this point, with limited information, this is Davis' best advice at this point. Commissioner Knier stated that the Market can be very full in July and it's best to have the Go Green event in the beginning of the season. Commissioner Hahs asked Commissioner Knier if she knew how much the Go Green Days event affected market attendance in June vs. July. Commissioner Knier felt it was difficult to compare June to July attendance. Commissioner Knier

stated that Go Green Day vendors would fill out empty space in May as opposed to July, when the Market is full of vendors and has less available space. Commissioner Ross asked Davis to go back to the Village with how Go Green Days benefits the Market. David stated that he would raise the Commissions advocacy and concern with his supervisor the Director of Development Customer Services.

Davis reported that 19 Market vendor applications have been received, thus far. He is reviewing the applications and making sure all of the required tax forms, insurance certificated, licenses, etc. are correct is a very time-consuming process. He will keep Mr. Damiano apprised of the process and will be giving the Market Manager direction to look at ways of simplifying the process in the future. Davis reported that he will start sending out acceptance emails to vendors this week. In the tentative approval e-mails, Davis will inform vendors of Kimball's hire. The Market Manager will be speaking with vendors soon as we have a number of documents that we need to get from almost all vendors to complete their applications with the Village.

The Market vendor lay-out has not yet been decided and won't be until next month. Commissioner Hahs stated that with Prairie Wind not returning, there will be a gap in organic vendors. She asked who will take the lead in finding vendors. Davis stated that he believed one or more organic vendors had applied to participate in the Market. The Market Manager will take the lead on finding any vendor the Oak Park Market may have room for in 2021.

- 6) **Church Liaison Report (Jeff Petertil)** – At the last Commission meeting Petertil mentioned that the Church had a shortfall on non-profit partners for this year. Recently. The Church has received several inquiries that they are pursuing so they should be good with partners. Davis met with Jeff and other Church members on March 19th at the Church parking lot and discussed the 2021 Farmers' Market set-up. Davis will set-up a meeting with Kimball, Jeff and church members at the church on Wednesday, April 23rd. Davis has already cleaned, organized and inventoried the equipment to help with purchasing any necessary extra tables, tents, etc. Davis mentioned that he plans to have Kimball look at the storage area in the basement at their meeting. Peteril shared that Davis has given the church booth space within the Market, if necessary, to sell donuts, which they are happy to use. He does have a question on the alley access during the Market. Davis will be meeting with Public Works staff at the Church parking lot to go over market logistics and the alley will be part of the discussion.

Commissioner Hahs asked if selling coffee had been decided. Davis says that he brings that up regularly to his supervisor but that he has not received confirmation that the church can sell coffee as this time. Davis mentioned that since the church has an agreement with the Village to rent the lot, it is on the schedule to be repaired, patched, etc. This repair work may happen in 2021, before the Market starts. If not in 2021, then the work will occur before the Market in 2022.

- 7) **Vendor Liaison Report (Frank Damiano)** – Liaison Damiano stated that everyone is looking forward to having the Market in the church parking lot. Davis asked him to share the discussion they had on how other markets simplify the application process. Damiano said that markets have a two-application process, an extensive one for new vendors and a simplified application for returning vendors that have no changes from previous years. Davis shared that a large OP Farmers' Market database is being created, which will make processing applications easier in the future. Current applications are 17 pages long, with significant documentation attached. When time allows, the Market Manager will work on simplifying the process for the future. The creation of a useful, professional database, in 2021, is the first step.

8) **Committee/Project Reports**

- a) **Volunteers:** Commissioner DeVore will be meeting with Jen Purrenhage this week to discuss how the volunteer sign-up genius worked last year. She expressed concerns about the on-line ordering pick-up program if we are not able to fill the Market Assistants positions. She asked how the program can move forward if there are not dedicated Market Assistant's available to run it. Without dedicated part-time staff she mentioned that we should not do the program. She mentioned that as we get closer to the Market's start, she will have a better idea on how to move forward with volunteers. Davis received several potential volunteer names this week and also has received volunteer interest from Village staff members. Davis will forward all of those names to Commissioners DeVore and Green.
- b) **Communications:** Commissioner Stewart mentioned that Davis at the last meeting was to forward on the part of the application that the vendors filled-in about what makes them unique. Davis replied that the question is not required to be filled out and not many of the vendors answered the question. He will forward the completed comments to Stewart from the vendors who supplied information. Stewart said that she will review the comments and decide how we can best to use the information. Davis also asked that Commissioner Stewart review the Farmers' Market page on the

Village website to see if she has any suggested changes.

- c) **Aggregation:** Commissioner Hahs has talked to What's Good on several different ways that they can help the on-line ordering pick-up program to work in Oak Park. She questioned whether the Village has determined where Aggregation would be held. Davis will follow-up with Hahs on this issue.
 - d) **Sustainability:** Commissioner Knier has nothing to report.
- 9) **2020 Vendor Survey Results:** Davis turned the discussion to the results of the 2020 vendor survey results. The memo about the survey results, that he distributed to the Commission several weeks back, is full of good information.

Commissioner Ross was surprised to see how many vendors were unaware of the Aggregation program. Davis felt that even though vendors participated in the program they were unaware that on-line ordering was Aggregation. The survey results may have been affected by the name.

Davis stated that a question of particular interest was #24, the question asking the vendors to compare 2020 sales to 2019. Davis was happily surprised that 30% of vendors responded that sales were up in 2020. The survey stated that an additional 24% of the vendors described 2020 sales were the same as 2019.

Commissioner Ross mentioned that the concept of customers only going in one direction appears not to have been popular. Davis stated that at this point, he's been given direction at least at the start of 2021, the Market experience will be one-way. You will enter the Market off lake Street and make a right and move in a counter-clockwise direction. This may change as the 2021 Market moves forward.

Davis mentioned that there was a long comment on Village Health Department Inspectors and relationship with vendors. Last year's inspector has moved on to another opportunity and Davis will discuss this matter with the Health Department staff member who will handle the inspections.

10) **Old Business:** None.

11) **New Business:** Commissioner Knier stated that a number of vendors will apparently not be returning to the market. What is in place to replace these lost vendors? Davis stated that it is the Market Manager's job to attempt to secure additional vendors, if necessary. Commissioner Hahs asked if every vendor had received an application. Vendor Representative Frank Damiano

confirmed that all vendors have received applications.

A question arose regarding the Markets 2021 schedule, Davis responded that the Market Manager will establish a schedule once staff receives directions regarding special events and potential Covid-19 related limitations.

- 12) **Adjourn:** A motion was made, seconded and approved, to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Next Meeting: May 12, 2021