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2 **Public Market Advisory Commission Minutes- January 5, 2010**
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4 **Meeting Agenda**

5 1. Call to Order

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7 The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm
8

9 2. Roll Call

10
11 Members Present: (3) S. Brines, D. Black, P. Pollack

12 Members Absent: (1) G. Service

13 Staff Present: (1) M. Notarianni

14 Guests: (0)
15

16 3. Approval of Agenda

17 4. Special Presentations

18 5. Public Commentary – Agenda items only (3 minutes per speaker)
19

20 G. Thompson: The subject is the proposed market rules and the labeling of organic
21 produce. I sent an info packet on the MI Organic Producers Act and the National Organic
22 Production Act shortly before the December meeting. Today I sent an additional email as
23 a result of a communication with a member of the MDOA. In short, certification is a
24 national requirement and the certifiers are nationally recognized or licensed. The state of
25 MI requires the additional step of registration, which is basically sending the state a copy
26 of your certification and a check. The language requiring submission of both certification
27 and registration is adequately covered in the existing market rules. We've heard some
28 comments that organic certification is prohibitively expensive for a small producer. I
29 talked with a vendor who expressed interest in changing to organic certification a few
30 Saturdays ago. I asked him how long he anticipated it would take him to recover the
31 certification fee, estimated to be approximately \$600. His reply was, "If I could put the
32 sign out today, I'd have a higher than \$600 gross increase". In short, one Saturday. He
33 was not particularly concerned about the certification cost. His primary concern was in
34 the organic production: would it be more labor-intensive, would he have lower yields?
35 Both of these are common for initial transition to organic. There are also many other
36 vendors at the market who do not find the certification cost prohibitive: Tantre,
37 Carpenter, Gardenworks, Wilson Farms and Shetler are all certified organic. Also
38 several years ago MI would reimburse small farmers for the cost of the certification.
39 Currently MI participates in a federal program that will reimburse farmers for up to 2/3 of
40 the cost. I don't think the certification cost is really prohibitive if you wish to go down
41 that road. There is a strong economic advantage in the Organic label and the primary
42 cost is in the actual production through organic means. This means there is a strong

43 profit in advertising organic and producing otherwise. If this is not already happening in
44 the market, it will. That is the reason I would encourage you to consider modifying the
45 market rules or enforce the existing rules to require that someone advertising or implying
46 organic be certified organic. This does not limit anyone from selling at market, we are
47 only discussing the advertising.
48

49 6. Approval of Minutes

50 a. Meeting of December 1, 2009
51

52 7. Commission Business

53 a. Old Business

54 b. New Business

55 (1) New Vendor Discussion
56

57 M. Notarianni: Applications are slowing down, but new vendor requests include a farm
58 who is certified organic who wants to bring organic beef and pork, an artisan interested in
59 bringing block printing, notecards and small stuffed animals, and a vendor who wants to
60 sell handmade chocolates, coffee, baked good, hot chocolate, and ceramic boxes just on
61 Saturdays. This vendor has some relationship to an estate in Latin America where the
62 coffee and chocolate is grown on their property, but they are applying not as a grower but
63 as a producer of value-added products.
64

65 S. Brines: We could use more vendors throughout the winter. We already have some of
66 those things but variety can be good.
67

68 8. Reports and Communications

69 a. Market Manager
70

71 M. Notarianni: No vendors have been inspected in the last month. November and
72 December were quite busy at market. We sold the remainder of our tote bags and now
73 we have another batch in the office. We are working to promote the winter market,
74 hanging banners and CTN produced another video segment on the winter market. I was
75 also invited to speak with a group of national food writers who were visiting Ann Arbor.
76 We are running ads in the Observer, Chronicle, PFC newsletter, Westside News. I
77 received one of the city of Ann Arbor's customer service grants, to institute a program
78 that works similar to the EBT program. It will allow shoppers to use their credit or debit
79 cards, in exchange for tokens to spend at the market. The tokens can also be used as gift
80 certificates.
81

82 P. Pollack: Perhaps you could collaborate with the KDA's gift certificate program!
83

84 P. Pollack: You mentioned the seasonal banners: any thoughts about where we are with
85 any new market signage?
86

87 M. Notarianni: I am in the process of updating all of the market's outdoor signage.
88

89 P. Pollack: One of the aspects of the earlier master plan was making sure the 4th Ave side
90 has an indication of the market, maybe at the market's entrances.

91
92 M. Notarianni: Continuing with my report, there are two new vendors who haven't started
93 attending yet - Willowbrook Farms who will bring heirloom organic beans, eggs and
94 fruits and vegetables, and Unity Vibrations Living Kombucha.

95
96 b. Related Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Task Forces

97
98 M. Notarianni: In the next week, the outreach committee will be meeting with the city's
99 outreach coordinator for some direction and guidance.

100
101 P. Pollack: Policy and Procedures subcommittee - there was a meeting on the 15th?

102
103 D. Barkman: We discussed updating the application and inspection forms, to include
104 more information for added clarity. We also discussed the issue of organic certification.
105 For the people we are sure are certified and registered we could give them an extra
106 hanging vendor sign that states something to that affect, so that it gives customers some
107 confidence and perhaps other vendors incentive to seek out certification.

108
109 P. Pollack: That's an appropriate approach where it's a market produced sign rather than
110 an individual's sign.

111
112 M. Notarianni: We wouldn't necessarily force everyone to change their signs, but we can
113 provide an additional official sign for those who have verified they are certified organic.

114
115 P. Pollack: This is a great way to get vendors to help us to market the market. The more
116 we can make it a personal experience between the vendor and customer the better.

117
118 P. Pollack: It seems as if we're focusing on several items now, ways of changing the
119 application and inspection form, giving a response back on inspection, so we need to
120 think about gathering that together as suggestions and thinking about when we will be
121 having our public meeting with the vendors. We should pick a date, even if it's tentative
122 and then we will have our suggestions ready within two weeks or ten days of the meeting.
123 So I think the policies and procedures subcommittee should pull these suggestions
124 together and drafting some documents and thinking about scheduling the meeting in mid-
125 march.

126
127 (Policies and Procedure subcommittee meeting scheduled for 5:30pm, in the
128 market building, January 19)

129
130 c. Items from Commissioners

131
132 d. Transmittals/communications received

133
134 (1) Kapnick Orchards, 12/21/2009, EBT and Project Fresh redemptions

135

136 M. Notarianni: Part of the confusion is that there's two things the vendors are reimbursed
137 for: one is EBT tokens from the Bridge card program, where the money goes directly
138 from a customers account into the city's account and then I turn into Finance each week
139 how much each vendor is owed, and I'm not sure why that was delayed; and then there
140 are the project fresh vouchers which customers get from the State and I have to mail
141 those in and wait to get the money back from the state, and that was delayed because I
142 don't have the money until I get the money from the state, and the timing of that can't
143 really be helped.

144

145 D. Barkman: Is it possible in the budget if we could make a line item for this, and then it
146 could be funded up front so that vendors wouldn't have to wait till the end of the year?

147

148 M. Notarianni: I think that's a good idea. I will start discussions on this with the City.

149

150 (2) G. Thompson, 1/7/2010, Organic certification of vendors

151

152 9. Public Commentary – General (3 minutes per speaker)

153 10. Adjournment

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155 The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 pm.

156

157 **General announcement - meetings will still be on the first Tuesday of every**
158 **month, but will now take place at 5:30pm, instead of 6pm.**

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