

February 7, 2014

Dear Members of the Market Advisory Commission,

My husband Mark and I have been vendors at the Kerrytown market for three years. We sell annual vegetables, and aim to attend market as many weeks of the year as possible. Our farm specializes in four season growing, meaning we have fresh greens and herbs, as well as storage crops to sell throughout the winter. We are excited about the new trend in winter growing, and what it offers market customers. When we show up with salad greens and carrots in February, the gratitude customers express to us is overwhelming. They are so glad to be able to continue to eat local produce in the winter months.

In spite of the positive feedback we've received from customers, we are very disappointed about having to conduct the winter market outdoors. This cold winter has especially highlighted the ludicrous nature of our outdoor winter market. Not only is it an uncomfortable experience for vendors and customers, but it is permanently damaging to our produce. We've lost countless batches of winter produce from head lettuce to cilantro to winter squash due to frost damage *inside our tent with a heater on!* This frozen produce we can no longer sell and our business simply has to absorb the loss. We aim for a very high quality of product at our farm, and to have that quality dashed because we are forced to sell our food out in the elements is very frustrating to us.

Just imagine the increased attendance—both vendors and customers--this market would see if we had an indoor location in winter! Our farm's sales potential, and that of every farm, would greatly increase. We would choose make investments on our farm in winter growing infrastructure and crop storage in order to produce more, if we knew we had an indoor space to sell it.

We understand that there have been a number of conversations about winterizing the market in the past. We are not advocating that the market invest in any kind of walls, tarps, or other costly and time-consuming add-ons to the current market structure. Instead, we are proposing that the market consider an alternative, indoor space to conduct business from the months of Dec-April. This could be a public school auditorium, Cobblestone Farm Barn, a recreation center like The Meri Lou Murray, or some other city-owned property. And while it may not have the best layout for unloading/loading, and some vendors may have to get used to not setting up right next to their trucks, the effort will be worthwhile when we consider the increased attendance and sales we will all see.

We, as vendors, are more than happy to pay an increased fee for our market stall if we knew that come winter we would be in a heated, indoor space selling our food. In fact, the market might consider charging separate fees for May-Nov and Dec-April. That way the market could defray the increased cost of heat and any rental fees in the winter months, and preserve a lower market fee for those vendors who only want to attend in the summer months. A good example of this model is the Somerville, MA farmers market. Somerville has a separate management for it's summer market that runs May-Nov in outdoor Davis Square. In winter, the market moves into the city-owned Armory building where there is a separate market management and separate vendors fees for Dec-April.

We hope that the market commission will prioritize this issue so that come December 2014 we will all find ourselves selling indoors and not exposed to the elements. If not, then our farm is seriously considering ending all our market sales past December. We simply cannot take the loss anymore.

Sincerely,  
Alex Cacciari  
Mark Nowak  
Seeley Farm