

1 **Public Market Advisory Commission Minutes**

2
3 Thursday, August 4, 2011, 5:30 PM
4

5 1. Call to Order

6 The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM
7

8 2. Roll Call

9 Members Present: S. Brines, L-J. Hard , D. Santacroce, D. Barkman, A. Germain

10 Members Absent: 0

11 Staff Present: M. Notarianni,

12 Guests: 0
13

14 3. Approval of Agenda

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16 4. Special Presentations
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18 5. Public Commentary Period
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20 6. Approval Minutes
21

22 7. Commission Business

23 a. Old Business
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25 S. Brines: What about the resolution we passed?
26

27 M. Notarianni: The resolution will move on to Council so we'll have to wait and see what they
28 do with that. Because the fees were set as part of the budget for the 2012 fiscal year, it's already
29 approval by Council and budgeted in for the vision of the evening market and the market as a
30 whole. So I have no idea what they will decide. Without hearing any indication from them
31 about what they will decide, I still have the power to offer discounts to the vendors on days it is
32 especially slow.

33 L-J Hard: Do you have a timeline for when it will be on their agenda?
34

35 M. Notarianni: I think it will be on the next meeting.
36

37 b. New Business
38

39 (1) New Vendor Discussion
40

41 M. Notarianni: Not quite as many applications this time. We have earring and jewelry made
42 with feathers, organic body care, French macaroons - these are all for the existing market so far.
43 One for eggs, poultry, beef, duck, lamb, rabbit, and goat all on one application. The last two are
44 for the Evening market and this is an Amish farm that wants to bring a variety of baked goods,
45 jams and jellies, pickles, produce, and also rugs, and cheese, and eggs. And a vendor who wants
46 to be a prepared food vendor with raw, vegetarian food.

47

48 S. Brines: The last two were for Wednesday Evening only?

49

50 M. Notarianni: Yes, for some the hours are better. One thing we talked about for the Evening
51 Market was that there's not a huge customer base right now, so people are wanting more
52 produce, but there's a delicate balance between adding more of what people want and just
53 diluting sales for the existing vendors, so I'm wondering if we have enough produce already,
54 since I feel like there's more and more every week.

55

56 S. Brines: So maybe more vegetables, but customers are not finding the vegetables they want.
57 Well, I'm in favor of more fruit at the evening market.

58

59 D. Santacroce: I think that people come more for food, as opposed to crafts, so the product mix
60 should reflect that.

61

62 M. Notarianni: Yes, and the evening market doesn't actually have any crafts and at the other
63 market, there's a limit to the number of annual stalls that can be taken by artisans, but beyond
64 that we try to control it when applications come in.

65

66 D. Santacroce What is considered a craft?

67

68 M. Notarianni: Basically anything that's not food. So soap, lotion, jewelry, etc.

69

70 L. Hart: In terms of the fruit at the market, how well attended are the jam making workshops at
71 the Saturday market?

72

73 M. Notarianni: Pretty good. They are pretty well attended.

74

75 L-J Hard: Maybe she could come to the Wed. Evening.

76

77 M. Notarianni: Yes, she came once and was going to come again but it was one of the super hot
78 days. But yes, we hope to add more activities like that.

79

80 S. Brines: Well, I'm not sure what more to say. It sounds like you've got a handle on the idea

81 that the market needs more time to catch on and get a bigger customer base so that other produce
82 could show up then.

83

84 D. S.: Is there a plan to try to reach out to the university?

85

86 A. Germain: I have a contact with MHealth that I can give you the contact info for.

87

88 M. Notarianni: Yeah, I'd love that.

89

90 A. Germain: Grad students shop pretty regularly and Rackham has a welcome fair that some
91 market flyers could go to.

92

93 D. Santacroce.: I'd be happy to spend an hour putting flyers around. A lot of students just don't
94 know about it.

95

96 S. Brines: Maybe some full flyers and some quarter sheets. Sounds like everyone here would
97 pass some out.

98

99 D. Barkman: The undergrads probably have a housing section that you could get some in.

100

101 D. Santacroce.: I can look into what I can do.

102

103 M. Notarianni: Yes, I've gone to the Healthy living fair for Rackham before but it didn't seem to
104 be super well attended.

105

106 S. Brines: It sounds like we should pursue all of these ideas and find out if there is a more
107 centralized welcome packet, or enlist volunteers to hang flyers on poles near housing. The grad
108 student group I work with was planning on having an informational packet, but it was mostly
109 within the school and some things about where to shop, so we should get the flyer in there.

110

111 S. Brines: So it sounds like the discussion became more of a goals discussion. So, maybe one
112 should be to pursue campus marketing, since students seem like prime shoppers. Any thing else?

113

114 M. Notarianni: I like the idea of continuing to make the market more welcoming and accessible
115 to more people and income levels. And the winter market can always use more attention, so
116 make that a well-attended place. The commission has reviewed the operations of the market, but
117 we could choose one of those items, how we handle infections, or vendor approval, etc. and look
118 at that?

119

120 S. Brines: Marketing is always a goal. Another I had is re-evaluating the inspection situation.

121 We are looking for a new inspector, correct?

122

123 M. Notarianni: Yes, our inspector resigned, so we are indeed in the hunt for a new inspector.

124 And we have a lot of vendors that need to be inspected right now, since it is the middle of
125 summer. All the vendors need an inspection every two years, so ensure they are producing what
126 they sell. Some people may be inspected more than once every two years depending on what
127 they do seasonally. There has been turnover in the last few years with the inspector due to it
128 being a challenging position and only part-time. It's difficult for the inspector to find the burden
129 of proof that someone is doing something wrong. There's a ton of gray area from product to
130 product, because we haven't written out step by step what you must do to produce every product.

131 So for plants, do you have to grow from seed, or what counts as you producing it. So it would
132 be nice to refine the inspection process so that the vendors feel like it is worth their time and
133 money.

134

135 D. Barkman: Did we get a report on how many he did this year?

136

137 M. Notarianni: I think he probably did about 25. But he is writing a report and I'll have it next
138 month.

139

140 D. Santacroce: How many vendors are there?

141

142 M. Notarianni: About 150. I go and visit new vendors in the spring so I wouldn't make them pay
143 again for another inspection. There's between 40-50 to do in one year. Technically all of the
144 vendors need to be inspected, but in my time here, we have never inspected the artisan vendors,
145 in part because the inspectors we've had haven't felt comfortable in that area. So we probably
146 should inspect them too, but it hasn't been the political issue as the agricultural ones.

147

148 D. Barkman: So he got you about halfway through.

149

150 M. Notarianni: Yeah.

151

152 S. Brines: Is evaluating this process a good goal to have? One question I have is whether the
153 inspection process is worth it or are there alternatives. Do we need someone to spend more time
154 on it, is there a budget for that?

155

156 M. Notarianni: My assistant and I have started documenting all the producers' stock each day of
157 the market, to track quantity and quality. We've talked about the inspector doing at-market
158 inspections, but that is hard to set up, but there has to be a connection between what they have at
159 the farm and a detailed idea of what they bring to market. Otherwise it's not worth it.

160

161 D. Barkman: So you're assistant does it and takes pictures when she sees something
162 questionable? It seems it really takes someone enter it into a system and check in overtime.
163

164 D. Santacroce: It sounds like then that you'd want to inspect right when you see something
165 suspicious.
166

167 D. Barkman: It shouldn't need to be really proactive as long as things correlate at market and the
168 farm.
169

170 S. Brines: It sounds there's a need for continuity. So a sketch of this data collection at market
171 seems like a nice start to adding some continuity.
172

173 D. Santacroce: Is there a file on each vendor?
174

175 M. Notarianni: Oh yes, application, inspection report, licenses.
176

177 D. Barkman: And the application is supposed to detail what you expect to bring to market, so it
178 should match up within reason to what you do bring to market. So some of it is common sense,
179 so you really need an inspector who knows the business and that was a complaint from the
180 farmers from some of the previous ones.
181

182 S. Brines: Someone from MSU has a potential lead. We worked on tweaking some of the
183 application and inspector documents, but I heard that we could even make sure that we're
184 enforcing what's on the books. But we could take a look at what other markets are doing.
185

186 M. Notarianni: IN my previous experience, there weren't too many other markets that had taken
187 it to the level of having an inspector but maybe that has changed now.
188

189 D. Barkman: Could a MSU student do it part-time? Or do it as a master's project.
190

191 S. Brines: Are there other producers-only markets around?
192

193 M. Notarianni: No, the only ones I know of would be the market in Madison, WI, the
194 Greenmarkets in New York City, but lots of other markets claim to be producers only but don't
195 have the infrastructure on the back end to keep up with it.
196

197 S. Brines: The farmers market listserv may be a resource to find info sharing.
198

199 D. Barkman: Or find information from the other markets vendors go to.
200

201 D. S.: Is there a sense that there's a lot of play in the gray area? People are pushing the rules?

202

203 M. Notarianni: Yes, because we don't have rules so detailed as to say what defines that you
204 produced something for every product because we didn't want to write rules that were un-
205 enforceable. Some things are very clear, but some rules just say you have to "put considerable
206 effort" into making a craft. The market in Madison has rules about how long you have to have a
207 plant before selling it and that you must grow the greens you use to make a wreath, etc. So there
208 is a spectrum of how detailed we could be.

209

210 S. Brines: So I guess part of our job would be to figure out how big of an issue this is and if it's
211 worth our time to work on it. I would add that we should develop a database of information
212 about all the vendors. Maybe we should hear a report for what's been done and what might be
213 added. I'd suggest the addition of a bio to the next round of applications so we can use it for
214 marketing or as a face of the vendor. We could explore highlighting vendors in the website.

215

216 M. Notarianni: I think it's a great idea.

217

218 S. Brines: It might give customers more information if they are concerned with producer only
219 issues. So outreach was another goal, and others?

220

221 M. Notarianni: I think the winter and the Wednesday day market should be on our minds.

222

223 D. Santacroce: How much does the city look at what we bring in vs. what is put into it?

224

225 M. Notarianni: The market is an enterprise fund so it has to have a balanced budget every year.
226 It's self-contained, the money coming in is from the market, not outside it.

227

228 D. Santacroce: So if we bring in more, does it go into a market fund?

229

230 M. Notarianni: Yes, there is a market fund and it is pretty considerable. In theory that money
231 goes mostly to infrastructure repairs and renovations at the market, but the massive renovation
232 plan from 5 years ago didn't happen.

233

234 D. Santacroce: So the winter market's problem is that it's outside in the winter, so what's the
235 cost of temporary plastic barriers?

236

237 M. Notarianni: When I started 4 years ago, there were about 8-10 vendors coming in the winter,
238 now there's close to 40. Eggs, meat, baked goods, storage crops and produce from hoop houses,
239 are all still there.

240

241 S. Brines: There's an increase in winter hoopouses growers.
242

243 D. Santacroce: Do you need city council's approval to get a contractor to put of barriers?
244

245 M. Notarianni: I think so, it's not my fund, I don't have access to it without approval, I think.
246 But I agree that it's something we need to do something about. People can't even put out what
247 they want to sell because it freezes.
248

249 D. Santacroce: I think a goal would be to figure out whether or how you can use that fund more
250 fluidly. The other thing I thought of, is how much more space could you fill during the big
251 rushes in fall and spring? Are you turning down 20 people in those times?
252

253 M. Notarianni: Probably. Closing off Detroit St and using Community High might come with
254 their own difficulties, though.
255

256 D. S: But it would also bring more income. So if that's something that you think you could
257 make use of the space, a goal should be to look at what it would take to get more space so you
258 could start bringing in extra money.
259

260 M. Notarianni: As shoppers, would that feel disjointed to you on Detroit St?
261

262 L-J Hard: You could put more popular people there to draw shoppers.
263

264 S. Brines: Is there someone at the city that could help with that last goal: 1) enclosing the market,
265 2) how to use the fund. It could go into the customer and vendor survey.
266

267 D. Santacroce: It could be a sensitive issue since the cuts, but if they know that the market is
268 self-sufficient and you just want to use your profit.
269

270 S. Brines: That's a lot of goals.
271

272 M. Notarianni: I'll write these up in a summary.
273

274 D. Santacroce: I would also suggest to put these in order of priority by timeline.
275

276 S Brines: So a summary, and look over those, then prioritize, then have input on next month's
277 meeting agenda. I'll get a draft out and we'll tweak it at next month's meeting.
278

279 M. Notarianni: The other thing is the survey – to both shoppers and vendors. It'd probably be a
280 different survey for each market.

281
282 S. Brines: So we could continue to look over the ones you sent us and send more question
283 suggestions. The other thing is to think about how to send these out.
284
285 L-J. Hard: A volunteer with an iPad would be good.
286
287 D. Santacroce: If you come up with questions, I can help develop them into a good survey
288 methodology so that you can have data that would show trends from year to year. Then I can
289 help get it online and distribute it.
290
291 S. Brines: And we could call for volunteers to go around market with their iPads to survey
292 customers.
293
294 L. Hart: Was there an increase in newsletter subscribers after the facebook post?
295
296 M. Notarianni: No, not that I can tell. I tried to look at the analytics, but I think they're wrong. I
297 agree that the interface to sign up for the newsletter is not user friendly, but I'm stuck. I've
298 asked the IT department to change my links and they won't.
299
300 S. Brines: So that sounds like a side project. So we should make September a goal for getting
301 the survey stuff out.
302
303 8. Reports and Communications
304 a. Market Manager
305
306 M. Notarianni: Our inspector is unfortunately quitting, so I'm looking for an inspector. Last
307 week we had a DIY fair and the local WIC office come to the Wednesday Evening market and
308 those were well-attended. The Double Up Food Bucks program had \$5,000 in sales and 90 new
309 users in the last month or so.
310
311 S. Brines: We should propose increasing the advertising budget. Perhaps part of the survey
312 could be "have you seen the advertisements?" That way we know where it would be best
313 allocated.
314
315 8. C. Items from Commissioners
316
317 S. Brines: A customer in the market was wondering about Trunk-a-palooza and had an idea of
318 using it during the Wednesday Evening market.
319
320 M. Notarianni: This year they're doing it once during Nash Bash.

321
322 S. Brines: So maybe a mini one during the Wednesday Evening Market so bring traffic. The
323 beer and wine is a model of that, and Slow Food Huron Valley is doing it this month, and we
324 extended the boundary and increased the selection. There were a fair amount of people that
325 came through and we tried to encourage people to shop as well as hang out. We offered 25 cents
326 off if people showed us their purchase from the market. We do need more chairs. We kept track
327 of our sales so we can measure from week to week. A green drinks group is going to have a
328 meetup or two there this month.

329
330 8.d. Transmittals/communications received

331
332 9. Public Commentary – General (3 minutes per speaker)

333 None

334
335 10. Adjournment

336 S. Brines: Move to adjourn around 6:40.