



**Public Market Advisory Commission Minutes
April 21, 2009**

Meeting Agenda

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:38 p.m.

2. Roll Call

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

Members Absent: (1) K. King, G. Service

Staff Present: (1) M. Notarianni

Guests: (1) J. Straw

3. Approval of Agenda

4. Special Presentations

a. Introduction of Jeff Straw, Deputy Manager

P. Pollack: Under special presentations, we have with us Jeff Straw, who has been with the City for 9 months, as the Deputy Manager of Parks Department.

J. Straw: I'm the Parks Deputy Manager, and my purpose tonight is to introduce myself to the Commission, and talk about the FY 10-11 proposed budget. We are in the budget process, and have proposed this year's budget cycle. Before I get into the budget, let me talk a little bit about the process. We put forth a 2 year budget, but City Council will only approve the first year of the budget, for Fiscal Year 2010. When I say Fiscal Year 2010, I mean July 1 2010-July 30 2011. As part of the 2 year budget process, City Council will be approving the first year of the budget. The second year of the budget is only a plan or proposal, which City Council won't be voting to approve until this time next year. I think there's some confusion about what is being adopted by Council, but at this point only the first year is what they will be approving, and the second year is a proposal or a plan. Things could definitely change over the course of the year, with these economic times, and this is something they will consider as they move forwards.

On the expense side, the FY 09 expenses are \$132,439. The proposed FY 10 budget would move those expenses to \$150,775. The largest reason for that increase is staff time, from an administration standpoint. That is the market manager's time, with an increase in salary and benefits, as well as a portion of my time, the Deputy Manager's position. We wanted to more accurately reflect the time that was spent on enterprise

43 funds. Part of my time will also be allocated to 2 other enterprise funds: the golf courses
44 and Recreation Facility Maintenance. That equates to 5% of my salary, which also
45 includes benefits. All of the other elements of the budget have stayed pretty much
46 consistent with what we've had in years past. Some of those costs are fixed costs that we
47 can't control: health care, retirement, are loaded into our budget and we don't control, but
48 have to work within our budget

49
50 As far as the revenue side, the biggest change that's being proposed is a fee increase. A
51 fee increase is being proposed for the annual rates, to move the 1 stall fee from \$250 to
52 \$300, reflecting a 20% increase. Generating operating revenue to offset operating
53 expenses. This is proposed to help offset those expenses. We took into consideration the
54 following fact: there hasn't been a fee increase since 2004, and over the past 5 years, our
55 fixed costs have continued to increase (benefits, utilities, IT charge). We also looked at
56 comparative data of other markets, both regionally and nationally, to see how our fees
57 compared. We're estimating an increase of revenue of about \$12,000. I know there have
58 been some questions regarding the renovations and whether these are in reaction to that,
59 and I would say no. These are only to offset market operating expenses. The market
60 renovation project is being funded out of 4 budget: the general fund of the City, market
61 fund reserve, the DDA, and 2 of our capital millages. This money we've proposed will
62 not be used for that purpose. Also, the timing of our billing cycle may be confusing.
63 Invoices for this year have already gone out; this proposed fee increase will take effect
64 this time next year.

65
66 P. Pollack: We could do a little q & a now, and we also have an agenda item under new
67 business about that. Any questions from us? What is the market reserve balance?

68
69 J. Straw: I don't know off the top of my head.

70
71 D. Black: What was the increase in 2004?

72
73 J. Straw: Roughly the same; I can get you the exact figures

74
75 D. Black: And when before that?

76
77 J. Straw: I think it was 2002, but I'm not positive.

78
79 S. Brines: If fixed costs are going to continue to go up, couldn't we plan for a smaller,
80 incremental increase, so people could plan that into their business budget?

81
82 J. Straw: Yes, that is a very fair question. I think we will look at that in the future, so we
83 won't have to have such a large increase, perhaps every 2 years instead of every 4 or 5.

84
85 5. Public Commentary – Agenda items only (3 minutes per speaker)

86
87
88 S. Robertello: I am a vendor at the market, and I want to speak about the budget

89 increase. All in all, the fees at the market are very fair compared to other markets, but I
90 do want to say that as time has gone on, the City has continued to lump additional fees
91 onto the Farmers Market. First it was the municipal service fee, then the IT fee, and now
92 the Deputy Manager's salary. It seems like the city may be taking the same approach as
93 the federal and state government: because money is becoming tight, they keep pushing
94 additional expenses down the line. Also, there's been some comparison to other markets:
95 this is the only market charging incremental increases for how many stalls you have.
96 Others may have the same fees, and some may actually give discounts with multiple
97 stalls. Another option is giving vendors a discount if they pay early for the season's
98 stalls. We're all in the same boat: we want to hold our costs down as vendors and we
99 don't want to raise our prices this year. I've spoken to a lot of vendors and many of us
100 have decided not to raise our prices this year for the customers. The fee increase has
101 been expected since it has been a long time since the fees have gone up. I would hope
102 you'd look at some of the fee structures of other markets. Is there going to be an increase
103 in parking also? The stalls are very irregularly shaped and sized at the market. Could we
104 price per square foot to make it fairer?
105

106 G. Thompson: I did watch the last meeting, and I want to thank you for getting it on the
107 web, although the audio was a little low. One of the discussions of the last meeting was
108 invasive plants. There is a very small list of invasive plants that cannot be sold in the
109 state of Michigan; the only one that comes to mind is purple loosestrife. There is no City
110 list; there is a list of city plants that are prohibited if you are getting a credit from the
111 City. There was an attempt to apply this to a greater extent across the City, the gardening
112 community protested, and it was unanimously rejected at Council. One of the other items
113 was complaint procedure. I think you should be careful about not letting the process
114 become abusive, both for the time of the market manager and the other vendors. As far
115 as the stall fee increase is concerned, we also realized the increase was planned for the
116 following season, not the immediate season. What I would like to ask is Jeff: there is a
117 hearing this may be by Council on all park fee increases, and is the market fee increase
118 going to be a part of that? (yes) I think that is quite unfair that this Commission hasn't
119 been given the opportunity to comment, and I think there are many ways the market
120 could be improved by more equitable arrangement of fees than simply 25% increase
121 across the board. I would also like to ask you how you got the numbers in the budget? I
122 hope you would correct them or explain them.
123

- 124 6. Approval of Minutes
- 125 a. Meetings of March 3, 2009
- 126 7. Commission Business
- 127 a. Old Business
- 128 (1) 2009 Events
- 129

130 M. Notarianni: This Saturday, April 25, there will be a walk at market in conjunction
131 with Slow Food. We hope to start holding market tours like this at market, and want to
132 see how the interest is. People from the city will be giving away compost starting at 9.
133 In May, Wednesdays start May 6, and like last year, Martin Bandyke from 107one will be
134 there broadcasting his morning show. From May-July, while Christina (the Assistant

135 Market Manager) is around, she'll be presenting a table of kids' activities. I've been
136 coordinating chef demonstrations, which I hop will be held on the 1st Saturday of the
137 month during the summer. I have May June & August scheduled. On May 2nd & 23,
138 Francie from LSNC will be at market with a great horned owl. On May 30th, Zipcar will
139 be at market. The growers' flower day is May 24th, a Sunday. As the summer goes on,
140 I'm hoping once a month (June -September), to have one Saturday with food
141 preservation/canning classes. On the 8th of August is the market's 90th birthday! The
142 month of September is local food month, and the market will sponsor an eat local
143 challenge. The Homegrown festival will be held in the public market. I'd also like to
144 introduce a veggie valet at market based on space and volunteer availability.

145

146 P. Pollack: As part of rental of the market, 3 weddings will be held there this summer;
147 the Kerrytown Book festival comes in the fall as it has in the past, and Trunkapalooza
148 will be every Thursday from June-August, except for the week of Art Fair.

149

150 D. Black: It would be awesome if the weddings could feature market produce.

151

152 M. Notarianni: Yes, I think they are trying to do that!

153

154 S. Brines: I think all the events are great How are you getting the word out? Market
155 news? Local food calendar?

156

157 M. Notarianni: Yes. I am looking for things that don't cost much money.

158

159 S. Brines: I think a big visible calendar at market could be good.

160

161 P. Pollack: Perhaps also sandwich boards in the City; Wednesday for a Saturday event,
162 etc.

163

164 (2) Farmers Market Operating Rules ~ update

165

166 M. Notarianni: One issue we had previously discussed was that of a complaint form,
167 creating a direct linkage between complaint and inspection. I spoke with the attorney at
168 great length about this, and he had several concerns about this. Essentially, he was
169 concerned of the appearance of charging a fee to do something we are already required to
170 do. He worried about the proportionality of the filing fee, and suggested that if we create
171 a filing fee, we'd also need to create a waiver process for those who could not afford the
172 fee. This, in essence, might negate the utility of the fee. I continue to want to foster open
173 communication between market management and vendors, and think perhaps we should
174 work within the current set of rules, and revisit this in the future if we feel we cannot deal
175 with the volume and content of complaints we are receiving.

176

177 S. Brines: Maybe we could get feedback on this idea at next week's public meeting. I
178 think the intent of the process is to create a concrete outlet to provide coverage for abuse
179 of complaints. We need to find some way to cover inspection costs.

180

181 M. Notarianni: Hopefully the inspection fee will do that.

182

183 P. Pollack: This is a good reminder that we were attempting to ensure that complaints
184 which are filed have some validity to them. I agree that open dialogue is good.

185

186 S. Brines: What about the definition of the term “grower” in the rules?

187

188 M. Notarianni: I think, after reading and re-reading the rules, that it seemed adequately
189 defined.

190

191 D. Black: What about the discussion of baked goods?

192

193 P. Pollack: This is an instance where research of rules at other markets could help guide
194 us.

195

196 M. Notarianni: Unfortunately, my research hasn’t shown any precedent. I think the goal
197 is to provide the customer with complete information about what they are getting.

198

199 P. Pollack: Any additional ideas we/the public have can be discussed at the spring
200 meeting. A note on process: any changes we propose will go to PAC, perhaps, and then
201 to City Council.

202

203 (3) Spring 2009 Public Meeting

204

205 P. Pollack: The agenda has eight items. It would be nice if different people could
206 present different things.

207

208 M. Notarianni: Let’s arrange the room so it feels like an inclusive conversation.

209

210 S. Brines: It will also be important to make sure we have comment cards so people can
211 express their opinions in ways other than public speaking.

212

213 b. New Business

214 (1) New Vendor discussion

215

216 M. Notarianni: I’ve received many applications from new vendors, and would like some
217 guidance in making decisions.

218

219 S. Brines: Ultimately, this is a decision for the market manager to make. I would say as
220 long as the new vendors have proper inspections and permitting, it would be fine to admit
221 them.

222

223 D. Black: It is important to maintain the business of vendors already at market. In some
224 instances, introducing another vendor with a repetitive product could decrease everyone’s
225 sales, new and old.

226

227 M. Notarianni: I agree.

228

229 P. Pollack: Perhaps the best approach is to focus on breadth first, tell new vendors to try
230 out Wednesdays first, and let the market forces decide.

231

232 S. Brines: Is there any way to track customer volume?

233

234 M. Notarianni: Yes, I have a series of Rapid Market Assessments planned for the
235 season.

236

237 D. Black: Is there any regular reporting of vendor sales, even in a metric such as bunches
238 of carrots instead of money? That would add another dimension to market volume
239 accounting.

240

241 M. Notarianni: There isn't currently, but I agree that would be a great idea. We did
242 anonymous gross sales reporting at the markets I worked at in Portland, and it was
243 incredibly useful.

244

245 P. Pollack: It is appropriate to really encourage vendors to make more information about
246 their operations available to the public: where is your farm? Can you include a photo of
247 your fields for the customer?

248

249 (2) Proposed FY 10-11 Budget

250

251 J. Straw: I think a goal for this Commission is to create a resolution for City Council, in
252 favor of, or against, the new fees.

253

254 To respond to some of the questions posed previously, the timing is tight, but this
255 information was brought to Commission as soon as possible after the budget was made
256 public.

257

258 D. Black: Can we discuss this at the public meeting next week?

259

260 J. Straw: Yes. May 18th is when City Council will vote on the budget.

261

262 P. Pollack: In that case, we can make a resolution at the meeting on May 5

263

264 S. Brines: To clarify, there will be no stall fee changes for this year?

265

266 J. Straw: Correct. If the fee increases are approved by Council in May, the new fees
267 would take effect a year from now.

268

269 S. Brines: A fee increase across the board, for example a parks rental fee, does not
270 usually affect small businesses the way this fee increase will. If there was a way to
271 structure this increase so vendors could plan for it, that would be more useful.

272

273 P. Pollack: What do the municipal service charge and IT charges do to the market budget
274 as a whole?

275
276 J. Straw: The municipal service charge actually went down this year, and the IT charge
277 did increase: essentially they balance each other out.

278
279 P. Pollack: This Commission has not yet dealt with budget issues, so providing
280 background on the budget for all of us is helpful.

281
282 (3) Temporarily filling vacant PMAC seat

283
284 P. Pollack: Ken King has not been at PMAC meetings for several months now. This is
285 really difficult for all of us to consider, and to discuss, but as a question of moving ahead
286 as a Commission, we will need to talk about finding a temporary fifth Commissioner.

287
288 M. Notarianni: The position is appointed by the Mayor. Interested parties can fill out an
289 application, which then goes to the Mayor for review.

290
291 S. Brines: Perhaps we can call it an “interim” seat. Let’s bring this up at the public
292 meeting as well.

293
294 8. Reports and Communications
295 a. Market Manager

296
297 M. Notarianni: No vendors have been inspected in the past month. I have been gearing
298 up for the spring season. Market has been very busy the past few weeks, which is, I
299 hope, a sign of things to come! This Saturday, representatives of the City’s compost
300 program will be giving away free compost at the market, and answering compost-related
301 questions. I will also be hosting a market tour, in conjunction with Slow Food Huron
302 Valley, and CTN will be filming a spring market promotional video. The market was
303 featured at both a Rackham health and fitness fair, and a sustainable living fair in East
304 Quad in the past month. We were also highlighted on the radio show Good Food, out of
305 LA! Like last year, 107one’s Martin Bandyke will be broadcasting live from our first
306 Wednesday Market. I’ve been promoting the Wednesday market’s opening in several
307 area publications. Some great new vendors have joined, and will be joining the market,
308 including artisan cupcakes, the Community Farm Kitchens, and pending inspection, a
309 new organic grower and McClure’s Pickles. I’ve been working with the Agrarian
310 Adventure and Farm to School collaborative to coordinate school field trips to the market
311 this spring; we’ve finally created curriculum and promotional literature for the field trips.
312 Christina, the assistant manager, has also been working to promote the market, updating
313 our website, and working on the oral history project. We will have a twitter feed soon,
314 and more buttons! I have several chefs lines up for monthly cooking demonstrations, and
315 am working with Hollander’s on such collaborations as well. I was invited to participate
316 in a statewide EBT retreat recently, as well as a DELEG conversation about the role of
317 farmers and farmers markets in the state’s economy. I am continuing to work with Food

318 Gatherers to promote our EBT programs, and CAN to create a youth entrepreneurial
319 market-focused summer program.

320

321 b. Related Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Task Forces

322 c. Items from Commissioners

323 d. Transmittals/communications received

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

325

326 C. Vena: In regards to your discussion of further classifying vendor status: we spent
327 months revising the rules. The more you try to dissect things, the more complicated and
328 troublesome you may make things. Also, in the past, Commissioner applications went
329 directly to the Mayor for review and were not weighed in on by existing Commissioners.

330

331 G. Thompson: For advertising, I suggest the Ann Arbor Chronicle. I hear they've been
332 getting up to 25,000 hits a day, and I assume the rates are less than the Ann Arbor News.
333 Also, rule changes do not have to be approved by Council. Often, they would simply go
334 to Council as a communication. Part of my dissatisfaction with the proposed fee changes
335 is that they have not taken into consideration creative ways to deal with fee assessment,
336 for example a structure to encourage vendor participation in the winter. This is an
337 opportunity for creativity on the part of the market.

338

339 L. Vazquez: I am here to lodge a complaint. I sent an email and received no response.
340 This complaint is about the vendor Kapnick Orchards. They are identified on the
341 website, of Hill & Valley, a baker of pies, on the list of folks who receive their baked
342 goods. They also get baked goods from distributor Lipari. As an Ann Arbor citizen and
343 market shopper, I know the market is billed as "producer only" and seeing this vendor's
344 name on suppliers' websites suggests they may not be making all baked goods they sell at
345 market themselves. I think this damages the credibility of the market. Knowing this
346 violates the market's rules, I suggest Kapnick be barred from selling baked goods at
347 market and investigated.

348

349 10. Adjournment

350

351 The meeting was adjourned at 7:14 pm.

352