

1 **Public Market Advisory Commission Minutes** Thursday, November 3rd, 5:30 pm

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3 1. Call to Order

4 2. Roll Call

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6 Members Present: (5) D. Barkman, S. Brines, A. Germain, L-J. Hard, D. Santacroce

7 Members Absent: (0)

8 Staff Present: (1) M. Notarianni

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10 3. Approval of Agenda

11
12 M. Notarianni –Our market inspector was not able to come for the special presentation
13 portion. Hopefully she can reschedule for next month.

14
15 5. Public Commentary – Agenda items only (3 minutes per speaker)

16
17 Glen Thompson – In my opinion the Wednesday market has become less desirable in the
18 last few years. I now have to walk past stalls offering products that I do not have any
19 interest in purchasing in my search for the produce that I do want to purchase. When the
20 commission discussed the creation of a survey, I had hoped that the survey would allow
21 me to express this opinion and to provide indication of whether others had a similar
22 opinion. Unfortunately, the survey seemed biased to encourage responses in favor of
23 changes that I find detrimental. There were questions asking about whether there should
24 be more artisans, more prepared food, or other similar items. There were no questions
25 asking about whether there should be more true farmers, more produce, and less of these
26 other peripheral commodities. When asked if you want more of something, people will
27 generally answer in the affirmative if there is no apparent reason not to. Asking do you
28 want more artisans if likely to elicit a yes. Asking do you want less farmers to make
29 room for artisans if likely to elicit the opposite. Let's remember that shopping at the
30 market it somewhat difficult. I have to make a special trip when it is open. The
31 supermarket is open whenever I want to go. Parking at the market is difficult. At the
32 supermarket it is free and convenient. The market can offer only one thing that the
33 supermarket cannot; farm fresh produce, direct from the farmer. If the Ann Arbor market
34 becomes a bizarre where all the diverse products are sold simply because a vendor is able
35 to lease a stall the market will ultimately fail. The Toledo market is an example of this.
36 It was a busy market about twice the size of the Ann Arbor market with sections for
37 different items, both wholesale and retail, its primary products being fresh farm produce.
38 But a few years ago when I visited both the Toledo and Ann Arbor markets on the same
39 Saturday, there were far more customers at the Ann Arbor market at 7am than in Toledo
40 at 10am. A lot of money has been spent in Toledo renovating the market to make it more
41 attractive to customers. The sheds have been redone, there's free parking, there's an
42 enclosed heated section in the winter. There are artisans, coffee, prepared food, all the
43 things that you are told will bring more customers to our market. But the Toledo market
44 still has fewer farmers. It is the farmer that is the anchor of the market and should be the
45 greatest priority of this market.

46

47 6. Approval of Minutes
48 a. Meeting of October 6, 2011

49
50 7. Commission Business

51 a. Old Business
52 (1) Vendor / Customer Survey

53
54 M. Notarianni – I left that on the agenda because I don't have solid results for the survey
55 yet. The customer survey is online and we had volunteers asking customers to take it on
56 a Saturday and I'd like to have them do it on a Wednesday over the next few weeks. The
57 vendor survey has been emailed to the vendors and I'm going to hand them out on
58 Saturday and mail them to those that didn't get them through email. There has also been
59 one out for the Wednesday Evening vendors that should be wrapping up soon. We've
60 had pretty good response rate, about 40 vendors and 200 customers filled it out online, in
61 addition to about another 150 in person

62
63 S. Brines –I think it's good that we are attempting a survey. As a vendor, I'd be open to
64 more surveys.

65
66 M. Notarianni- One valid comment on the customer survey is that there wasn't a straight
67 section for comments.

68
69 b. New Business
70 (1) New Vendor Discussion

71
72 M. Notarianni – Surprisingly fewer applications this month. Fairy doors. Zucchini
73 bread, chocolate zucchini bread, honey whole wheat bread. Lollipops and hard candy.
74 Gourmet cookies. And a food cart vendor who wanted to bring prepared vegetarian food.

75
76 S. Brines – Any comments? At the last meeting I talked about looking into whether
77 there's any research regarding the optimum number of vendors at a market. There are
78 several camps, some who say that there should be a lot of fresh produce vendors. And
79 there some who are worried about there being a glut of fresh produce vendors or vendors
80 with one type of produce diluting business. I've started to look into some food systems
81 publications around the matter and so far it looks like there's a lot of white paper that
82 represents these varying opinions that we sort of intuitively picked up on. I will point out
83 that there's a resource that I re-discovered called the FarmersMarketCoalition.org that is
84 great. I did find one report, which I'd like to discuss. It's interesting because some of the
85 things they bring up are things we're already encountering at our market. They're talking
86 about this idea of actually recruiting vendors and considering this dynamic that Molly has
87 to think about having a nice selection but worrying about whether she should worry about
88 a glut of certain types of vendors. They mention that many vendors who want to join an
89 existing market have distinct things that they offer to the market. For example, they
90 provide and opportunity to better meet the needs of the existing customer base or to
91 broaden the customer base. Many people who may want to join may not understand why
92 existing vendors may have priority over themselves, especially if they offer a higher

93 quality version of something already on the market. Many vendors want to offer
94 something identical to something to those being sold already because that is what they
95 see. Many vendors would be willing to offer something new and needed at the market if
96 given information about what is needed. They also say that new vendors who apply to an
97 existing market may provide an opportunity for the market to diversify its product and
98 customer base in a way that would allow it to expand to another physical area or another
99 day of the week. This document also has case studies of other markets and directly
100 addresses questions of glut and redundancy, which are all things we've encountered
101 already so it could be a good resource if folks feel like taking a look at that. I will
102 continue to look for helpful resources. As an advisory commission I think if we can
103 come up with some things that we agree on that could be criteria for letting people in that
104 might make the job a little easier.

105

106 M. Notarianni –I like the idea of trying to direct interested vendors to products we need.

107

108 S Brines – And my overall thought comes to sustainability of the market long term. Are
109 we able to accommodate new vendors in terms of parking, and how is the process for
110 new vendors. If we had a checklist of some criteria so that we could see how the new
111 person might overlap with what we have and how we might be able to tell the applicant
112 to take a new angle that would serve the market better. Or to figure out how does it fit
113 into the fold of what we already have. So we can give them a better explanation and
114 leave a better taste in their mouth after this process. Some of these folks are budding
115 entrepreneurs for our community and we don't want to turn them away if we can We
116 want to encourage them and say if it doesn't fit at this market maybe offer a market that it
117 would fit at. I think it would be more constructive for the community of people applying.

118

119 D. Barkman – Is it possible to just tally in broad categories what we already have?

120

121 S. Brines – I mean a critic could always say you can pick and choose your tallies to
122 defend who you let in or not, but ultimately the city has made it the manager's decision.
123 We can always paint the picture of what we're going for in a way that would benefit
124 everyone involved.

125

126 M. Notarianni – Because there's a finite amount of space at the market, we can't let every
127 single person who applies in for all eternity because we'd run out of space.

128

129 D. Barkman – Maybe we could use some of the other parks for this, maybe some parks
130 are willing to share the space rather than just being green space or a golf course or
131 swimming pool.

132

133 D. Santacroce – The next part is once they're on the roster deciding if we have space for
134 them, but it sounds like that's part of your decision of letting them be on the roster.

135

136 M. Notarianni – Well, that goes back to the mystery we were saying about distribution of
137 products at the market. So I try to tell people that on a busy Saturday we may not have
138 room for them and I wouldn't want them to show up with a car full of products and turn

139 them away. I try to the best of my ability to manage that even if it's someone that does
140 seem like a good fit I try to tell them when there realistic is going to be space. And that's
141 why I've added this to the agenda because it would be helpful to get input from the
142 commission as an advisory body about how you think things are going at the market.

143

144 S. Brines – To reiterate, I thought we should step in as thinking about the long-term
145 sustainability of the market and to decide the vision or mission of the market and decide
146 how that informs the vendor or product mix at the market. Is there anything we can
147 advise for Molly in terms of new vendors according to a vision that we see for the
148 market? I have found the whole new vendor process a bit fuzzy and maybe that's fine,
149 but it might be good if there were some things we could lay down from there.

150

151 D. Santacroce – It seems implicit that we're talking about this space. So if we operate
152 within those parameters we answer it in terms of those parameters. But a few years back
153 people brought up the idea of a Tuesday market in Liberty Park. Obviously that would
154 require some additional resources, etc. but the public market while we naturally think
155 about it in that space is also subject to our vision and is it broader than that?

156

157 D. Barkman – You have your certain people, your customer base of people who've come
158 to the market for a long period of time. Trying to recruit people in certain areas over the
159 next few years, you're going to need to recruit people if you look at the age of the
160 farmers at the market, we need younger people who are willing to do the work. I assume
161 that'll evolve over time, so you need to come up with a tool to find people who are
162 willing to do that. If we can find those then maybe we can think about adding extra
163 markets and extra time.

164

165 S. Brines –I found another resource about successful public markets that I'll pass on to
166 everyone, but they came up with the ten qualities of a successful public market: right
167 vendor, which talks about quality of vendor, right location, right mix, mission, right
168 public spaces, right connection, right economics, right promotion, right value, right
169 management.

170

171 8. Reports and Communications

172 a. Market Manager

173

174 M. Notarianni – Short this month. The following vendors were inspected in the last
175 month: Blandowski, Our Family Farm, Todosciuk, and Wilczewski. The inspections are
176 slowing down on the produce, but the inspector is gearing up to do people with animals,
177 prepared goods, and maybe eventually artisans. This month we had so many volunteers!
178 We hosted a Halloween event in the market with volunteer help. We also conducted a lot
179 of surveys of vendors and customers. We have the return of the Apple History Museum
180 coming again this Saturday. This month we'll be in the process of planning for the
181 Kindlefest event, which is not a farmers market event per se but rather a public market
182 event hosted by the Kerrytown District Association in the farmers market. It's a German
183 Holiday mart open to everyone with a few vendors from the farmer market attending.
184 This month marked the end of Double Up Food Bucks, Project Fresh, and Market Fresh,

185 all of which had super successful seasons. I don't have the numbers on that yet, but I'll
186 bring that next month because it'd be interesting to see how much those programs drove
187 sales to the market. Any questions?

188

189 S. Brines – Do we have any upcoming promotions or advertisements, so that people
190 know that the market is open in the winter?

191

192 M. Notarianni – No, but we should!

193

194 c. Items from Commissioners

195

196 S. Brines – I'll just say thanks to all the volunteers that come to the market office this
197 month. We're always looking for volunteers so you can always check website
198 a2gov.org/market for opportunities.

199

200 d. Transmittals/communications received

201

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

203

204 G. Thompson – One of the commissioners made the comment at the last meeting why not
205 accept people to the market and let their sales determine if they should stay. I do not
206 believe that is a good market management approach. First, different vendors do not have
207 equal risk. Artisans can pack up what they didn't sell and try again next time, farmers
208 cannot. Second, many vendors do not rely on their sales at the market as their primary
209 income. Some have other fulltime jobs, others are retired and have their retirement
210 funds. I do not mean to imply that these are inappropriate, but that these types of vendors
211 are less sensitive to their sales than a vendor who truly needs the income. Finally, there
212 are a few vendors who I believe have lost money over the last few years but continue to
213 come to the market. Maybe they enjoy the social aspect or maybe they just have an
214 excess of tomatoes and zucchini. I do not think that these should be removed from the
215 market, but I want to point out that it is those vendors who are true growers that depend
216 on sales at the market that are what we need for the long-term stability of the market. It
217 is this vendor that has the resources and motivation to attend market more times of the
218 year and for more days of the week. Unfortunately, these are the vendors that may be
219 most sensitive to declining market sales.

220

221 Kevin Bahser – Hello my name is Kevin Basher and my parents are regular Saturday
222 morning market goers. I think there should be an increase in advertising because they
223 had no idea about the Wednesday evening market and they do attend on Wednesday day
224 and evening is more convenient so I think they would go if they knew about it. And if
225 you want people to attend in the winter there should be more advertising about it being
226 open.

227

228 10. Adjournment