

10/15/15

Hi Commissioners,

Sarah asked that I share this message with you. I wrote it in reply to a fellow vendor who messaged me to ask my opinion on the winterization project, and it pretty much summarizes my thinking.

Thanks!

Mary

Hi Janna,

Thanks for the message and for taking the time to attend these endless meetings. I really appreciate that you've put so much thought into what this change might mean for the AAFM.

Honestly, however, I am in favor of the proposed winterization project. I am a vendor who attends year-round, even on the coldest days in January and February when I'm freezing my face off! I would love to have a warmer venue in which to work and I anticipate higher sales due to a more comfortable shopping environment for my customers! Additionally, my set up is small and flexible, so I am not very concerned about the more cramped quarters in the proposed shelter--I would gladly trade some space for warmth on the cold days!!

I think that in a situation like the Farmers Market we all tend to think first of what would be important/best for our own businesses. I know that the changes would present challenges for you and some of the other "short aisle" vendors, but for *my* business, I think this would be an improvement on the status quo. I am not generally able to park in the market on any Saturdays from May to Thanksgiving, so a loss of parking spots isn't a big deal to me. Also, there is simply a limit to the space--I don't think it's possible to have a plan that will allow for large stalls in an indoor structure AND not sacrifice some parking, so I accept that some compromises will have to be made.

I completely understand that since you're attending the meetings you might have a better sense of the reality of the project AND of course you will speak from your perspective if and when you comment and give input. I just wanted to let you know that while I recognize the issues you raise, I actually favor the project in spite of the drawbacks.

Thanks for reaching out! I am really hoping that in the end the final project will be an improvement for all vendors. Good luck with your work and I look forward to seeing you at the market soon.

yours,

Mary Wessel Walker

Harvest Kitchen

Harvest Kitchen

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10/15/15

I will give my opinion, but I don't think they really care about what the farmers want. Last time there was a large amount of money they decided to do an add on, all the money was spent on drawings, polls and surveys just to find out that the farmers didn't want all that, and then the money was gone and it was over. Now there's money and here we go again.

The sandlot is not used all year round if there is space on the market the vendors do not go there, so now they want to make this building and take away stalls and parking to make room for vendors that don't always want to be there. There are simpler less expensive options for the sandlot. They say that the building is not for after market events so they won't rent a tent the size of the sandlot, they have done that before, and put it up from May till Nov. Or another option build a basic pole barn the size of the lot with large garage doors to open during the summer months. I have been to Eastern Market in the winter months and they have two buildings open one is heated and the other is not. The heated building has a lot of the smaller vendors in it, but the non heated building had all the bigger vendors and a lot more of the customer flow. A heated building does not guarantee the customers or the vendors will go there, they want to be with the crowd.

Changing something that has been working for a long time is hard, but adding such a large building and taking away parking along with stalls that people have worked hard to get just does not make sense.

The amount of use the sandlot gets doesn't justify that building, and that building will not make the farmers want to be in there.

Hope the right thing happens.

Bessie Newbery

Gracias' Greenhouse

56 years on market

10/15/15

Dear Commission,

Thank you for taking feedback about the proposed building for Market. I am a vendor of 29 years. While it seems to be an impressive structure, & we appreciate attempts to winterize, it is quite extravagant for that purpose. I am wondering why the price & construction of a new roof to accommodate a modern structure to winterize the current structure was not even researched (that info was not known, as stated in the report given to vendors). A structure, for summer, similar to the current structure could be built on the sand lot without the tremendous expense, time, inconvenience, disruption of operations, removal of middle aisle stalls, upkeep, increased taxes, decrease in parking & possible increase for vendor fees that a formal building would pose. Some more vendors would attend Market if it was warmer in the winter, but only part of the current structure, it seems, would need winterizing to house those extra vendors, for instance, the main aisle. Other markets in other cities made significant changes to their markets with a poor attendance outcome & disappointing results. I hope this revising attempt will not destroy the fine attendance & feel of the current outdoor Market.

Again, thank you for asking our input.

Nancy Willoughby

10/15/15

Now that there is a building planned - the ONLY solution being considered- perhaps a survey should be done of all the low seniority vendors, asking "If we build the building, will you want to be in it?" Because it is the low seniority vendors who will be forced to be in the building.

You have always defined a space as the 5' or 6' by 8' platform. But most spaces have "extra space" in back of them. I cannot imagine working in a space in a building that is 50 square feet; the entire feel of a small space indoors is different. Those of you who have never been a "vendor" will not know what I am talking about. Those of you who have, will. It's a matter of 3-dimensional spacing, and the difference of what a 50 sq foot space feels like outdoors, or indoors surrounded by walls. A small space outdoors can feel sufficient. The same square footage in a building can feel suffocating.

40 or 50 square feet is not do-able for many vendors. And if you make the spaces more "reasonable" (larger), what is the point of all this planning, if only 18 or 20 or 24 vendors can fit in the building?

We were initially asked - if there were some protection from the weather would we come in the winter? I don't remember how that survey was worded. But we were not asked "Do you think there should be a building so that some vendors can be indoors in the winter" or "IF we build a building, do you want to be in the building?" We just wanted to have SOME protection from the weather in the winter. The responses we gave to that survey have been twisted and mis-interpreted.

The vendors' idea, tossed around for months, was to somehow have the market aisles enclosed, so that the temperature would be in the 40's - comfortable enough to maybe take our gloves off. Those requests have mutated into a building that will eliminate at least 16 parking spaces and at least 8 vendor spaces. The first building we saw on paper was smaller than the building that is on display (on paper) now. Surprises keep appearing, and the building is getting larger.

I am one of 6 or 7 vendors who will lose their annual space. I have been assured that I will be given priority in choosing a new space when the time comes. That is total crap. You are not going to displace ANY annual vendor to give me a new space. We will just be expected to re-locate to some other available space, if there is one. And the number of outside spaces will be 136 (???), rather than the current 144, so there is no guarantee that we will have any space to re-locate to. After waiting for an annual space for about 25 years, should I be happy to re-locate "for the greater good"?

Many vendors will have to unload and haul their merchandise to the aisles or to the building, because there will be less "open space" and fewer places to park and/stand while unloading. Unloading and hauling will take time, and there is really not space for those vehicles to park. The situation is already difficult and stressful. Now it will get worse. Where are all those vehicles going to park while unloading?

And then where are they going to park for the day? Their vehicles used to park in the lot; now they will have to find parking in the neighborhood. Some vendors already have to do that. Now there will be more vendors needing to park off-site.

We are hearing many customers complain about how difficult it was to find parking. We should not take for granted that customers will forever come to the market for their produce and plants. There are many new places they can go to shop; all of them are our competition. And all have more convenient parking than they find here. My sales are down from 5 years ago. Many vendors say the same thing. I believe that is because many customers have already left us. We must not make the parking situation any worse. To displace 16 or more parking spaces in the market will add even more of a burden to the public parking in the area.

The market could be re-build, so to speak.

1) Cover the gravel lot with a roof, so that those vendors would not be so at risk in rain and bad weather. Add lights to that new roof. Leave the drive-through alone.

2) Add some kind of protective walls to at least some of the stalls in the winter; give vendors the option of being in those sections.

3) Add some nominal heating - a large heat blower at one end, for example.

If the goal of this building is to create stalls that will be comfortable (in terms of temperature) in the winter, you are putting a lot of energy and money into a project that is geared to the off-season, less than 1/3 of the year, when most growers do not have plants or produce anyway!

Why not put resources into the existing market... re-pave the dangerous parking lot, fix the broken gutters, clean once in a while or at least require vendors to clean their stalls? The property is embarrassing; it could easily be cleaner, safer and more functional. With a creative plan, part of the market can be more comfortable in the winter, for a lot less expense and trouble.

Daren Otis

Lightweight Travel Totes

Annual Stall holder - space 81, to be eliminated

11/5/15

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing you as a business owner located steps from the Ann Arbor Farmers Market and as a homeowner within a mile of the Farmers Market. I love to call Ann Arbor home. I also love to travel. Every city I visit, I try to visit as many public markets I can. In all the cities I visit that are recovering from the Great Recession, the blossoming neighborhoods are those around public markets. The one's that appear to be the largest hub of activity are those with permanent structures. Those that have small food stalls, artisans, fresh produce and cover from inclement weather are filled with foot traffic 52 weeks out of the year.

I have been dreaming about a permanent structure for the Ann Arbor Farmers Market for years. I am so glad there is energy and funding behind an advisory commission. My business' busiest days are those that correspond to the Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday market days. We see a significant dip in traffic when Wednesday market days end and see an increase when Wednesday market begins again. Many of our customers combine multiple destinations into one visit to the neighborhood. We love to see the customers that have their market bags filled with leafy greens, a Sweetwaters latte in hand, some shrimp from Monahan's in another bag and then Lunch Room baked goods in their bellies. A permanent structure would greatly assist in continuing the foot tra_c through market neighborhood to 365 days a year.

The Lunch Room purchases vegetables and products from the market twice a week most weeks during the year. We fully support this type of growth for the market and would love to see the neighborhood bustling in the colder months as it does in the warmer months.

Sincerely,

Joel Panozzo

Co-Owner of The Lunch Room