

MEMORANDUM

TO: Public Market Advisory Commission

FROM: Sarah DeWitt, Ann Arbor Farmers Market Manager

DATE: December 14, 2015

SUBJECT: Wednesday Evening Market 2011-2015 Five Year Review & 2016 Proposal

The Wednesday Evening Market began as a pilot project in 2011 with the mission to support small-scale growers and producers through the creation of a vibrant marketplace that is welcoming to all members of our community. The market aims to both preserve the rich agricultural history of the region and to foster innovation in the local food system, while meeting the demands of area residents for additional opportunities to purchase locally produced, fresh food.

The Public Market Advisory Commission supported this pilot with the following considerations: 1) Existing and potential vendors and customers of the Ann Arbor Farmers Market frequently requested additional market space and longer market hours; 2) there were no ongoing events held in the Public Market site on Wednesday evenings; and 3) there was originally little additional cost associated with starting a Pilot Market on Wednesday evenings.

The Evening Market has seen success in hosting weekly live music, engaging a multitude of community groups, offering flexible programming, and creating two seasons of well-attended, popular monthly Food Truck Rallies. In contrast to these successes, vendor attendance has declined over the five year period since the market began and expenses for staffing and supplies have continued to outpace revenue for this market.

In reviewing the status of this pilot market after five seasons, Staff recommend hosting monthly Food Truck Rallies in lieu of a weekly evening market in 2016. These rallies will be hosted on the first Wednesday of each month, May through October. This approach will build upon the community-oriented, food-focused events that have been well-loved as part of the Evening Market in past seasons. The change will allow staff time to be targeted toward these singular events and also redirected toward other daytime market responsibilities. The events will continue to foster innovation in the local food system and provide a vibrant space for the community, fulfilling two key goals of the Wednesday Evening Market pilot project.