

Public Market Advisory Commission

Tuesday, September 13, 5:30 pm
Fourth Floor Board Room
Ann Arbor District Library
343 S. Fifth Ave

Meeting Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Special Presentations
5. Public Commentary – Agenda items only (3 minutes per speaker)
6. Approval of Minutes
 - a. Meeting of August 5, 2011
7. Commission Business
 - a. Old Business
 - (1) Vendor / Customer Survey
 - (2) 2011 PMAC Goals
 - b. New Business
 - (1) New Vendor Discussion
8. Reports and Communications
 - a. Market Manager
 - b. Related Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Task Forces
 - c. Items from Commissioners
 - d. Transmittals/communications received
9. Public Commentary – General (3 minutes per speaker)
10. Adjournment

Note: In response to pending City Hall/Courts and Police construction, Market Commission meetings have been relocated to the 4th floor Board Room of the Ann Arbor District Library, and will occur on the first Thursday of each month, at 5:30 pm.

Public Market Advisory Commission Minutes

Thursday, August 4, 2011, 5:30 PM

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM

2. Roll Call

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

Members Absent: 0

Staff Present: M. Notarianni,

Guests: 0

3. Approval of Agenda

4. Special Presentations

5. Public Commentary Period

6. Approval Minutes

7. Commission Business

a. Old Business

S. Brines: What about the resolution we passed?

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

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

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

b. New Business

(1) New Vendor Discussion

M. Notarianni: Not quite as many applications this time. We have earring and jewelry made with feathers, organic body care, French macaroons - these are all for the existing market so far.

One for eggs, poultry, beef, duck, lamb, rabbit, and goat all on one application. The last two are for the Evening market and this is an Amish farm that wants to bring a variety of baked goods, jams and jellies, pickles, produce, and also rugs, and cheese, and eggs. And a vendor who wants to be a prepared food vendor with raw, vegetarian food.

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

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

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

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

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

D. Santacroce: What is considered a craft?

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

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

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

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

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

S. Brines: Well, I'm not sure what more to say. It sounds like you've got a handle on the idea that the market needs more time to catch on and get a bigger customer base so that other produce could show up then.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

S. Brines: Marketing is always a goal. Another I had is re-evaluating the inspection situation. We are looking for a new inspector, correct?

M. Notarianni: Yes, our inspector resigned, so we are indeed in the hunt for a new inspector. And we have a lot of vendors that need to be inspected right now, since it is the middle of summer. All the vendors need an inspection every two years, so ensure they are producing what they sell. Some people may be inspected more than once every two years depending on what they do seasonally. There has been turnover in the last few years with the inspector due to it being a challenging position and only part-time. It's difficult for the inspector to find the burden of proof that someone is doing something wrong. There's a ton of gray area from product to product, because we haven't written out step by step what you must do to produce every product. So for plants, do you have to grow from seed, or what counts as you producing it. So it would be nice to refine the inspection process so that the vendors feel like it is worth their time and money.

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

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

D. Santacroce: How many vendors are there?

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

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

M. Notarianni: Yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 worth our time to work on it. I would add that we should develop a database of information about all the vendors. Maybe we should hear a report for what's been done and what might be added. I'd suggest the addition of a bio to the next round of applications so we can use it for marketing or as a face of the vendor. We could explore highlighting vendors in the website.

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

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

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

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

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

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

M. Notarianni: Yes, there is a market fund and it is pretty considerable. In theory that money

goes mostly to infrastructure repairs and renovations at the market, but the massive renovation plan from 5 years ago didn't happen.

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

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

S. Brines: There's an increase in winter hoop houses growers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

S Brines: So a summary, and look over those, then prioritize, then have input on next month's

meeting agenda. I'll get a draft out and we'll tweak it at next month's meeting.

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

S. Brines: So we could continue to look over the ones you sent us and send more question suggestions. The other thing is to think about how to send these out.

L-J. Hard: A volunteer with an iPad would be good.

D. Santacroce: If you come up with questions, I can help develop them into a good survey methodology so that you can have data that would show trends from year to year. Then I can help get it online and distribute it.

S. Brines: And we could call for volunteers to go around market with their iPads to survey customers.

L. Hart: Was there an increase in newsletter subscribers after the facebook post?

M. Notarianni: No, not that I can tell. I tried to look at the analytics, but I think they're wrong. I agree that the interface to sign up for the newsletter is not user friendly, but I'm stuck. I've asked the IT department to change my links and they won't.

S. Brines: So that sounds like a side project. So we should make September a goal for getting the survey stuff out.

8. Reports and Communications

a. Market Manager

M. Notarianni: Our inspector is unfortunately quitting, so I'm looking for an inspector. Last week we had a DIY fair and the local WIC office come to the Wednesday Evening market and those were well-attended. The Double Up Food Bucks program had \$5,000 in sales and 90 new users in the last month or so.

S. Brines: We should propose increasing the advertising budget. Perhaps part of the survey could be "have you seen the advertisements?" That way we know where it would be best allocated.

8. C. Items from Commissioners

S. Brines: A customer in the market was wondering about Trunk-a-palooza and had an idea of using it during the Wednesday Evening market.

M. Notarianni: This year they're doing it once during Nash Bash.

S. Brines: So maybe a mini one during the Wednesday Evening Market so bring traffic. The

beer and wine is a model of that, and Slow Food Huron Valley is doing it this month, and we extended the boundary and increased the selection. There were a fair amount of people that came through and we tried to encourage people to shop as well as hang out. We offered 25 cents off if people showed us their purchase from the market. We do need more chairs. We kept track of our sales so we can measure from week to week. A green drinks group is going to have a meetup or two there this month.

8.d. Transmittals/communications received

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

None

10. Adjournment

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