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3 CITY OF ANN ARBOR PUBLIC MARKET ADVISORY COMMISSION MINUTES  
4 September 18, 2008  
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6 1. Call to order

7 The meeting was called to order at 5:08 pm.

8 2. Roll Call

9 Members present: (3) D. Black, P. Pollack, G. Service,

10 Members absent: (2) S. Brines (arrived late), K. King

11 3. Approval of Agenda

12 4. Special Presentations

13 P. Pollack: I was going to present a special presentation, but haven't had a chance to  
14 finish yet. I will present it in October.

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

16 G. Thompson: At the recent working session, it was proposed that seniority be based on  
17 total days of attendance. The rationale for this was that it would somehow encourage  
18 greater participation at the market, and that all vendors were equal. That basic concept is  
19 false. Some vendors can sell at market each week, while some sell truly perishable  
20 produce. If you watch what the people are buying, you'll find they really come to the  
21 market for fresh seasonal produce. The idea that absolute number of days is important is  
22 disadvantageous to such vendors. In order to be competitive, vendors could buy and sell,  
23 or change what they bring to market. This would also be very different to track  
24 administratively. Vendors can pass one another in total attendance; in seniority they  
25 cannot. I think this is difficult to apply, and I urge you to reject the concept.

26 K. Sidney: I'd like to encourage you to focus more on the customer. What does it take to  
27 get people there? The HomeGrown Festival is an excellent example of this. Since we  
28 don't have a big marketing budget, we need to think in creative ways. How about doing  
29 an event in conjunction with the schools to get classes down there? You've already got a  
30 great product to sell; you've just got to figure out how.

31 D. Donahee: I am a vendor at the market. All of the markets I've been involved with have  
32 been organized by seniority. You've got a very good market. I don't think changing  
33 seniority would be fair at all. The market runs beautifully! Ask the customers what they  
34 think: they don't like the idea of making changes to seniority at all--they're who you have  
35 to please. Don't make any changes to seniority.

36 6. Approval of minutes

37 a. Meeting of August 21, 2008

38 7. Commission Business

39 a. Old Business

40 (1) Seniority

41 P. Pollack: There is not a specific proposal on the table to change seniority. That's  
42 important for everyone to understand. The working session was to discuss what the

43 context was, as well as the specifics. Anything that was discussed at the working session  
44 was not a proposal: it is just that-discussion. We are exploring the subject, and if it is not  
45 broken, it does not need to be fixed. It is not going to happen, any of this discussion,  
46 without significant public input. We will discuss ideas and then have a comment period,  
47 so everybody who has an interest can come and talk. Jumping to conclusions is not  
48 helpful. Jumping to conclusions is not productive.

49 G. Service: This was a part of our agenda left over from the old Commission.

50 D. Black: If anybody has a concern or question, it is our obligation to hear it. If the  
51 majority of people feel seniority is fine the way it is but several vendors have a problem  
52 with it, that is our duty and responsibility as a Commission to listen to their concerns.

53 P. Pollack: Part of the discussion at the work session was figuring out a way to activate  
54 the market, from the perspective of the customer as well as the vendor. That was where  
55 the discussion regarding whether 15 attendances a year was enough. Nobody is changing  
56 Seniority. That is the basis for what we are doing. We are looking at how one can alter  
57 the way seniority is acquired in order to make the system richer and more  
58 productive...and again, if it is not broken, it will not be fixed. It has been mentioned that  
59 record-keeping may be difficult, and differences in seasonality of various vendors'  
60 products has been mentioned. Do we weight Wednesdays differently, to encourage  
61 attendance then? The simpler the system, the better the system, I think.

62 D. Black: It seems to me that you'd have to study the cycles of seasonal produce, to see  
63 whether or not 15 attendances is reasonable. Are there people who come just fifteen times  
64 a year?

65 M. Notarianni: Yes. It depends very much on the product they bring to market.

66 D. Black: What positive change would raising the number of attendances bring about?

67 M. Notarianni: It could encourage more people to come to the market more frequently, if  
68 they are able to.

69 P. Pollack: I think there are two things that should be done: review your records to see  
70 who with seniority does come within that 15 times a year frame. The second is to survey  
71 all of the vendors to get their opinion on that. Our goal, as per the work session, was  
72 increasing participation at market, which is not necessarily tied to seniority. There are  
73 other ways to encourage participation.

74 G. Service: It would be really nice to encourage additional participation on Wednesdays.

75 D. Black: That could be a survey question: "What would encourage you to come on  
76 Wednesdays, if you don't already?"

77 M. Notarianni: I guess this might be obvious, but the main reason the vendors are coming  
78 to market is to make money...so if they come to market but don't have any sales, it doesn't  
79 really help. Perhaps we need to focus more on increasing traffic.

80 D. Black: Wednesday is also Senior day at the Co-op. We could try to promote the  
81 market that way.

82 P. Pollack: I'm wondering if we are at a point where we put a paper together with our  
83 findings, and then have a meeting, almost like a public hearing, on the topic of Seniority.

84 D. Black: I feel like we might be ready to put this to rest. Maybe we don't need to make  
85 any changes? It seems like we've already asked these questions several times.

86 P. Pollack: That could be because there is nothing specifically bad about the system, or at  
87 least no clear changes to make. Do we have anything new to add to the dialogue at this  
88 point? The only thing we've talked about is that the Seniority system itself seems to be

89 working, but is 15 times a year enough? That, too, is rooted in another subject: How do  
90 we increase participation at the market? Getting more vendors here is only helped by  
91 getting more customers here. I'm hesitant to frame a motion on this topic with only 3 of  
92 us here. Let's set this aside until we get a full group.

93 (2) Fostering agriculture in SE Michigan.

94 M. Notarianni: Ginny, from the Conservation Fund, wanted to try to connect the PMAC  
95 with the Greenbelt Commission to discuss collaborations.

96 b. New Business

97 (1) Revising the fall meeting schedule

98 P. Pollack: Let's try to reschedule the October meeting for October 9th, and shift our  
99 October, November, and December meetings until 6 p.m.

100 8. Reports and Communications

101 a. Market Manager Report

102 M. Notarianni: Many vendors have been inspected since last month's meeting. Prompted  
103 during discoveries at routine inspections, two vendors received the attached letters. Mr.  
104 Heim refused inspection of one of the sites on which he was growing produce for the  
105 market. This is grounds for removal from the market, and he was removed from the  
106 market. He can follow the appeal procedure outlined in the market rules, if he wishes.  
107 Several of the products grown by Fusilier Family Farms and Greenhouses were in  
108 question, and could be subject to further inspection. We requested updated lease  
109 paperwork for their peaches and cherries.

110 P. Pollack: What is the status of those two?

111 M. Notarianni: Mr. Heim filed an appeal, and Fusilier submitted lease paperwork for the  
112 peaches; both of which are being reviewed. The market's new solar installation is a site  
113 for GLREA's annual Solar Tour. I've been in touch with local Master Gardeners and the  
114 AA Home Canning Collective to see if they might be able to come to the market to offer  
115 information to shoppers. A volunteer has been taking beautiful photos at market for us. I  
116 hope to get photos of each vendor, to post on the website some day. Around 40 area chefs  
117 will be given a letter inviting them to shop at the market, along with a packet by the  
118 Glynnwood Center regarding how to cook with local food. We conducted our first,  
119 slightly abridged, RMA several weeks ago. A newsletter for vendors was distributed.  
120 Vendors continue to participate in Project Fresh. We are in the final phases of EBT set-  
121 up. The Grow Your Kids Social Marketing Campaign has been taking place at market.  
122 I've been forging relationships with varied professors at U of M, to use the market as an  
123 educational tool. The Inter-Cooperative Conference has been working with me to find  
124 ways to source food from the market, both for their daily operations and the NASCO  
125 Institute. I'll also be representing the market at several Rackham events this fall.

126 P. Pollack: To share Ken's comment, what is taking place at the market with inspections  
127 right now, know you have the support of the Commission to proceed with that. This is  
128 really important. Anything new on the renovations?

129 M. Notarianni: Not yet. More news soon!

130 G. Service: I've heard concerns from vendors that everyone has not been inspected yet.

131 M. Notarianni: I know. We are trying to get in as many as possible before the end of the  
132 season!

133 b. Related Boards, Committees, and Task Forces

134 c. Items from Commissioners

135 S. Brines: The first annual HomeGrown Festival is concluded. It rained, but it did go  
136 quite well. There was certainly a lot of excitement from people who attended, and also  
137 from chefs who attended, and are interested in sourcing local food. We hope to  
138 collaborate with other area groups to make September 2009 a local food month!

139 P. Pollack: I love the idea of a local food month. It is an opportunity for the Farmers  
140 Market to act as a focal point: a physical and emotional place; a focus.

141 S. Brines: Next year we do hope to see a stronger connection with the market. Some of  
142 the Kerrytown merchants actually said they had a busy day, and felt it was due to the  
143 festival.

144 G. Service: I heard the same from Market vendors.

145 d. Transmittals/Communications Received

146 9. Public Commentary-General (3 minutes per speaker)

147 G. Thompson: There are a fair number of vendors who do attend between 15 and 20  
148 times; some have fairly high seniority and some do not. The problem is, it is impossible  
149 to determine which ones will be affected, and how. I'd be happy to run any analysis on  
150 attendance that you would like. This Commission holding a special meeting in an unusual  
151 place at a time that was not telecast may meet the legal guidelines, but not the spirit of  
152 transparency. This body is supposed to be the group of experts that make proposals. Once  
153 an idea becomes a formal proposal, a great deal of time will be spent responding to that.  
154 If you make one that will be rejected, you'll have wasted a lot of time. You need to be  
155 rather careful, and allow input early in the discussion process. Wednesday attendance is  
156 down, and I think it will be very hard to increase Wednesday attendance period. You are  
157 fighting the demographics, just like the Toledo market.

158 K. Sidney: Johnson Hill did a customer survey, and it turns out parking was the big issue.  
159 I want to strongly encourage you to put seniority to rest. You have to make choices about  
160 what it is important to work on. I also wanted to give my support to the inspection  
161 program. This helps ensure the food we say is local food is truly local food.

162 10. Adjournment

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