April 21, 2020

Coventry Farmers’ Market Operating Committee
Special Meeting Minutes
Via Zoom video conferencing

Call to order:

The meeting was called to order by Nelson at 8:04 am.

Roll Call:

Michelle Pesce, Jamie Lynn Fontaine, Barbara Barry, Eric Trott, Erica Pagliuco, Jean Nelson, Ann Marie Charland, Janine Coughlin, Katrina Weaver

Adoption of Minutes:

A motion was made by Barry and seconded by Weaver to adopt the minutes of April 14, 2020 as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Financial Report:

No update, since the last report still stands from the last meeting.

Planning for 2020:

The discussion continued to center on how the season can be planned during the current COVID-19 pandemic. The goal is to limit exposure to the virus by all who are involved with the Market – volunteer, staff, vendor, customer – while honoring the mission of the Market which is to support the farmers’ and producers.

Erica reached out to several farmers to get their feedback on creating an online sales approach. Some were supportive, some were not, and some are doing online sales at this time.

Two ideas that can be considered involve: an online only approach with distribution at the Homestead, or reduce the scope of the Market and use the Market field for farmers/producers only. No music, tastings, samplings, demonstrations can occur at this time.

Jean shared a story that involved the former Market and when it moved from the Glass Museum to the Homestead. The moral of the story is it boiled down to what was best for the Market in the end.

A three phase feasible concept involves: 1. having only CT Grown producers in the field, which amounts to around 20 and a bakery; 2. pursue a grant with DoAg to create an online ordering system and distribute at the Market – vendors accepted in the field must commit to the online
approach to expand customer base which would be unveiled later in the season; 3. if we return more to a ‘normal’ situation and restrictions are relaxed, we can open the Market up to other vendors later in the season.

Starting the Market in July is another option to consider to enable an online system to be implemented.

The capacity/occupancy of the field would need to be determined to accommodate the 6’ social distancing. Also, the funneling of customers from the parking field to the Market field needs to be carefully considered. A defined route through the Homestead site will be necessary. Establishing a one-way ‘travel route’ and ‘exit route’ to the vendors in the field will be necessary as well. Cones, rope and signage will need to be established, along with designating separation between customers and vendors. Credit card sales will be necessary to reduce exposure.

Food trucks create a unique situation, but the issue of lines and customer separation still come up. This still needs to be determined if it will be possible.

The key to the concept is educating the customers that this is not a place that can support folks lingering in the field and connecting with each other, like in the past. It will need to work as a ‘shop and go’ situation. Encouraging one customer per family is important as well. Everyone has to understand the rules for the Market operation and abide by them or it will risk it continuing.

It appears that it will be necessary to maintain the parking volunteers as well as the Fire Police traffic control to direct traffic to the site and parking. The volunteers ‘policing’ the social distancing requirement is something that is not preferred to be done.

Examples of Markets doing similar arrangements include Marshfield, Mass. and Westport, CT. Erica and Jean will communicate with representatives from each if possible.

Next Meeting:

April 24 at 8am.

The meeting will be via Zoom.
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Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30am.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric M. Trott
Director of Planning and Development