April 24, 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, Katrina Weaver

Adoption of Minutes:

A motion was made by Barry and seconded by Weaver to adopt the minutes of April 21, 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.

Eric discussed his findings on the capacity/occupancy issue for the Market field. He spoke with Bud Myers, Coventry Fire Marshal, about the proposed formula of taking the overall field dimensions and dividing it by 36 sf (6’ x 6’ social distance requirement) to obtain a maximum of approximately 1,250 customers. The Health District was asked to provide guidance, but has not responded yet. The DoAg criteria does not provide guidance on this issue other than social distancing.

Jean spoke to a representative from the Marshfield, MA market who is currently doing an online order and pick up process. Jean will share her notes on the discussion with the group. They are working on a new financial program since the current one is not working as well as they would like. They expressed the overwhelming response as of late to the online order/pick up option. There has been a lot of pressure on volunteers with the increase in orders that required them to begin paying volunteers and increase the fees to the vendors.
The concept of an online order and pick up system was further discussed. Not all the current vendors work with credit cards or have an online system, which may limit who joins. This may allow for new producers to be involved. The predictability of the produce being offered and available could be an issue for ordering. Order updates and unfulfilled orders are an aspect of this type of shopping experience. The online order and delivery option has become the new normal for many people at this time.

The option of facilitating an in-field Market option versus an on-line order/prepay and ‘tent-side pick-up’ in the parking field system were considered and voted on by those present. A unanimous vote was made to pursue the online order/prepay and tent-side pick-up in the parking field. This option is the most viable to make happen, reduces the risk and exposure to the virus for everyone involved, continues to support the farmers’ and producers, and provides local products to the community.

It was agreed to pursue the Market operation in the following manner:
: Phase 1 – CT Grown producers involved and one bakery
: Phase 2 – Add cottage industry and other producers
: Phase 3 – Add food trucks with preorder only
: Phase 4 – Consider adding other vendors

The logistics and vehicle movement in the parking field to support the tent-side pick-up needs to be carefully considered. Eric will print out and send to Katrina an aerial map of the parking field. Katrina will create a draft sketch of the vendor layout and possible circulation pattern for consideration. Eric will share with the Town Engineer for his input.

The vendor guidelines and regulations will need to be reviewed for applicability with the intended new Market operations. The vendor fees will also need to be reevaluated since the Market offerings will not be the same as usual.

The standard expenses will be reduced due to the fact that the scale of the Market is being minimized. Fire Police, one port o let, Erica’s salary will remain. A dumpster, supplies, equipment, musicians will not be necessary.

Next Meeting:

April 28 at 8am.

The meeting will be via Zoom.
Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05am.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric M. Trott
Director of Planning and Development