

DRAFT - October 11, 2022

Farmer's Market Policy Committee

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Policy Committee Members in Attendance: Andy McLawhorn, Chair; Jean Spong, Vice-Chair; Mary Hardy; Patty Shegas; Wilbert Futrell.

Staff in Attendance: LaRita Johnson; James Rhodes; Jordan Smith; PJ Andrews; Hannah Smith; Janis Gallagher.

Public in Attendance: Sam Hardy; Richard Dart; Herb McGrail, Bobby Grissom.

2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (July 12, 2022)

Third Quarter Policy Committee minutes- Wilbert Futrell made a motion to approve; Patty Shegas seconded. Minutes unanimously approved.

3. Public Comment

Chair opened the floor for public comment. Chair recognized Bobby Grissom. Mr. Grissom addressed the committee requesting an exception to current market policy regarding vendor responsibilities. [Section 5.5 - Empty booths at the end of each market week. Market tables and limited shelving or racks may remain.] Mr. Grissom based this request on limited mobility due to a disability. James Rhodes advised that the committee does not have an avenue for making exceptions under the current policy. Chair advised that the committee will review again later in the meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

4. Board Membership

Committee reviewed Attachment 2 in the meeting packet regarding the current listing of board members and their terms. James Rhodes notes that Jean Spong has been reappointed to the committee and Wilbert Futrell has been newly appointed by the County Commissioners. Patty Shegas clarifies that Nita Haddock had recently resigned, which opened the seat to which Wilbert was appointed. Ms. Shegas questioned the length of Mr. Futrell's term on the committee due to the unique situation. James Rhodes assured Ms. Shegas that the clerk to the board keeps an accurate record of terms served and will make notifications when appointments or reappointments are needed. Ms. Shegas asked an additional question for clarification on the meaning of "applicant district" on Attachment 2. Mr. Rhodes explains that it refers to the Commissioner voter district in which a committee member resides.

5. Restructuring of Constitution and Bylaws

Chair refers to James Rhodes to guide the committee through item 5 of the agenda. Mr. Rhodes explains that the committee will be working to approve a restructuring of the documents contained in Attachment 3 into separate documents including Rules of Procedures and Policies/Standard Operating Procedure of the market. Current information was taken from existing Constitution and Bylaws as approved in 2018 and will be the foundation for discussion during this meeting. Mr. Rhodes notes that minimal editing has been done, but encourages the committee to take this opportunity to review and update these documents to meet current needs and standards of the market. James Rhodes gives an example of a conflict in the existing constitution and bylaws concerning

the timing of the annual vendor meeting and the due date of vendor fees. "One vendor meeting for all vendors who have paid current year's dues"...most vendors have not paid for the current year prior to that meeting. Chair asks if there is anything that is decided at that meeting that would become controversial. Mr. Rhodes explains that under current policy there may not be any vendors eligible to participate in the vendor meeting. Patty Shegas suggests changing the due date for vendor fees to January 1. Wilbert Futrell offered background on how that policy came to be, stating that the market was not open year-round when the standing policy was enacted.

James Rhodes moves to vendor responsibilities, highlighting that all vendors should have an updated and signed copy of the Code of Ethics on file with the Market Manager. Mr. Rhodes then suggests that the committee may want to revise the wording of 5.2 "Produce a majority of products within eastern North Carolina." to better define what constitutes both 'production' and eastern North Carolina. Chair provides a brief history of previous attempts to regulate producers at the market and shares that they have received reports from other vendors with concerns about misrepresentation, misconduct, and regulating what is sold at the market.

Chair is concerned as to how the Market Manager will be able to enforce those types of issues. He encourages a thorough review of 5.1 and 5.2. Wilbert Futrell comments that there have been previous discussions around 'what is local?' and cites the NC Department of Agriculture definition of local as anything less than 400 miles. He uses this to raise concerns as to how to specify the perimeter for products being sold at market. Mr. Futrell points out that many products currently sold by other vendors include produce that is not available in the eastern part of the state (i.e. peaches, apples, etc). James Rhodes reminds the committee to consider enforcement of any policies set during this amendment process. Patty Shegas brings up the issue of having vendors selling products at market from other producers in the county. She questions how that would be regulated. Mr. Rhodes states that his understanding of current policy would mean that individual vendors should be producing what they sell at market.

PJ Andrews provides an alternative definition of local from US Department Agriculture that states "85% of vendors at farmer's markets come from within 50 miles of the market and that it is up to the discretion of the market committee and manager to make final decisions." Patty Shegas raises the issue of being able to provide what customers to the market are looking for. She is concerned that the market will lose customers if vendors are limited by location. Mr. Andrews mentions that setting a standard percentage for each vendor would help to regulate and balance the allowance of produce not available in eastern North Carolina. The Chair charges the committee to seriously consider the type of market they want to build for current and future vendors. He requests that committee members send comments, questions and concerns to James Rhodes via email and be prepared to amend and vote on 5.5 of the current policy at the next meeting.

James Rhodes continues to review the current policies, welcoming comments and recommendations for changes from the committee.

6. Improvements to Farmer's Market Facilities

James Rhodes and PJ Andrews report on improvements to the market facilities including tree removal, drainage, storage room, parking lot, traffic circulation, water service and interior improvements. Mr. Andrews raises concerns around the safety of the current parking layout and traffic circulation. He reports that bids, plans, and work to improve flow and pave the parking lot will begin in the coming months. Funding for this update will be dependent upon the final design of the parking improvements. Mr. Andrews also reports that water service inside of the facility has been completed and reminds the committee that these spigots are not to be used for washing produce or food items, as that is not allowed under environmental health regulations. Every two doors on the right-hand side of the facility now has a spigot and should be hooked to the water meter within two weeks. Mr. Rhodes states that the market schedule may need to be altered to allow work to be completed. The Chair requests that vendors be given appropriate notice before the market closes to begin work on the parking lot and other projects.

7. Advertising/Marketing for Market Activities

James Rhodes reports that the new Leroy James Farmer's Market Facebook page has 526 followers. He provides highlights of recent posts made to the page and welcomes ideas for future efforts. Patty Shegas recommends connecting Facebook to Instagram to broaden market reach. Mr. Rhodes also reports that the market website has been updated with current information. Photos of committee members will be added in the upcoming week.

8. Manager's Report

Holiday Schedule: LaRita Johnson shares dates the market will be open over the holidays and highlights specific events and activities:

- Pumpkin decorating on October 22, 2022. Station will be set up at the market for those that would like to participate on-site. Families will have the option to take home as well.
- Thanksgiving card decorating - November 12, 2022
- Holiday card decorating - December 3rd, 2022
- Holiday craft fair - December 10, 2022 (8:00am -3:00pm) Ms. Johnson clarifies that non-member vendors are charged \$25 for the day of craft fair.
- Last Friday of the 2022 season is December 16.
- The market will open on December 31st, 2022 from 8:00 am - 12:00 pm for the New Year's Eve market, if produce crops are available.

Vendor Payments and Compliance: James Rhodes clarifies that the fee schedule cannot be changed until the beginning of the fiscal year (July). Fees/schedule/payments need to be clarified and streamlined for ease of staff and vendors.

Sampling Program: LaRita Johnson reached out to Taneisha Armstrong for a sampling station in lieu of Robin Tant who was unavailable on October 22, 2022. Ms. Johnson would like to have a tasting/sampling once a month.

Great Pumpkin Decorating Competition: LaRita Johnson reports that pumpkin orders exceed the allotted budget for the event. Committee recommends focusing on those orders that came through the market to ensure there are sufficient funds.

Seed Library: A seed library is being set up at the Sheppard Memorial Library on Thursday, October 13, 2022. Pitt County Council on Aging will also host a site along with the main location at the market.

Request for Policy Exception: Jordan Smith recommends that any vendor requesting an immediate exception to current market policy due to disability make a formal written request that includes the nature of the disability, appropriate documentation, and specific accommodations being requested. This would be returned to the Market Manager for review by James Rhodes and Pitt County Risk Manager Chris Barnes.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

9. Next Meeting Date

The next regularly scheduled committee meeting will be held Tuesday, January 10, 2023 at 6:00pm in the Arts and Crafts Room at the Pitt County Community Schools and Recreation.

10. Adjourn

Wilbert Futrell made a motion to adjourn; Patty Shegas seconded and passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.