

Bellingham Farmers Market

Annual Spring Membership Meeting

March 27, 2010, Bloedel-Donovan

Minutes

Meeting commenced at 9:30am with Vendor Category Breakouts. Each of the following presenters shared information in each breakout:

Membership

Renee Bourgault presented on behalf of the Membership Committee. Committee Members for 2009 season: Renee Bourgault (P) chair, Azizi Tookas (P) Processor sub-chair, Erin Boyd (C) Craft sub-chair, Gretchen Woody (F) Farm sub-chair, Beth Haley (F), Deb Lowery (C), Nicole Champagne (C), Christie Tomlin (F)

Who we are and what we do: This committee is comprised of 8 members with increased representation from all vending categories. With 2 Processors, 3 Farmers and 3 Crafters our goal is to represent the membership by means of reviewing applications, reviewing site map as needed throughout the market season, determine appropriate market mix and address 'bigger picture' membership issues as they arise. The Membership Committee meets approximately every 6-8 weeks during April-August and every 4-6 weeks Sept-March. The biggest work load for our committee happens between Sept-March. Our committee communicates via email to discuss small scale issues as they arise. All board elected seats serve on the committee for a 2 year term; all other participants serve a 1 year term, beginning in April. As of 2011, all vendor participants in the Membership Committee will complete an application process to apply for the committee. Current committee members will review applications and conduct a silent vote for Market Director to count so as to remain non-biased.

Challenges: The committee faces a variety of challenges in the 2009 season.

- Committee restructuring: The board eliminated several committees which were not functioning in early 2009 with the hopes to utilize all existing and to make all more efficient. Site committee and many larger Membership issues were given to our committee for task completion. We went from a 5 person committee to 8 as we incorporated board elected sub-chairs representing each vendor category onto the Membership Committee. This has been beneficial in making sure each vending segment of the market is represented in the bigger picture of Membership
- Market Growth: As the market grows, the need to membership clarification continues. We are faced with new issues often and work to ensure resolution is met.
- Saturation: Many segments of the market are hitting saturation. In the summer of 2009, farmers expressed concern that bulk farm product could be hitting saturation point within the market. Craft and Farm Value Added products are at overlapping point. Farm Committee has been tasked with looking at market mix and determining next steps to ensure all vendors remain viable in the changing market mix.

- Limited Space/Site Restrictions: Concessionaires make the move to east side of east shed with all ready to eat food.
- Market Mix: The pavilion market mix is still being questioned by several vendors. Membership Committee reviews site plan mid summer. Committee proposes several main season vending location changes by high grossing vendors attract a draw to the pavilion, without success. Committee to discuss alternate routes of filling the pavilion with different mix than current. Railroad Avenue becomes destination for fruit vendors with much success. Early season plant vendors still very successful.
- Tough economy: Due to the nature of the 2009 economy, attrition of new vendors for 2009 was inevitable. The craft vending category was hardest hit with tight pocketbooks. Processor and Concessionaire saw growth in overall sales, Farm stayed consistent.

Site Map/Market Mix: The site remains at maximum capacity, with 109 stalls. Of those stalls the following is the breakdown by vending category:

- Farmer stalls 55% or 60 vending spaces
- Craft stalls 20% or 22 vending spaces
- Processor stalls 23% or 25 vending spaces
- Service Provider stalls 1% or 2 vending spaces
- Market Booth/Non Profit stalls 1% or 2 vending spaces

In 2009 we had a total of 160 vendors. In 2010 we have a total of 142 vendors. This included totals from both Wednesday and Saturday market. Of those 142 vendors for 2010, 55 are farmers, 49 are crafters, 36 are processors and 2 are service providers.

New business:

- In 2009 we allowed for pre-registration of all returning vendors. This assisted with having an understanding of which types of vendors the market was in need of prior to the application going to the general public. This greatly assisted the committee with planning for the upcoming season.
- Should you wish to change vending categories, please note that seniority points DO NOT TRANSFER.
- Should you plan to take a leave from the market, the following is a new policy regarding taking leave.
 1. You must inform the market director of your leave in writing
 2. The Membership Committee will “hold” your stall for 1 year
 3. Craft and Processors must re-jury their product at no charge upon their return to market to ensure that quality has not diminished.
- Communications Liaison’s have been proposed to be introduced in 2010 to all committees. This person will be responsible for submitting all minutes and communications to the entire vendor base or sub-committee (as applicable). An email will be set up through the farmers market for all liaisons’s to use as primary contact. Questions, concerns or issues regarding your specific vending category will commence with your respective liaison. This person will work closely with the vending category chair. This will offer some diversification for the committee

chairs to focus on overseeing their respective committee. More information will follow as it becomes available.

Board Report

Mike Finger spoke on behalf of the Board.

Strategic Plan Report

Anna Martin spoke on behalf of Strategic Plan. She explained that the Market needs to work on their Vision Statement to help us figure out where we want to be in 5 years. She did a brainstorming exercise with each group to discuss what vendors don't want to see changed in the Market and to explore ideas of where vendors would like to see the market in the future. These brainstorming ideas will be brought back to the Strategic Plan Committee to help them formulate a Vision Statement.

Director's Report

Caprice Teske gave the following Director updates:

- Site Hotline (magnets with this information were given out at the meeting. Vendors not present will receive them in their vending envelopes)
 - 643-1234 or site@bellinghamfarmers.org is the NEW contact numbers to cancel or change vending dates. Please DO NOT use the 920-0452 number any longer.
 - Deadline for Wednesday Market cancellation is 5pm on the previous Monday and deadline for Saturday Market cancellation is 5pm on the previous Wednesday
- EBT (wooden coins)
 - Only our second season and our first full season accepting food stamp benefits (SNAP Benefits)
 - Almost \$28,000 in food stamp redemption last year
 - Only farm product /non ready-to-eat food can be purchased with these coins. Vendors not selling these items should NOT be taking the coins.
- WIC/SFMNP (Women, Infants & Children/Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program)
 - \$34,000 worth of benefits redeemed last season
 - Farm only program that accepts \$2 coupons. Farmers responsibility to make sure they are signed up each season
 - Returning farmers should receive their renewal letters soon
 - Only farm products, herbs and plant starts
 - Vendors not registered with the State Department of Health CANNOT accept WIC or SFMNP checks. If you do and you are not qualified to take them, you will lose the money.
- Market Bucks (equivalent of Gift Certificate to the Market)
 - Can be purchased at the Information Booth
 - \$5 increments
 - Everyone can take market bucks
- Smart Trips

- Not sure if this program will run again this year, but it represented almost \$10,000 in redemption
- Reimbursement – understand that Smart Trips was a challenge for some of you , it’s also a challenge for us as we are reimbursing you and we haven’t received our reimbursement yet
- Busker Policy
 - New last year, we had some challenges, but overall, feedback from vendors was that we were moving in the right direction
 - We are keeping the permit policy, but reducing the cost to a flat \$10
 - There will only be 4-6 busking spots available at any time in the market
 - April will be complimentary to allow for buskers to raise the \$10 permit fee
- Advertising options
 - Website – if you have not already emailed Caprice your vendor information for the website, please do to soon. This is a great way to reach your customers!
 - Cascadia weekly – 4 page insert came out on March 24th. Another one is slated to run June 1st. If these are successful, we would like to run one more in November to advertise the late season market.
 - Vendor advertising is available at a reduced rate in this special publication (normal small black and white ad would cost \$186)
 - Cascade radio group – Our sponsorship of Kafe radio’s Brain Strain premiers on March 29th.
 - We will sponsor 3 more weeks of this throughout the season
 - Vendors can get advertising for the business simply by donating a prize worth between \$50-\$100
 - Bellingham Herald
 - Will continue run pick-up ads throughout the season. This is our most expensive print media advertising option so we are limiting the amount of advertising we run in this publication.
- Chef in the Market
 - Sponsorship from Country Financial
 - Only held once a month now on the third Saturday, but we will have 2 times (11am and 1pm)
 - Recipes will focus on a featured ingredient readily available in the Market. We will also focus on affordability and “5 Ingredients or Less” concept to make this more accessible to our customers
- Affordability messaging
 - To counter the perception that the Market is over-priced, we are having a volunteer shop various outlets to compare our prices. We will share this information with the public as appropriate

Business Meeting commenced at 11:30am

Elections: Applicant that had turned in Board Applications and bios were each given 2-3 minutes to address to membership. Applicants included:

Mike Finger
Gretchen Woody
Betsy Cassell
Tom Thornton (Not present at meeting. Caprice reports on Tom's experience)

Board calls for nominees from the floor. Josh Craft nominates himself and speaks to membership.

Ann Russell has been nominated by the Board to fill a Community seat on the Board. Ann is not present but has prepared a written address that Caprice reads.

Ballots are collected.

Introductions of Board, staff and volunteers

Kathryn Hanowell, Vice President, calls the business meeting to order.

Action: Approval of 2009 minutes
--No discussion
--Vince Lolande moves to approve the minutes
--Chey Black seconds the motion
--2009 Spring Meeting Minutes approved

Finance Report

Marv Fast, Board Member, delivers the **finance report** on behalf of Tom Thornton:

- Recap of 2009
- Explanation of savings, \$43,000 is what carries us forward in the early months of the market
- Explanation of the reserve fund at \$16,000, this is a reflection of higher fees, a great selling season last year and spending controls. This is our "rainy day fund" so that our business remains solvent. 2009 was the first year the market established a reserve fund.
- 2010 approved budget: new cost for farm inspections, our lease fee has raised slightly. Explanation of "professional fees": accountant, taxes, and graphic design
- Projected net income for 2010 \$6,900

Discussion:

Question: "Will the vendor fees drop now that we have a reserve fund?"

Answer: Site expansion has also put pressure on fees, and a reduction in fees is not clear at this point. In addition, our operational costs will continue to rise every year.

Comment: "As a former board member I think this reserve fund is really important and we need to bulk it up as much as possible."

Comment: “It would be helpful to see this budget side by side with last year’s budget. Is there a foreseeable cap for the reserve fund?”

Answer: \$16,000 represents 2 months of operating costs and we would like to have 3 months in reserve. This was where we wanted to start and the Finance Committee will analyze it further.

Question: “Why did the fees for the Wed. market jump so much?”

Answer: this is a reflection of better sales, not increased fees.

Question: “Will there be a kids market this year?”

Answer: Yes, last Saturday of every month.

Committee Reports:

Strategic plan (Mike Finger): Because of detailed break out session, Mike asks if there are any additional questions. No discussion.

Farm Committee (Gretchen Woody) This committee completed the first round of farm inspections last year. The farm committee will have an open meeting at end of year.

Processor Committee (Azizi Tookas) This committee encouraged the use of locally sourced products this past year and will continue to develop education about this for members. For the first time processors have seniority points, they received 2 points for every year at the market (different than other categories), but seniority is only used WITHIN the Processor category. The Processor Committee will have a open meeting in the Fall.

Craft Committee (Erin Boyd) The Craft Committee had more meetings than ever before. They are dealing with growing pains but moving towards positive growth in 2010.

Policy & Bylaws (Mike Finger) This committee is increasingly pertinent as we get larger. We are planning on taking a comprehensive look at the policy and bylaws this year.

Discussion:

Comment: “I suggest that is a policy that we have microphones in the crowd at these meetings, giving lip service to two way communication.”

New business:

Committees looking for new applicants:

- Farm
- Policy and bylaws
- Processor
- Craft

Please let Caprice know if you would like an application to join one of the above committees.

Fundraising: We are rolling out a “Friends of the Market” campaign this year to raise funds to help pay for things like Chef in the Market, Festivals, additional advertising, improvements to site, etc. To kick off this campaign, every vendor is being challenged to bring in one \$25.00 “friend” of the market. They fill out the application available online and put the vendor’s name in the “referred by” line. Each member you bring in qualifies you for a chance in a drawing for free membership that will be held on July 1st. Contact Caprice for more information.

Hour Change: The hour change for Saturday Market to open 1 hour earlier (9am-3pm) will not take place this year, but it is the Board’s intention to make this change for 2011. A lot of discussion has taken place over this topic and will continue to do so. We need to do our best to move forward with new things. If you wish to give input, please feel free to send Caprice an email or contact one of our board members.

Discussion:

Feedback on structure of meeting:

Comment: liked it but would also like to know what was happening in other rooms

Comment: this is our last Saturday morning, it was a really difficult this to give up (lots of others members agree)

Comment: it would be nice to see a special meeting for the Wednesday market

Comment: The Wednesday market doesn’t get a lot of attention, it’s seems as though it is set up to fail.

Comment: The only reason I will be vending on Wednesday is because I believe in the Market and want it to succeed; it is against my better business sense.

Answer: We are concentrating more advertising on Wednesday Market this year, including a special edition of the Market poster, another Cascadia Weekly insert to come out on opening day of the Wednesday Market and a week sponsorship of Brain Strain during the first week of the Wednesday Market.

Action: Board will look at holding a separate meeting for the Wednesday Market.

Meeting Adjourned 12:38pm