

Operating Committee Meeting November 14, 2009

Present were: Mimi Booth, Phil Cool , Andy Mackey, Winnie Pitrone, Marbry Sipila , Gypsy Spring, Claudia Finerty, Jen Lyon , Donna Bishop, Tom Gervase , Alexandria Curry, Angela Harney, Cindy Wilder

Discussion regarding Annual Meeting:

OC voted to hold the Annual Meeting on Jan. 23, 2010 from 9:30-3:00. Location TBA

McFarm leadership Discussion

This discussion began with an overview regarding the work of the president. There is a lot more involved than meets the eye. Angela and Claudia presented the following:

It is time to have a paid person at the helm. Too much work, too many responsibilities for a volunteer, they suffer burnout. And these issues will increase as the association gets large. We need to be able to choose a person with the skills and time needed; application process & interview process; Market Managers & Office Manager who are out on the front lines- between the general public, the vendors & the agencies need the expertise of a qualified leader, not likely to be a volunteer.

How can we create the money needed for this? We could skip one newsletter a year (500\$) Increase fees by 1\$ per vendor, per day. (2,600\$) Increase dues by 5\$ (800\$) Add in some from the contingency fund, and we would have the 5,000.00 (estimated) necessary to get started. Research indicates that MCFARM may be one of the few farmers market associations that is run by volunteers.

Other OC thoughts:

- Bigger pool of workers if the job is paid a decent wage
- We can speak with North Coast Opportunities for ideas. Might be able to get in under their umbrella. They write grants, and are very organized.
- If a GM is hired, who would be supervising the board? Who would supervise the GM?
- Either have a GM, or simplify and become independent markets, with no association.
- Job description, and vision statement is necessary for the position.
- Ideally, the person filling the position will live in a central location, but we can't require it.
- Initially, the pay for a GM will be low. But that person can work towards increasing funds for association, and for their wage.
- New president at annual meeting will need to understand that the goal is to have a GM. - President could then have duties lightened primarily for moderating meetings.
- NCO might be able to help us find the perfect GM, even if we are not under their umbrella.
- Regarding candidates for president: There was no newsletter this summer. Winter newsletter should communicate the officer positions that are open and their responsibilities.

Leadership Task team: Angela, Claudia, Alexandria, Donna, Winnie, Mimi

Producer Location discussion:

Discussed background of bylaw changes regarding producer location. Explained the bylaw language was recently changed to "adjacent counties", as it seemed more concise than to use the term "nearby counties". Attempts were made to use the same term throughout our documents. Although we commonly perceive Humboldt, Sonoma, and Lake Counties to be our only adjacent neighbors, we forget that our county also touches three other counties.

as our main highways take us through several counties in order to get to these adjacent neighbors along the highway 5 corridor. It was suggested that we clarify this term in our documents by stating our three common neighbors as Humboldt, Sonoma and Lake Counties. OC agreed that existing out of county vendors should be grandfathered in and that Ag. members, regardless of location, should have a vote. It was suggested that the following change of language should be discussed and considered for voting on by members at the Annual Meeting:

RULES AND REGULATIONS

III. ADMISSION OF A PRODUCER AND PRODUCTS TO A MARKET

Move item B to C and so on. Replace B with the following:

B: Market Managers have the right to refuse admittance to any producers from out of the county, other than those from nearby counties (Lake, Sonoma, or Humboldt Counties).

Those managers who accept long distance producers on a limited basis should ensure that the following conditions will be met:

1. The fuel distance will be mitigated by other factors such as a fuel efficient vehicle, exceptional growing practices etc.
2. The products will not directly compete with products from local vendors nor significantly take away sales from local vendors.
3. The products are generally viewed as potential enhancement for the market.
4. The origin of the products will be reasonably easy to monitor and the producer agrees to a site visit by a member of OC prior to acceptance.
5. It is determined that the market will have ample space for the projected local producers.

Market reports: (in no particular order)

Boonville: Cindy will email

Gualala: Market had another good year. We had our new Mendocino Salt Co, which did amazing sales all season. I encouraged everyone to be creative with new ways to sell the same ole great foods. For example; we had a BBQ going with veggie samplings to showcase the many spice and condiments that several vendors have. It sure boosted squash sales. We had another lovely year of weather on the coast. Jiggling spaces each week is just the way it is in Gualala. Everyone was very courteous and adaptable. We are looking forward to an even better 2010.

Redwood Valley: Positive highlights: The second annual Farm Tour fund raiser, local RV produce vendors and fabulous music, working with the enthusiastic farmers market committee, they inspire me. Why it was a successful season: RV has great volunteers and vendors. It feels like a family with everyone working together. This market encourages local to grow food and provides a place to sell it.

Focus of the promotions/operational budget: music

Goals for the next season: continue to encourage local food production, do another farm related fund raiser. Get the committee to join the RV Grange and start the process of getting the kitchen certified to produce value added products for the farmers markets.

Willits: Chef demos, program where people work in community gardens for market green bucks, used EBT machine for food stamps, lively market. Budget focus: music, chef demos, next season goals: grange certified kitchen. Encourage vendors to use that kitchen

Fort Bragg: We were able to remain in our beautiful lot, after much last minute scrambling prior to opening day. 30 days before opening, Claudia and gypsy were informed by City Hall that we would have to pay for a CDP (coastal development permit) to remain on the lot. After much discussion, we were able to get the fee waived for 2009. Currently, we are

attempting to get the fee waived for 2010, as it would come to \$1,500. We were delighted to host many new vendors this year. It is with sadness that Claudia will be retiring this year from managing the FBFM. Her energy, enthusiasm, and dedication will be sorely missed. The question that currently posed to vendors is: Extending hours. Since we have more than a few vendors who commute anywhere (round trip) from 1 ½ hours, to 5 hours, that doesn't seem to make sense for a market that is 2 ½ hours in length. Customers have also indicated that they would prefer longer hours. All of these things have been brought up, during the course of the season. The general feeling seems to be, open a half hour earlier, and close no later than six. I have told everyone NOTHING will happen without consent, and come to the annual meeting, where it can be discussed freely. All in all, it has been a productive, profitable year. The numbers seem to be up for the year, excluding the last 2 months. That was due to: freezing weather for some of our vendors, ill health on the parts of others. Once again, without the fabulous vendors, there would be no market. My hat's off to everyone!

Laytonville: It has been a lively, fun and profitable market season. Changing our market day to Monday has been successful and in the fall when school starts our market picks up as we have many parents with kids drop by after school. Our local musician Dennis Krisp, came faithfully to all the markets and entertained us, giving the markets a festive feel. We had 2 chef demos during the season, and a tomatoe tasting which was quite popular. Our weekly newspaper article is our main source of advertising, along with our signs on the highway which are up on market day. Most of our market budget is spent on paying the musicians. We have continued with our Green Bucks program, which allows low income folks to do a work trade in the Laytonville Community Garden in exchange for market dollars. A total of \$1156.00 worth of Green Bucks were spent this year at our market. Many thanks to our vendors and community folks that make our market a success.

Mendocino: 2009 was another fine farmer's market year. We are very pleased with the diversity of products that are available at our relatively small market. We're glad to report that community support has stayed loyal during these tough economic times. We host a seed exchange twice a year which is a very positive community service. The Mendocino Land trust also sets up an info table occasionally throughout the season. The only negative event was surrounding the Neufeld Farm, but it was also a learning experience. It helped clarify our views on the paradoxical situation of maintaining open markets while preventing unfair competition for the farmers that this organization was set up to support. We are very grateful for the support that the OC provided to those of us dealing with this complicated situation.

Ukiah Tuesday: Down 47% largely due to losing Gowans. Phil is getting his feet wet managing. Phil would like to see the market continue, thinks that it is worth while.

Ukiah Saturday: It was a mixed year for the market. We had significantly more vendors (particularly for plant starts at the beginning of the season) and a wider range of products. However, in terms of income, the market was significantly down. It gave back about half of the gains from 2009/ That was in part due to changes in vendors. Two of the top ten vendors from 2008 (Elk Creamery and The Garden Bakery) dropped out entirely and two of our other large vendors (The Gowan's and Aqua Rodeo) missed large portions of the season. Also, the local fresh fish (a huge seller in prior years) has down in part due to a limited selection this season. The economic downturn was also a large factor. People were just spending less, and in some cases, growing more in their own gardens. Although the same customers seemed to be coming to the market, they were far more concerned about prices this year. A couple of farms talked with me about the potential of running specials and/or frequent buyer discounts (the kinds of things other retailers are doing to survive these days) and I also asked farms to alert me to planned specials so that I could help get the word out. However, I did not notice any significant effort by the vendors.

to implement any strategies addressing the recession in their pricing and marketing. Fortunately, the continuing off season market should be bigger this year to help narrow the gap in farm income between the two years. Market funds were a bit down this season due to a cut in sponsorship by the Ukiah Main Street Program (another organization suffering through the recession) and new costs such as paying for Chamber and Farm Bureau membership (the latter provided a feature article in its monthly magazine) All other funds were used for advertising and promotion. The main change this season was to drop the use of TV advertising and significantly increase the use of KZYX sponsorship. Other advertising was substantially the same with the exception of the addition of two walkers paid each week to wear sandwich boards to alert people out driving that the market is in progress. That seemed to be a fairly effective technique for getting people to check out the market. Overall, feedback about the market (at least the part of it that gets to me) is still almost entirely positive. I could go on about a dozen other topics, but this is already not brief.

Fee Changes Discussion

- Disparity of percentage paid by all vendors on stall fees.
- Discussed tiered stall fee system.
- Raise cap? Up to 500\$ ceiling
- Raising ceiling may hurt the midrange vendors
- We already have increased membership fees
- Lift the ceiling, higher, like 600.00
- We have not raised the cap for at least 15 years
- Look at inflation, everything else has gone up
- Spoke about tiered system, and how it works

Summary: Due to inflation that affect our costs and the fact that the ceiling has not been raised for over a decade, this would give greater fairness.

Caveats:

1. Need to value our anchor vendors as well as respect the contributions of our many sma vendors.
2. We need actual numbers to discuss
3. Fees need to be commensurate with other counties
4. We will need vendor input regarding revenue increases.

Task team: Phil, Angela, Marbry, Donna, Mimi

Office Manager Report

Handouts showing Gross Sales & Stall fee increases & decreases, by market. On 2010 Vendor Application going to include small meats, and how vendors get the letter of exemption. Market manager addresses need to be obvious in vendor packs

New method for accepting crafters: Go to MM first, before becoming a member? How can we make this work?

Regarding MM monthly reports: Tracked ag versus non ag through these. Ranges from 93% ag, to a low of 63% ag in markets. Easier to compute budget if MM's commission is a flat 48% rather than a mix of comped stall fees. Will change to a straight 48%, excluding those who are grandfathered in. Discussed MM contract. Last paragraph will be modified to include: training, interview, etc.

Vice President report:

The promotional items were: Magnets, bumperstickers. We have plenty for next year. Aprons were tie-dyed. Hats were also promo items. It is important that we give the promo

items back to Office Manager at the end of year, for collation. Or MM's could turn in inventory sheet. Chico bags were left over from the grant, and were self sustaining, as well as the Marzel bags, and canvas bags. Bags have come to an end due to saturation, so perhaps we should look into other ways to use the end of the grant money.

Local Dirt Website: connects farmers and customers on a local level. Will put in CFM's for free.

Regarding our logo in a single colour screen. We could stand to update it for an appropriate one colour item, such as our third fold fliers.

Posters: New artwork is 350-400\$ To reuse last years, and redo the center would be 100\$ or less. Smaller size poster (8.5X11) was very popular. Will reuse poster with mules (2000) for 2010. Should find ink that does not fade so quickly.

Do third fold brochures with more colour, three colours at the least. Red, green, and yellow Website: Want to include a "vendor profile/ biography". Winnie is volunteering to help on this.

Newsletter

-Angela is suggesting that we send out postcards announcing annual meeting, that mention that if you want a hard copy of the newsletter, you contact Angela for same. Otherwise, it will be available on line for the majority of people.

-Include survey and Bylaw changes

-Pay tribute to Richard Wood, who passed away this year. One of the founders of UFM

-Birth announcements: Keith and Kate Feigins baby, Javier and Elodie Salmon's baby, John and Sarah Bailey's baby, Jenifer Elmer's impending birth

-Open positions: 2 Member reps, secretary, president

-Thanks to outgoing OC members

Time Line:

This week: save the date, and survey

January: newsletters on web, rather than December during the holiday rush

Second mailing, to remind people of the meeting

Managers to remind their vendors to show a week prior to meeting

Evaluations/review/closure

Task team for Leadership: Winnie, Angela, Alex, Donna, Claudia, and Mimi

Task team for stall fee options: Phil, Donna, Marbry, Angela, Mimi

Mimi will email Bylaw language discussed today. Send in newsletter items.

Winnie will deal with pictures for website (everyone send pix to Winnie on CD) Everyone write their own bio's

Mimi/Angela will edit minutes and e-mail OC for approval before posting the minutes on the website.

MM's and pres. submitted self-evaluations and all participants submitted eval of OM.

Adjourned at 3pm

Minutes Submitted by Gypsy Spring due to the absence of Secretary Jenifer Elmer