

Madison Public Market 11/11/14

Good evening,

I am here to speak for the continuation of funding for the Madison Public Market. As a Farmer, as a member of the Dane County Farmers' Market and as a farmer member of the Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative I have been involved in discussion about the MPMD.

Speaking for those of us who are in business, stopping the process for even a year will derail much of this group's ability to stay involved. It would be just too uncertain for us to carve out the time needed to bring this together. As I understand it our participation is critical for the completion of the business plan. The vast majority of us in this group have a lot more time over the winter and great strides can be made this coming winter if the will is there.

The question that everyone wants to know and cannot be answered until after the business plan is complete is, "How soon can the tax payers quit funding this endeavor?". If there was a way to project when this might happen it may alleviate concerns about ongoing support. We have a very good example that we can look to and that is the Dane County Farmers' Market. It was started by government and business agencies, nurtured long enough for the members of the newly formed entity to establish rules, protocols and leadership and then in their great wisdom, the founders passed it off to the Farmers.

I will suggest that the governance of the Public Market follow a similar path as the DCFM and by following that path, many fronts can be worked on at once. For example if each potential group of users, Farmers, Food Carts, Restaurants, Wholesale produce, artists/crafts and customers each had a council the was elected by its membership. Each groups sets their own standards of business and elects a member to an overriding council made up of members from each group as well as the City of Madison. Public Health might be included in this top group as well. There may well be other groups of players that will identified as this moves forward.

With the consultant's leadership, each of these groups could be guided to accomplish what was needed to complete the business plan this winter and we would all be up to speed on implementation for a 2016 opening.

For example, if the Dane County Farmers' Market is the one to manage the farmers' market portion, one instantly has history, reputation and proven operational management. Similar infrastructure could be found or developed for the other users too including the Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative.

When you consider that the minor amount of money spent nurturing the Dane County Farmers' Market and the arguable fact that it played a major role in the revitalization of downtown Madison, development of the Public Market takes on a different light if it includes a goal of users covering the ongoing management and costs of it as soon as possible.

Please use your vote tonight to keep contiguous funding of the Madison Public Market.

Be well,

Mark Olson, Renaissance Farm