

MOSCOW FARMERS MARKET COMMISSION



Jamie Hill
Commission Chair
fmc@ci.moscow.id.us

Regular Meeting
~Minutes~

Amanda Argona
Staff Liaison
208-883-7132

<https://www.ci.moscow.id.us/362/Farmers-MarketCommission>

Wednesday
July 5, 2023

4:00 PM

Council Chambers
206 E. 3rd St.

Meeting called to order at 4:03 pm

WELCOME AND ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS: Jamie Hill (Chair), Joshua Larson, Kassie Smith, MacKenzie Lawrence (Vice Chair), Jenny Parker, Kerry Morsek (arrived 4:05 pm)

ABSENT: Samantha Martinet, Gerardo Alvarez, Colette DePhelps

STAFF: Amanda Argona (Community Events Manager), Laura Perrigo (Administrative Specialist), Cody Riddle (Deputy City Supervisor), Maureen Laflin (Councilmember)

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Mission of the Moscow Farmers Market

The Moscow Farmers Market celebrates life on the Palouse by providing the community with the opportunity to buy and sell local and regional agricultural products (e.g., crops, meat, cheese, wine, etc.), distinctive handmade goods, artisan pieces, and original recipe cuisine. This venue is meant to encourage and support sustainable economic, social and environmental practices.

Lawrence read the mission statement aloud.

2. Approval of Farmers Market Commission May 2, 2023 Minutes (ACTION ITEM)

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Approve minutes, amend minutes, or take such other action deemed appropriate.

Smith moved to approve minutes as presented; Larson seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Unanimous. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

3. Public Comment and Response to Previous Comments (limited to 10 minutes)

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Members of the public may speak to the Commission regarding matters NOT on the agenda or currently pending before the Commission. Please state your name and city of residence for the record and limit your remarks to three (3) minutes.

4. 2023 Site Visits (ACTION ITEM) – DePhelps and Argona (1 hour)

The Site Visit subcommittee visited eight new agricultural producers on Wed., May 17, Wed., May 24, and Fri., May 26. Two agricultural producers remain to be visited this season. The following concerns and issues were raised from the May visits:

- a. Concern in regards to the raising/management of livestock that is purchased from another producer and whether this is in alignment with Basic Eligibility requirements of being the producer of such goods.
- b. Concern in regards to production practices not in alignment with encourage and preferred sustainable and environmentally sound practices as stated in the Market Handbook in the following areas:
 - **Mission Statement** – See top of agenda
 - **Information core value** – “Increasing awareness of regional agricultural, sustainability, and sound environmental practices through education and outreach activities.”
 - **Sustainable Practices definition, adapted from the United States Department of Agriculture** – “An integrated system of plant and animal production practices that are capable of maintaining their productivity and usefulness to society over the course of time. These systems incorporate the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources, and where appropriate, utilized natural biological cycles and controls that maintain agricultural productivity, promote economic vitality in both the short and long term, and maintain stable rural communities, and quality of life.”
 - **Agricultural Vendor definition** – “Vendors who participate in the cultivation, harvesting, or production of crops, or management of livestock and bees. Vendors are strongly encouraged to be hygienic and sustainable with their practices in planting, growing, cultivating, harvesting, transporting, and offering of such items for sale.”

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Per Appendix 6 – Vendor Eligibility & Approval of the Market Handbook, under Issues and Actions “...Vendors who are deemed incompatible with the Market’s mission statement, core values, and philosophies by the Site Visit subcommittee may attend the Market until further notice by the Commission.”

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Prohibit Vendors from bringing meat products that are derived from purchased livestock for the remainder of the 2023 season; or take such other action deemed appropriate.

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Prohibit Vendor from attending the Moscow Farmers Market for the remainder of the 2023 season; or take such other action deemed appropriate.

Argona presented to the Commission observations made by the Site Visit subcommittee while touring Blue Wildrye Farm and Ee-Ii-Ee-Ii-Oo Ranch. Argona invited both producers to be present at the meeting and introduced Tim Dittmer with Blue Wildrye Farm and Kerby Van Tine and Melvin Heuett with Ee-Ii-Ee- Ii-Oo Ranch.

Argona explained that subcommittee members learned through the site visits that both operations were purchasing livestock of a certain age and raising for slaughter. The subcommittee members questioned whether this fits the basic eligibility requirements which state “All Vendors are required to be the grower/producer of their products...”. Argona cited a previous Site Visit from 2021 where the animals were born and raised on a farm, but then put on the majority of their weight at a feed operation not managed by the Vendor. In that example, the subcommittee members brought this to the Commission, who felt it was not in alignment with Market policies. The questions posed to the Commission were at what point are purchased livestock deemed too old to qualify as being raised by a Vendor, and do these products meet Market policies or not.

Ee-Ii-Ee-Ii-Oo Ranch purchases their cattle around 18 months of age from two producers within a 200 air-mile radius, then finishes them with grain anywhere from two to four months before they are slaughtered at a USDA facility.

Blue Wildrye Farm plans to source their calves at about eight months from Weekes Family Farm this summer, and will raise them until slaughter weight in the summer of 2024.

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Hill requested to hear from the Vendors. Dittmer explained their farm is a pasture farm and practices rotational grazing with the livestock as part of the process to improve soil health for future production. Dittmer's family recently moved their farm from western Washington and is in the process of rebuilding the farm in Princeton. They plan to birth calves in the future, but do not have the capital to do so currently. Dittmer explained they are working on a 35-acre farm and will only hold as many animals that are complimentary to each other on the farm. Discussion ensued about the ability to purchase livestock at different ages, and how long animals tend to be in an individual's care prior to slaughtering.

Parker felt Blue Wildrye Farm supports sustainable farming practices and feels it is in align with the Market's mission. Lawrence referred to the Market's policy and after hearing Dittmer's situation felt that it is in alignment with Market policies. Morsek said that the subcommittee was in support of recommending to the Commission that Blue Wildrye Farm continue to sell their meat products at the Market.

Van Tine noted that their ranch used to be a calving operation, but they have transitioned to purchasing livestock as that model works best for them. He expressed flexibility in adapting to future policies. The currently have access to 160-acre in hay/pasture in Gifford, Idaho which is harvested and brought to the cattle pens at their Culdesac, Idaho property (most of which is forested and not pasture); this property is also where their farrow operation is housed, with the pigs finished out housed in paddocks in a different area.

Lawrence expressed to Van Tine that the Commission would never want to interfere with a farmer's production practices. Lawrence asked Van Tine where they source their animals from. Van Tine said his calves are sourced from his father-in-law (who was present at the meeting), and a Camas Prairie cooperative in the Orofino/Cottonwood, Idaho area. Heuett, added their livestock leaves his farm with a health inspected certificate. As it is standard for all cattle.

Lawrence further asked about the timeline in which they possess and raise the cattle and referred to past Vendors that did not align with the policy of being the producer of their product. Heuett added that it is costly to feed a young calf and get them up to weight.

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Parker suggested the Commission come up with a policy that addresses an animal's lifespan and how long a Vendor would need to be in possession of that animal to qualify as the producer of subsequent product. Argona referenced a quick audit of current Market Vendors, with most raising animals from birth to slaughter. She also referenced two other Farmers Markets' policies on animal production (Spokane Farmers Market and Boise Farmers Market).

Hill opened the table up to anyone with more questions or comments. Further discussion continued around the acceptance of new Agricultural Vendors and the ability for Market policies to affect small farms and their success.

The Commission requested clarification on the first proposed action. Argona clarified that the Commission take the proposed action, or make a motion for a different action.

Lawrence moved to allow Vendors to continue to bring meat to the Market who have overseen management of the animal(s) for at least 51% of their lifespan prior to harvest, with the expectation that the Policy subcommittee will propose a policy for future adoption that may or may not meet this motion. Morsek seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Unanimous. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

Argona introduced the second proposed action item in regards to production practices. Issues revolving animal welfare and sustainability at Ee-Ii-Ee-Ii-Oo Ranch arose during the Site Visit and have been brought forward to the Commission to decide if the farming practices are in alignment with the mission of the Market and its core values.

Photos of the Site Visit were presented to the Commission along with anecdotal observations made by Argona and Morsek, who were two of four members on this visit. A basic summary of the operation was provided: Pigs are birthed and raised on property. Piglets are farrowed in huts and once they reach 30 lbs. (about eight weeks) are moved to paddocks with feeding troughs to be brought up to weight for slaughter, which is about six to seven months or until about 270 lbs. The paddocks are roughly 15'x60' in area, and can hold up to 70 pigs, but the Vendor only keeps about 50 to 60 pigs in the paddocks.

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Morsek expressed concerns of the concentration of animals in one area and the amount of manure build-up, given the paddocks are only cleaned out once per year. Overall, the subcommittee members felt this Vendor operation was not in alignment with sustainability practices that are cited and referenced in the Market Handbook.

Morsek and Argona both expressed that the farm is following University of Idaho Extension guidelines and meets USDA processing requirements. The largest concern is the animals not having access to any pasture and manure management.

Van Tine conveyed to the Commission he wished he had a clearer understanding on what the subcommittee was looking for on Site Visits. Argona and the Commission welcomed the feedback and felt it was a good opportunity to task the Policy subcommittee with development and refinement of such policies around sustainability and land management. Lawrence asked Van Tine if their customers are aware they are not a pasture operation and are transparent with their practices. Van Tine ensured that he explains to their customers that they are not a pasture operation when asked. They don't have the land to make pasture raising viable.

Argona clarified to the Commission which action is on the table. Morsek said the subcommittee was recommending to the Commission that Ee-Ii-Ee-Ii-Oo Ranch not be permitted to continue with the Market due to production practices not being in alignment with sustainability practices as outlined in the Market Handbook. Argona went on to comment that Farmers Markets across the U.S. are expected to vet and curate Vendors on behalf of the customers. Not every customer asks specific questions around production practices, which is why they have such an intensive eligibility standard in place.

Lawrence agrees that the Commission is here to make decisions that are best for the Market, but is hesitant to not allow a Vendor to finish out a season. She agreed that the Policy subcommittee needs to consider policy around humane animal practices for inclusion in next year's Market Handbook. Morsek is concerned that allowing the Vendor to finish out the season may impact other Vendors that have taken great care to align with the Market's mission and core values and it might undermine their efforts. Parker invited Dittmer to give insight to the Commission as a fellow livestock Vendor. Dittmer explained that farmers make decisions in purchasing livestock and feed far in advance and it would be financially detrimental not to be able to bring that meat to Market six months later.

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Lawrence said the discussion around the production practices of Ee-Ii-Ee-Ii-Oo Ranch is philosophical and it would be unfair to not allow them to remain as a Vendor at the Market for the rest of the season. Hill thanked both Vendors for their attendance and for being open with the Commission.

Parker agrees the Commission should allow the Ee-Ii-Ee-Ii-Oo Ranch to finish the Market season and give them a chance to reevaluate their farming practices to be more in alignment with the Market mission if they would like to continue as a Vendor in the future.

Argona advised the Commission to consider all factors, including the Market Handbook's transparency on Prospective Agricultural Vendors needing to pass a Site Visit when joining the Farmers Market. Commission members should also consider Market customers and if their expectations of the Market are being met.

Lawrence expressed appreciation to each Vendor for taking the time to come to the meeting and encouraged the Commission to move on the action item today to avoid delay for the sake of Ee-Ii-Ee-Ii-Oo Ranch's interest.

Laflin asked how the decision would affect the Vendor's sales. Argona reported they estimate about 75% of their sales come from the Moscow Farmers Market.

Smith added people that shop at the Market have an assumed expectation that Vendors at the Market are organic or organic adjacent and finds it unfair to put two farmers in the same Market producing the same meat product but have very different practices. Smith also agrees it would be unfair to not allow them to finish the season.

Lawrence moved to allow Ee-Ii-Ee-Ii-Oo Ranch to finish out the 2023 Market season with only their pork products and for the Policy subcommittee to propose future policies on animal welfare for inclusion in the 2024 Market Handbook. Larson seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Lawrence, Smith, Larson, Parker, Hill. Nays: None. Abstentions: Morsek. Motion carried.

REPORTS

1. WSFMA Conference report – DePhelps, Lawrence, Argona

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Report has been tabled for future meeting.

2. Community Events Manager report – Argona

Report has been tabled for future meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Farmers Market Commission representation required

- **Jul. 29, 7:45 am to 1 pm – RMA Customer count**
Minimum of five Commission members and/or volunteers.
Confirmed: J. Hill, J. Larson
- **Aug. 12, 9 to 11 am – National Farmers Market Week Celebration**
Minimum of three Commission members to assist with emceeing, engagement, and prize drawing.
Confirmed: J. Hill, J. Larson
- **Aug. 26, 7:45 am to 1 pm – RMA Customer count**
Minimum of five Commission members and/or volunteers.
Confirmed: J. Larson
Maybe: J. Hill, K. Morsek

2. Proposed Items for Future Agendas

Commission members may email Amanda Argona (aargona@ci.moscow.id.us) to propose future agenda items for discussion.

- Strategic Plan update (August)

3. Farmers Market Commission regular meeting August 1, 2023 at Moscow City Hall in Council Chambers.

ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 5:33 pm

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