

Farmers Market Meeting - 3/04/14

Jeff Bradley, Extension Director, and Jan McGuinn, Extension Agent, presided over the meeting.

Jan opened up meeting and highlighted the following:

- Brief review of Farmers Market progress within the last 6 months. Currently, working on Interlocal Agreement with Rutherford County and Town of Forest City.
- Developed a Farmers Market Committee.
 - Committee members are: Jack Causby, Marie Chan, Jon Hanson, Gerry Roberts, HESSIE TIPTON, Tracy Davis, Jeff Bradley, and Farmers Market manager.
 - Committee met February 6th and the 27th deciding to conduct the monthly meetings during the year.
 - Stressed the need for a good support team for the Market
 - Farmers Market Committee meetings will be posted on both the county and Farmer's Market website. Anyone is welcome to join.
 - Next scheduled Committee Meeting is March 27. *Meetings will be the last Thursday of every month.
- Encouraged vendors to fill out new 2014 Grower Certification forms.

Jeff's items of discussion:

- Interlocal Agreement –
 - The document is currently in draft process. Awaiting Town of Forest City and Rutherford County attorneys to complete.
 - Estimated approval is 2-3 weeks.
- Saturday, April 26th is soft opening day of Farmers Market.
 - Hours of operation: Committee decided to do away with Thursday and open Tuesday and Saturday only. Thursday date may be added back later on.
- Suggestions from the floor:
 - Change the time on Thursday to accommodate more clientele such as during lunch hours.
 - Also adding music or events to increase clientele
 - Opening on Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday.
 - Many vegetables needed to be picked 3 times a week such as okra or figs.
 - Tuesday hours be 8am – 12pm and Saturday 8am – 1pm
 - Opening on Wednesday night
 - Returning to old schedule of only opening on Tuesday and Friday mornings.
 - Opening Tuesday 10am-2pm instead of 8am-12pm
 - Jeff asked the question, “Why was the Market a disaster on Thursday?”
 - Not conveniently planned around customers lunch hour.
 - Committee will continue to review.

- By the Grand Opening will possibly consider opening 3 days per week.
- Consensus reached to open 8am-1pm on Tuesday and Saturday then advertise additional days for peak season.
- Due to health issues, Ricky Horne has resigned as Farmers Market manager.
 - New Farmers Market manager is not allowed to be a vendor – conflict of interest.
 - Qualities of new manager: enthusiastic, PR experience, energetic. All applications will go through Human Resources office for Rutherford County at the County Annex building, Main Street in Rutherfordton.
- Group advised to contact Farmers Market Committee with suggestions, problems, etc.
- New Department of Revenue certificate guidelines. Vendors will be updated as soon as receive certification guidelines. Basic guidelines are if you grow, sell, and do not process crops no sales tax. Go online to NC Department of Revenue retrieve certificate form. Market manager will keep lists of certificates.
- Vendors talked about growing and selling vs. buying and selling.
 - Vendors selling non-local produce should not compete with those selling homegrown produce
 - Suggestion of signage that says, “Not Grown By Me.”
 - At least 51% of what vendors sell must be grown by themselves.
- Committee suggests marketing your farm and promoting, especially if grown 100% in county.

New physical address of Farmers Market is 172 Depot St., Forest City

- Reviewed 2014 Farmers Market Rules and Regulations. New change in that vendors will need to either bring their own tables or rent a table (\$5/day) from the Farmers Market. Vendor Fees will remain the same as last year (\$5/day or \$50/season).

Danielle Withrow, Town of Forest City Planner and Downtown Development Director, shared that she is networking with Chatterbox, a Marketing firm to assist in the development of a new Farmers Market logo, rack card with the up-coming Market events, and will be coordinating with the Farmers Market Committee. Proposal for focusing on a special event for the first and third Saturdays of each month. Proposed ideas include: fruits and vegetable promotions, Pasta Festival, various ways to cook produce such as sweet potatoes, eating healthy. Selling t-shirts and reusable shopping bags.