

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
OF JANUARY 24, 2023**

Mayor Patricia Randall called the Committee of the Whole Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in Conference Room #1 at Portage City Hall.

ROLL CALL: Councilmembers Lisa Brayton, Chris Burns, Lori Knapp, Victor Ledbetter, Terry Urban, and Mayor Patricia Randall were present.

ABSENT: Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Pat McGinnis, Deputy City Manager Adam Herringa, Parks & Recreation Director Kathleen Hoyle, and City Clerk Erica Eklov.

POTENTIAL LOCATIONS AND EXPANSION/ENHANCEMENT OF THE PORTAGE FARMERS MARKET:

Mayor Randall welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the topic of reviewing the Farmers Market's future. She then asked City Manager McGinnis to present information from the City Administration.

City Manager McGinnis began his presentation detailing seven years of statistics regarding the existing Farmers Market program, including days of operation, attendance, revenue, as well as both seasonal and weekly vendors. He noted the various ongoing and future needs for a successful market and required funding to create an improved market venue. The City Manager highlighted five sites: the current market site in the City Hall parking lot, plus four potential locations in the city. He presented a City Centre location off Brown Avenue, two locations in the Lake Center District, and a separate location on Romence Road in an existing shopping center. He provided several draft concepts for a market layout at each potential site while noting the current site at City Hall is no longer viable.

Mr. McGinnis then presented several criteria for grading a successful market site, including parking, property availability, timing, booth potential, existing plans, adjacent residential density, scalability, interoperability, and pedestrian connections. Based on this scoring, City Manager McGinnis presented how each of the four potential sites rated with the Lake Center District (Zylman) location scoring highest, followed by the City Centre lot on Brown Avenue, the D&W site on Romence Road, and the Lake Center District (billboard) location. Councilmember Urban inquired who was involved in rating the properties. City Manager McGinnis responded that city staff had done the review. City Manager McGinnis also noted that the City Administration had considered the Crossroads Mall location, but declined that option due to concerns with the current property owner and associating city branding with the mall location.

Mayor Randall asked how the vendors are screened to ensure variety. Director Hoyle confirmed that Parks & Recreation staff review applied vendors with a goal for variety in combination with positive attendance records. Mayor Randall then asked about statistics regarding public attendance and distance traveled. Director Hoyle responded that such data could be gathered. There was additional discussion regarding competition with other area markets and attributes to draw attendance. Councilmember Knapp expressed interest in the D&W location with a caveat for additional discussion with the property owner. Councilmember Ledbetter echoed her comment. Councilmember Brayton expressed concern about the cost to the city of the D&W location. Councilmember Urban shared her concerns. There was additional discussion regarding capital investment considerations for the various sites. Councilmember Urban expressed concern about the Brown Avenue location considering the adjacent Reformed Church and Sunday services on the same day as the Portage market. The discussion also encompassed a comparison of the two Lake

Center District sites. Mayor Randall inquired whether the residential density aspect included future development. City Manager McGinnis responded that it is only somewhat factored in. There was additional discussion regarding the desired number of vendors and parking spaces.

PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS: Mayor Randall noted two audience members present.

Patricia Niewonder (10310 South Westnedge Avenue) commented that an expansion of vendors is desired if the city plans to expend money on a new market, with increased variety. She expressed a preference for the City Centre site.

Annie Pryor, current manager for the Portage Farmer's Market, spoke regarding her feedback on the sites proposed and the Council's discussion. She expressed concern about the Lake Center District billboard site and its wetland status. Ms. Pryor also provided feedback regarding the question of collaboration and competition with the other area markets, as well as vendor availability and stock supply. She recommended a feedback session with the existing vendors, noting the vendors desire a long-term location. Councilmember Knapp asked Ms. Pryor about the customer base. Ms. Pryor responded that parking and access via bus routes, trails, and biking have been high priorities in the existing market.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION AND NEXT STEPS: It was the consensus of the Council that the City Administration gather additional information from the owner of the D&W plaza on Romence Road regarding pricing and availability of the site and provide the follow-up information at a future date. City Manager McGinnis confirmed the feedback provided by the Council will guide the City Administration to perform further research.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 06:54 PM.

Erica L. Eklov, City Clerk