

July Farmers Market Report

Following orders from Mayor Foulds, the DS Farmers Market returned to May's Phase II COVID restrictions on July 8: three-foot spacing between booths, eliminating all non-food vendors and live music at market, with picnic tables roped off to discourage shoppers from lingering at market.

Shoppers are now required by state law to wear face coverings while at market, unless they are under the age of two or have a medical condition. Farmers Market staff has been on the alert to spot people entering market without masks and offer them one from market supplies. This strategy has worked well most of the time.

Shopper numbers are still up (though not as high as during March and April); vendor attendance has remained steady at about 30 booths per market. The Salt Lick continues to be a contributing market member from their remote location on the southwest corner of the Triangle; Thai Gourmet pays the regular booth fee each Wednesday to deliver pre-ordered dinners from a designated spot in the parking lot.

FMA Board member Nikki Dahlin has helped at market for several weeks, learning the ropes (literally – how to lay out the twine used to mark booth spaces). She's been a huge help to Laurel, especially when market assistant Maggie Martin can't help at market.

On July 29, Nikki helped rescue several vendor tents as they blew across market during a sudden windstorm. Several tents were damaged, tables were blown over and product damaged - market was generally disrupted for more than half an hour. After the storm subsided, Laurel gave vendors the option to pack up and leave, or to stay and sell. Only Johnson's Backyard Garden opted to stay until market closed.

In mid-July, PCS director Kelly Schmidt received unexpected news from City Administrators that Manager Robertson had worked nearly 1000 hours during the 2020 fiscal year and couldn't work more hours without paying into the Texas Municipal Employees Retirement system. (The City would be required to match those funds, also.) Their instructions were to immediately cut Laurel's hours to below the retirement trigger until the new fiscal year began in October.

Laurel worked the prescribed 19 hours for one week, then worked with Kelly to find a way to stay within the year's budget, while still devoting 25 hours per week to managing the market. She will maintain the 25-hour per week schedule through August, to be reviewed in September. (Laurel had previously requested, and will take, a two-week unpaid leave from Aug 10-21.)

In late July, the PCS team attempted to launch online vendor booth registration (instead of cancellation) using the City's ActiveNet software. Although the software had performed well in

test runs, attempts at using it for online registration by vendors turned up many bugs in the system, so we have delayed its launch until we resolve the problems.

Submitted on July 31, 2020

By Laurel Robertson, Market Manager