



To: Mayor and City Council  
From: Dylan Mulfinger  
Subject: Farmer's Market  
Date: 4/13/2024

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The Farmers Market has approached the city and is working toward a partnership. The Oelwein Farmers Market is entering their third and final year of participating in the Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant. This grant was administered by the Northeast Iowa RC&D.

Below is what Northeast Iowa RC&D provided as part of this grant:

- Provided a Market Managers Success Kit to include supplies such as signs and banners.
- Compensated Market Managers' time - Each participating community partnered with the RC&D to pay a market manager for on site market management throughout the year, development of community relations, and marketing for the market.

Oelwein committed to being the community partner and supplied a portion of the funds for the market manager as matching dollars for the project (\$7,500 total/\$2,500 per year for 3 years).

This partnership was instrumental in growing the Oelwein Farmers Market. The current Manager Kathryn Stejskal has requested a continued partnership with the City of Oelwein. The City Administrator has provided two options for the City Council.

1. Hire the Market Manager as a part-time city employee and create a timeline and job description for the position. Provide the manager with an annual amount of money for their work at the market. The position would be a stipend similar to the campground.
2. Create a 28E agreement with the Farmers Market nonprofit and provide funding that they are free to use as they see fit.

Without the city's investment, the Oelwein Farmers Market will struggle to keep providing a service to the community.

Below is input from the Farmers Market current director Kathryn Stejskal.

**A few notes on what the market offers the city:**

We offer 20 free public 'events' at a public park throughout the summer. Most market days, we provide some kind of programming, which includes live music, kids' activities through the ISU extension, partnering with the library, welcoming summer school kids field trip, food related 'fests' such as salsa fest and squash fest. These events are open to all and can benefit all.



The market accepts vouchers from a state nutrition program that provides checks to seniors, women, and children that fall below a certain income requirement. So it provides fresh fruits and vegetables to more vulnerable members of our community that might be facing food insecurity. The vouchers are used very frequently at our market.

An economic perspective: vendors occasionally use the farmers market as a way to trial their product before committing to a brick-and-mortar store. Also, we get customers traveling through Oelwein to the river for the weekend. Tourism!

Also, people like to move to a town with an active farmers market. It shows how cutting edge and exciting Oelwein really is!

### **Why the Farmers Market needs funding for a paid manager:**

Since the market manager position was funded in 2022, we have more than doubled our vendors and greatly increased our customers. In addition, before a paid manager, we had no programming, no social media presence, and no promotion (besides newspaper notices).

The manager organizes and promotes the various programs that provide a space for the community to gather and socialize. A large portion of our customers are retired or elderly, and they consistently let us know that they enjoy the market as an opportunity to get out of the house and mingle. Without a funded manager position, these events would likely disappear or diminish.

The manager is the face in the community for the market. For example, the market manager has presented at Rotary, communicates with the newspaper, and has participated in the OCAD recipe sample event. In addition, the manager recruits and communicates with vendors, and provides on site management at each market, with special focus on safety and organization.

In short, funding the market manager position would go a long way toward sustaining and growing market vitality.

The funds could be designated to operate the market and do not have to be exclusively for the manager's salary. That could be sorted out later based on the position requirements.











