



April 20, 2020

Mayor and City Council  
City of Ames  
515 Clark Ave  
Ames, IA 50010

Dear Honorable Mayor Haila and City Council,

Thank you all for your hard work during this challenging time. We support and respect the current restrictive measures on event gatherings and social distancing protocol. I have been notified that the Ames Main Street Farmers' Market special event permit for the month of May has been cancelled, along with all other City events for the month of May, and I respectfully ask for your reconsideration.

The Ames Main Street Farmers' Market is more than an event, it is an essential activity that is an integral part of the local food supply. As the market manager, I ask for your consideration to allow the Ames Main Street Farmers' Market be held on Saturday mornings beginning May 9 as previously scheduled, while adhering to current social distancing standards.

Across the country, farmers markets vendors are reporting double and triple the normal sales volume. Many are selling out of produce, bread, meats, eggs, and canned items, and markets are reporting customers purchasing more food plants than normal. Business from the Iowa Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) customers are being reported at a higher than average as well.

We want to proactively take any steps we can to protect our markets' and vendors' abilities to serve our community. Here is why:

- **NECESSITY:** Purchasing food is a non-optional activity that should not be made scarce. Closing a farmer's market would only redirect farmers market customers toward online, or enclosed-space grocery stores, over-burdening those spaces, and further hurting the local economy of local food and farm vendors. In 2019, the Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) Farmers Market Nutrition Program and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program combined provided over \$675,000 to Iowa producers of fresh fruits and vegetables at over 120 farmers markets and 90 farm stands throughout the state. Additionally, the Double Up Food Bucks program doubles SNAP benefits so our neighbors with limited food budgets are able to provide more fresh and nutritious food for their families. Last year this program witnessed \$154,236 in sales using Double Up Food Bucks at more than 30 participating sites across the state, including farmers markets, farm stands and retail grocery stores. These programs are essential, now more than ever, to help them make ends meet.
- **OPEN AIR:** We enjoy optimal fresh air ventilation, direct sunlight, and are not in confined spaces using recycled air systems. Outdoor spaces with airflow and natural UV spectrum light are less hospitable to viruses.
- **TIME FRAME:** The Ames Main Street Farmers' Market will operate from 8am-1pm once a week, keeping it very manageable to maintain frequent disinfecting and cleanliness. The week-long gap between each market gives the opportunity for any infected surface to no longer be active by the following week.
- **TRAVEL DISTANCES:** Because our products travel 100 miles or less this greatly diminishes the risk of spreading a virus into, or out of, the immediate region. The direct system of farmers' markets is the least circulated, most direct farm-to-table food available to eat, after your own backyard garden.



- **IMMUNE BOOSTING:** The food available at farmers' markets is more densely nutritious than largely industrialized sources (this is highly studied and documented). It is widely believed that immune responses are best served by the intake of fresh fruits, vegetables, and fungi harvested and eaten at the peak of their freshness.

Not only do we believe our market is as safe or safer than shopping in a conventional grocery store, but we are also, in many cases, one of the few direct outlets many of our fifty vendors have to make ends meet, not only during this time but year-round.

That is why we are contacting you. Please, if there is a discussion of the safety or importance of farmers' markets during this time, we want you to know: we take the safety of our vendors and customers very seriously. Below are the guidelines we will put in place to protect our vendors and help keep customers safe; these are the same guidelines that were sent to the State from the Iowa Farmers' Market Association. If additional guidelines come out that are recommended by the State of Iowa, we would add them to our guidelines as well.

- Vendors will be spaced out, leaving a space between vendors.
- Vendors will be asked to wear gloves which they will change every hour during the Market.
- No reusable bags will be allowed. Vendors will only use new, clean plastic bags in which to package their products to the customer.
- No food sampling.
- Require all vendor surfaces be frequently cleaned with disinfecting wipes and other standard cleaners before, during, and after each market.
- Streets will be marked for social distancing in front of vendors
- No music at the market
- No special events or children's activities, such as Petting Zoos, Face painting, Cooking Contests and etc.
- No tables and chairs will be set up.
- 3 hand washing stations will be set up for the customers to use: one at the east entrance, west entrance and in the middle of the Market.
- Vendors who are ill and unable to vend on market days due to will not be charged booth fees for that day.
- Strongly encourage all customers who are not feeling well to stay home and to send a proxy to shop on their behalf.
- Offer an online ordering option for folks who prefer to pre-order and "drive-by" for car delivery.

In an additional effort to help facilitate the sale of locally grown food and product, the Ames Main Street Farmers Market and the Ames Chamber of Commerce are developing an Online Ordering System for the Ames Main Street Farmers' Market. Through this virtual marketplace, customers would order online and the staff and volunteers would load into the trunks of the cars as they drove through a pick-up point. This service will allow our vendors to provide their products to the customers that are not comfortable with coming to shop on the street. This process will also help control the number of customers that would otherwise be on the street to shop.



I would ask that you allow us to start the Market on our Opening Day of May 9 under these guidelines and not be labeled as an event. According to the Iowa Farmers' Market Association AD HOC advisor to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Paul Ovrom, the Governor's Proclamation on April 2, 2020 that prohibits mass gathering of more than ten people does not apply to farmers markets at this time.

Thank you for your time in considering this request. I would be happy to visit with you at any time if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Lojean Peterson  
Ames Main Street Farmers' Market Manager  
515-520-0702