

Dear Park Commissioners,

As farm vendors, devoting many years to the BCFM, we have serious concerns as we enter a new market season. The market has intact policy, as it has had for years, to handle any form of protesting within the farmers' market. This is a fair policy that allows the public to share their opinions in a respectful manner in a designated space, allowing commerce to continue undisturbed within the market. Last season this policy was tested, and unfortunately it was not enforced from the beginning as it should have been. This resulted in unclear policy, escalated protesting, continuous disruption of commerce, and a significant drop in customer counts. In addition, the income of small family farms and other local businesses was considerably affected along with customers feeling uncomfortable and unsafe patronizing the market.

The Rules of Behavior for the Bloomington Community Farmers' Market given to the Board of Commissioners for approval states under *Customer and Vendor Interactions*:

- Interruption of commerce is not permitted
- Except in designated free speech areas, the following conduct is prohibited: picketing, demonstrating, yelling, excessive or unreasonable noise-making, [obstructing or hindering the flow of pedestrians or access to a vendor](#), and other conduct disrupting Market activities

As farm vendors relying on this market to support our families and as members of this community who value this market, we ask that you pass the proposed Rules of Behavior. A farmers' market is not the appropriate space for political demonstration. This is a space for the community to gather and support local businesses without the threat of walking into the crossfire of political warfare. If this policy is not passed and not enforced, it will open the door for any and all protestors to flood the market with their passionate demonstrations, continuing the decline in customer counts due to patrons feeling unsafe and avoiding the controversy. This will result in a decrease in sales, hurting local businesses working to support their families. Ultimately, allowing protesting to continue within our farmers' market will ruin this gem that our community has grown to love.

Not only do we ask you to pass this policy, but we ask that the City strictly enforce it from the very first market, making it clear that this year will not be a repeat of last year. This is a farmers' market not a space for political demonstration and conflict. Please allow us to have a place to gather as a community, support local businesses, and thrive as small business owners.

We certainly do not support any form of supremacy and we respect that the protestors have constitutional rights to express their opinions, which they can share in designated areas around the market. However, we ask that they show us, the other BCFM vendors, and their fellow community members equal respect by allowing the local businesses devoted to this community and the patrons that support them to continue commerce without being in the crossfire of their political agenda.

The protestors claim that they are peacefully protesting at our market because not all members in our community feel safe there and they are additionally fighting for the rights of marginalized people. In doing so, they are creating an unwelcoming and an unsafe feeling for many other members in the community while compromising the livelihoods of other marginalized people, local farms and businesses.

Thank you,

Rosie Sill, Earth Song Farm