

**TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**  
**FROM: NEIL JENSEN, City Administrator**  
**SUBJECT: Farmers Market Discussion**  
**MEETING DATE: June 2, 2020**

**BACKGROUND:**

Please find in your packet a note from Dianne Howard who has extensive training in the Farmers Market Business, Food Aggregation Program and Farm to School Program. Her response gives the council insight on why the Farmers Market is at Artisan Plaza which is due to the inspections of the facility, the requirements of the grants and how the funds are expensed. When the Cannon Falls EDA took on this project it required countless hours of training, paperwork and follow up.

The recipient of some of the food is the school and the retirement assisted living facility so the Dept. of Ag gets involved to do inspections yearly. The grant money is all connected to these programs.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

For Your Information.

I sincerely thank everyone for their inquiries about the Farmers Market as sharing this information with you is extremely important.

Three years ago, the EDA under the direction of Dave Maroney looked into becoming one of ten markets in the State that were going to be granted a pioneer food aggregation opportunity, (which was to be a four year commitment). In preparation for that, Dave sent me to trainings at RCTC for cottage food licensing, The Good Acre for food aggregation retail training, a three-day training with Tara Johnson of Tara's Whey on food business management, and yearly trainings thereafter with the Minnesota Extension Office on Good Agriculture Practices. With the Cannon Falls EDA holding the license, we had to make sure that we had all of our bases covered. Due to the suggested requirements of the food aggregation program, Artisan Plaza was chosen as home base. Although, we were not yet up and ready to conduct business. First, we had to forego an inspection with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Our inspector inspected the entire Artisan Plaza Site, the business plan that I drew up, all of required equipment, as well as the vehicle that I would be using to transport produce, if needed. We passed our first year's inspection the first time due to the foresight of Dave Maroney and the trainings that he sent me to prior. We have passed every inspection since, (which is done yearly).

With the food aggregation license, we were also invited to participate in the Farm to School program which was kicked off by Renewing the Countryside for the Department of Agriculture this fall. This program, too, came with a lot of requirements and training.

With both of these programs, we have been given grants to implement them. These grants require countless hours of reporting and detailing of how we are running these programs as well as accounting for how these funds are distributed. None of these funds are managed by employees or contractors of this program, as the City of Cannon Falls is the fiscal agent.

This year, the Farm to School Program received two grants, one from Renewing the Countryside and one from Compeer, each for \$1000.00. We have until the end of the year to meet all of the requirements of the grants. These funds are to be used to support and implement the Farm to School program at Artisan Plaza, (our licensed premise). After the Good Acre came down to train our local cafeteria staff this spring (which was part of this funding), there were noted needs. Seeing this and believing that I could run the program efficiently enough, I asked Compeer to extend the parameters of their grant to allow us to donate some of the funds to the school for the Farm to School Program as well as their outdoor gardening program—which happily they have recently agreed to.

The Food Aggregation Program is in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year, with definite yet different requirements each year to meet the grant requirements. They provide \$2,000.00 per year, (which they prefer to be paid to the coordinator for payment of their services); however, I am instead deferring the funds to the food program as I see a need and think it could do a lot of good for the Cannon Falls local food program. This is especially important now with having both the Farm to School Program as well as the Food Aggregation Program to manage, both of which are licensed by the MN Department of Agriculture at Artisan Plaza.