

May 11, 2016

Dear Knoxville City Manager, Mayor and City Council,

My husband and I will be in Minnesota Sunday-Monday and will not return in time for the May 16th council meeting. Therefore, we want to express our concerns over some council members suggesting the Farmer's Market move away from the downtown square, a location they have occupied for many years.

As we read the newspaper article about the Farmer's Market application being tabled and some of the following council discussions that weren't even related to the application, we almost could not believe what we were reading.

We cannot fathom a council person would call the Farmer's Market equivalent to a flea market or bake sale. These individuals cannot predict when their produce is going to be ready for the market and if they or any one else supplements their income with other goods, so what! Who is being hurt, inconvenienced or upset by this? Des Moines has a huge Farmer's Market that includes everything imaginable; produce, baked goods, lawn ornaments, jewelry, etc. People travel from all around the state to attend their Farmer's Market. Des Moines would never consider making their Farmer's Market relocate nor consider it a flea market or bake sale.

We feel the council has made a huge mistake in requesting the Farmer's Market relocate. The city's Street Scape project downtown eliminated several parking spaces all around the square, so how can you now blame the Farmer's Market for taking away available parking? We have never gone to downtown businesses or to the courthouse and not found a parking place even during Farmer's Market. The same goes even after the Street Scape project eliminated so many parking places.

We would not even think of heading over to Auld Park for the Farmer's Market. Once I am downtown, I want to take advantage of all there is there, not make an additional trip to the north end of town for Farmer's Market. I would also ask if the City Manager or the council members have seen or ever used the restrooms at Auld Park....they are absolutely deplorable! Some locations that have been suggested do not have any restrooms. One I heard that has offered to have them at their location have their restrooms quite a distance from where the Farmer's Market will set up. How is that better for the vendors or those that attend?

The courthouse is a public building. Why shouldn't the public attending Farmer's Market, or for that matter, the vendors themselves use the restrooms there? The courthouse restrooms are open for Bike Night, so why is the Farmer's Market any different? If area businesses have told the Farmer's Market personnel they do not mind if attendees use their restrooms, why would the city even consider interfering in this arrangement?

Who can say any unsupervised children in the courthouse belong to the vendors or attendees of the Farmer's Market? Is councilman Stephens insinuating that the **only** time there are any unsupervised children in the courthouse is during Farmer's Market? If any children, at any time, are causing any disturbances or interfering with the ability for any courthouse offices to conduct business, impacted individuals should deal with them as any other place of business would do.

We continually promote to our citizens to “shop local” and try to bring the public downtown to support our businesses, yet the decision to try to make the Farmer's Market move is doing the absolute opposite!

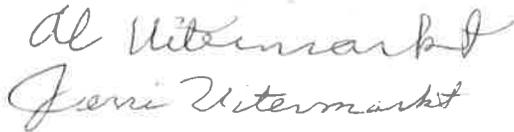
I served on the city council for 12 years and I learned you cannot satisfy 100% of the citizens 100% of the time. However, I would never have voted to discourage any business in town, no matter how small. They all deserve the opportunity to conduct business as long as they are operating within guidelines.

Hopefully the current council will listen to the residents of Knoxville and reconsider making the Farmer's Market move and leave them where they have been for years.....exactly where we want them.

Because of our inability to be in attendance, we are requesting that our letter be entered into the official record for the May 16th, 2016 city council meeting and a copy be included in the council's agenda packet for their review before the council meeting.

If this were an actual hearing on a matter, this letter would have to be read aloud. If we could attend, we would read it aloud. We would appreciate it if you would take that into consideration at this time also.

Thank you for your consideration,

Handwritten signatures of Al Uitermarkt and Jerri Uitermarkt in cursive script.

Al and Jerri Uitermarkt

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