



TOWN OF MINTO

DATE: April 12, 2017

REPORT TO: Mayor & Council

FROM: Belinda Wick-Graham, Business & Economic Manager &
Taylor Pridham, Economic Development Assistant

SUBJECT: Discontinuation of Harriston Farmers' Market

STRATEGIC PLAN:

10.5 Improve accessibility and awareness of local food by continuing to maintain and enhance Farmers' Markets, facilitating a Clifford Farmers' Market (where there is sustained local interest) and continuing to promote buy local food campaigns in partnership with the County and others 10.6 Recognizing agriculture is in transition, support diversification

BACKGROUND:

The Harriston Farmers' Market started in 2011. It ran for two years at the current home of Minto Auto which provided easy access, plenty of parking, a public washroom and permanent signage. In 2013 the vendors/committee requested that the Market be moved to the Harriston Seniors Building as this venue was more "people friendly". It provided a beautiful green space, public washrooms and kitchen facilities and parking.

Once again, in 2015 the vendors/committee requested that the Market be moved. They found that when they had a small number of vendors the site looked quiet and therefore people didn't visit. The Market was moved downtown to Tannery Park. This site was picturesque and with there already being customers base downtown it was hoped it would result in more shoppers. In 2016 we scheduled numerous special events and activities to encourage people to come to the Market, but once again it seemed that visitor numbers deteriorated in August and when that happens so do vendor numbers.

At a 2016 season wrap up meeting in October it was again suggested that the Market change venues. After three location changes in six years, staff felt that a location change would not make a difference as the same trend happened every year even when the Market was in Clifford.

A planning meeting was planned for March 6th, despite numerous phone calls and email reminders Taylor Pridham, our Economic Development Assistant and Market Manager was unable to get people to attend the meeting and as a result it was cancelled. There was also only one vendor registered for a full season despite ads being placed in the Rural Route magazine, on our website, social media channels, Wightman TV and packages being mailed to previous vendors. It was made clear that if there was no interest from the Committee or from vendors the Market would be cancelled. One vendor expressed disappointment that the Market was being discontinued. We suggested that if they could assist us in recruiting full season vendors that we would still operate the Market.

A letter was mailed to all previous vendors on April 3rd and the issue was discussed at the Palmerston Farmers' Market meeting on April 4th. At this point we have received no further interest from vendors for the Harriston Market. Several vendors had participated in both Harriston and Palmerston Markets but none have agreed to do this again.

COMMENTS:

It is unfortunate that we were unable to sustain the Harriston Farmers' Market. The Market provided local farmers, producers and artisans with an outlet to sell their wares, provided family entertainment and allowed community members to access fresh local food.

Despite trying different locations and increasing promotions and special events the outcome continues to be the same every year.

The Palmerston Farmers' Market has a strong Committee made up of committed vendors who go above and beyond to create a great experience at the Market. The fact that it is a Saturday morning at a great venue has certainly helped the Market grow and become sustainable. By focussing on one Market staff feels we are able to deliver a better quality product for both vendors and shoppers.

If in the future, a group of interested vendors and potential Committee members come forward to operate a Harriston Market we would be happy to assist as we feel Farmers' Markets add to the quality of life in a community, but the Town simply cannot operate a Market without a Committee and vendors.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The Farmers' Markets operate on a break-even basis. The Harriston Farmers' Market budget is \$1,000 and is raised through vendor fees and sponsors. The discontinuation of the Harriston Farmers' Market will not impact the budget but will free up staff time. 58.5 hours alone will be freed up by not having a staff person on site. Additional hours will be saved by not having to implement the marketing and events plans.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council accepts the April 12, 2017 report as information from the Business & Economic Manager and Economic Development Assistant regarding Discontinuation of the Harriston Farmers' Market.

Belinda Wick-Graham, Business & Economic Manager &
Taylor Pridham, Economic Development Assistant