10 Tips for Connecting With Local Officials

Whether you’re planning a Farmers Market Week tour with local officials and dignitaries to highlight your amazing farmers and their contributions to local community and economy, or requesting your local government issue a Farmers Market Week proclamation, the first steps are making and nurturing those connections with the powers that be.

1) Read up! Google your city, if your market is officially within a city’s limits; or your county, if your market is officially in an unincorporated section of the county.

2) Get a handle on the structure of your city – or your county; each will have its own website and that’s where you will find the most accurate information.

3) If you are in a city, MOST LIKELY it will have a mayor. If you are in a county, MOST LIKELY there will be a county “manager”. Whichever it is, make sure that you are including communication to either of these people.

4) Contact information will be on websites.

5) On the city’s website, find the list of City Councilors (one who sits on a city or town council). These are elected officials. Each may have a Facebook page and/or a website where you can learn a little bit about their interests. Find the one who comes closest to understanding the value to the community of your farmers market.

6) If you are not in a city, but in an unincorporated part of the county, on the county’s website, you will find a list of County Commissioners (one who sits on a county council). The titles for these people may vary, but you will note they are elected, typically representing a geographical district or region of the county. Find the one who represents your district – the one who has been put there by your community.

7) These people – either the city councilmember that best represents your interests, and the mayor – or the county councilmember who was elected by your district, and the county manager/executive – are your local go-to officials.

8) Use email, phone or mail to contact them. They will all have staff that helps with communications; these are also all good people with whom to connect.

9) When writing or speaking, be specific and organized in your request for action to be taken or even considered. An in-person meeting for one half hour can offer time for your official to understand your needs and can have a long-lasting effect on a productive relationship.

10) Be fearless! These people are elected officials; they are accountable to you, your vendors and your customers.