



STAFF REPORT

Town of Nags Head

Planning & Development Department

To: Board of Commissioners
From: Kelly Wyatt, Deputy Director of Planning & Development
Paige Griffin, Event Coordinator
Art & Culture Committee Members
Date: March 29, 2021
Subject: Art and Culture Committee Update

Planning Staff and members of the Nags Head Art and Culture Committee will be providing a brief presentation to the Board of Commissioners at their April 7, 2021 meeting. The intent of the presentation is to highlight efforts by the Committee during the 2020/2021 Season, and to provide information on what the Committee would like to achieve during the upcoming 2021/2022 Season.

2020 Season

As did many things, the 2020 Dowdy Park Farmers Market looked different in light of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Art and Culture Committee had undertaken the vendor selection effort prior to the Pandemic, selecting approximately 43 vendors with the ability to accept “drop-in” vendors; however, when the Market began in July, we had approximately 32 vendors participating, and the Committee decided to no longer accept “drop-ins” given the rising numbers of Covid and the associated uncertainty. Of the 32 vendors participating, 17 provided consumables (fresh fruit, vegetables, cheeses, baked goods, fermented foods, sauces, etc.). While many of our vendors were local it is important to note that many came from as far as Currituck, Swan Quarter, Columbia, and Edenton, making their participation in the market very valuable.

The Market’s visitation peaked the third week in August, with approximately 340 in attendance at one market. Generally, the average number of attendees at each market was approximately 225. While Event Coordinator Paige Griffin usually has notable interactions with visitors in attendance, with restrictions in place for masking and distancing, this was not possible this year. What Ms. Griffin did do, however, was note the license plates in the parking lot, identifying that it was not until August that patrons from out-of-state began to increase.

The safety of vendors, visitors, and Staff was priority for the 2020 Farmers Market Season. Vendors were spaced apart to allow for social distancing, and every vendor was required to provide hand sanitizing gel and display a laminated “3 W’s” sign at their booth. Vendors were asked to self-check for symptoms at the beginning of each market day and we additionally had a head scan thermometer at the Event Coordinator table for those who wished to check their temperature throughout the day. Vendors were

prohibited from providing samples of food and beverage or from having any open displays of consumables. Vendors were also asked to encourage patrons to not linger at their booths after a purchase, opening up space for the next shopper and encouraging greater social distancing. Vendors and visitors were required to follow State mandates, including wearing a face covering and practicing social distancing. Staff had three (3) hand washing stations available throughout the Market area and placed signage at each entrance and throughout the park reminding attendees of the 3-W's. Staff also wiped down the restrooms with a bleach solution intermittently throughout each market day.

Following the success of the 2020 Farmers Market Season, the Board of Commissioners granted approval for three (3) Holiday Markets. Two of these markets were held on Saturday mornings and one was held on a Thursday evening. These markets had approximately 25 vendors participating, all but three of which were local, with those coming from Edenton and Elizabeth City. All safety protocols enacted during the regular season were in place for the Holiday Markets. The Town received many compliments from both visitors, locals, and vendors on the festive atmosphere, holiday music, and holiday lights. It was noted that guests appreciated having an evening market.

Advertisement was kept to a minimum for the 2020 Markets with the use of Facebook and Instagram only. Social media response to the markets was positive with expression of gratitude and thankfulness for the continuance of the market and requirements for strict compliance with all safety protocols.

Also missing this season in light of the Pandemic were community partnerships, such as fitness programs, SPCA pet adoptions, Outer Banks Hospital and Dare County Health and Human Services educational opportunities and free health screenings, etc. Additionally, no music or movie events were held.

2021 Season

Plans for the 2021 Season are already in development. In terms of the 2021 Dowdy Park Farmers Market, the application to vend was made available on March 22nd and we are receiving numerous applications daily. It was the consensus of the Art and Culture Committee to keep the number of vendors at or around 50, with the most significant change being the frequency of the market going from every other Thursday to every Thursday during the months of June through September 9th, 2021 with a kick-off market being held on Thursday, May 27th.

In addition to the regular Market, the Committee is also interested in organizing a Fall Festival, as well as continuing with the Holiday Market in 2021. With the increase in the number of markets being proposed in the 2021 Season the Committee would like to increase the vendor fee from \$125 to \$240 (16 markets @ \$15/market day). This change has been requested in an update to the Consolidated Fee Schedule, included on the Board's Consent Agenda for the April 7 meeting.

With regard to the Pandemic and safety measures, of course all State mandates and orders will be adhered to and Staff would envision operating the 2021 Farmers Market in the same manner as the 2020 Season with requirements for masking, social

distancing, providing hand sanitizing gel at each vendor booth and handwashing stations. However, with increased vaccinations and the evolution of mandates, Staff does expect that enforcement of mask requirements will be more difficult this season and requests the Board's feedback with respect to expectations for masking at the Market, and Staff's role in the enforcement of masking.

Noting a level of uncertainty with the Pandemic, the Committee would like to continue to monitor Governor's orders and consider opportunities to program fitness and music in late summer or fall if that becomes an option. Along the same lines, there are no current plans for community partnerships in 2021, but should the Governor ease restrictions, that is something that we would like to revisit.

While it may not come to fruition this Market season, Ms. Griffin has been exploring the option of providing SNAP/EBT opportunities at future markets. This requires a significant amount of coordination with each individual vendor as well as the need for the proper payment equipment.

The Art and Culture Committee is very pleased to announce that the first phase of the Art Mast Project is almost complete. After receiving four (4) art panels created by local artists these panels have now been digitized and printed onto a durable banner to be hung on masts and displayed at various beach access in the northern part of Town. Public Works is constructing the masts now and these art pieces will be displayed well before the summer season.

The Little Red Mailbox of Hope located at Dowdy Park continues to be utilized by the community. While the Town maintains the mailbox, it now has a "keeper", Kelley Grider, the mother of Ravann Rachell'e and grandmother to Ravann's son Sebi who recently passed away. Kelley Grider "keeps" the mailbox with fresh notebooks and pens for the patrons of the mailbox. The Art and Culture Committee would like to formalize a process where these notes of hope are digitized and shared with the community. Also, with input from the Committee, the Outer Banks Women's Club has donated a Little Free Library to Dowdy Park which appears to be appreciated and used often.

The Art and Culture Committee continues to discuss a large piece of artwork donated to the Town of Nags Head from the former Tanger Shopping Center and would like to see this piece displayed at the Harvey Tract Sound access given the nautical theme of the artwork.

Former Nags Head Mayor, Bob Oakes, graciously offered the Town a self-portrait painting by Don Bryan. The Art and Culture Committee discussed this and very gratefully accepted this painting. The Committee and Staff are working on where and how best to display this artwork within the Town Hall gallery.

The Committee will also be involved in planning initiatives throughout the Town, including, but not limited to, offerings at Whalebone Park, Barnes Street Park, and the Dog Park.

The Art and Culture Committee also hopes to discuss and possibly create opportunities for a "Adopt-a-Park" or "Friends Of" Program. The Town has been made aware that a group of children participating in OBX Yoga Studio Karma Kids visits and cleans the

skatepark often and would like to formally “adopt” the skatepark for the purpose of keeping it free of trash and debris.

Planning Staff, Event Coordinator Paige Griffin, and members of the Committee will be available for questions and input from the Board of Commissioners following the presentation.