

Request to West Hants Regional Municipality Council

February 2, 2025

From: Avon Community Farmers Market Board of Directors

The Avon Community Farmers Market is a registered non-profit entering its 8th year of operation. We operate an outdoor market in Victoria Park from late May to mid October and for the past 3 years, a Halloween Market in the Windsor Community Centre and a Holiday Market at the West Hants Sports Complex. West Hants has been providing park access for free, but we rent the Community Centre and Sports Complex. In the past we have received an in-kind grant for \$500 which we have applied to the holiday market. We have also received a \$750 operational grant which goes towards our Farmers Market Nova Scotia Membership and insurance.

As a member of Farmers Market Nova Scotia, in addition to offering our seasonal weekly market, we also participate in provincial initiatives which include Nourishing Communities, Nova Scotia Loyal and Taking Root. Through Nourishing Communities since 2019 we have provided West Hants households with over \$28,000 of market purchases and food boxes and an additional \$10,000 of provincial grant money providing food literacy and access through cooking workshops. Nova Scotia Loyal, a 2024 initiative was a big success with a high redemption rate for our area. Local school children received a \$10 coupon to buy market products. It was great way to introduce West Hants families to the market. Taking Root was a new initiative last summer as well and it pairs BIPOC and newcomer entrepreneurs with local markets and mentors. Our market was the first in Nova Scotia to have a vendor signed on! All these amazing programs require administration and accounting.

In addition to providing a seasonal weekly gathering place to enjoy music, food and local products, providing food insecure households with free access to local healthy options, providing education and access by networking with community partners, we have launched small businesses into store front operations. Our weekly markets and our seasonal markets contribute greatly to local community economic development.

We have a seasonal part-time market manager, and we get our revenue from vendor fees, sponsorship and grants, which results in a cash flow challenge for us, and it is difficult to establish a reserve fund. We need our market manager to work part time year-round to ensure growth and sustainability of the market.

The ask:

The ACFM Board is asking council for an emergency start up grant of \$5000 to allow us to begin the work required for the upcoming 2025 market season and to carry us through to the influx of vendor fees and grants that come in over the summer. We would ask that you consider this as a budget item for the next three years so that we can move the market forward with confidence.

In addition, as you go into budget deliberations, we would ask that you consider an exception to your facility grant to extend beyond the \$500 in kind. Specifically, we are requesting free use of the Community Centre gymnasium when the park is flooded or otherwise unsafe to host our market.

We appreciate your consideration of our request, and we look forward to your response.

Respectfully submitted,

Dianne Levy

ACFM Board Chair