

I am looking forward to meeting with you and the rest of the stakeholders at next week's meeting! Thanks for looping me in on this chain and for sharing your concerns and questions.

Tomorrow, we will share a copy of our income and expenses for Grand Lake Farmers Market operations with the committee, so you will have time to review before our meeting to understand what we collect in terms of stall fees and where that money goes for operations and staffing.

In the meantime, I'd like to share some important information about how AIM provides support for low-income food access; other expenses to the City of Oakland and county of Alameda; and ways that we are creating a better market experience. We are proud that Grand Lake has once again been named the best farmers market in the East Bay, according to the East Bay Times, thanks to the amazing market management, our farmers, fishers, ranchers, food purveyors, and artisans.

Like you, we are committed to a thriving market experience that benefits Oakland residents, farmers, food purveyors, and artisans. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, our purpose is to create a viable local food system through agricultural education and food access so all people can buy foods directly from farmers and local food producers. We're also one of the only organizations in the country that administers a farm audit program, where our staff audit all farmers that sell at our markets to certify that they are selling what they grow. This insures no fraud or re-selling in the marketplace.

### ***Support for Low-Income Food Access***

Personally, as a member of the LGBTQ community myself and a social justice advocate, I am deeply committed to ensuring our Grand Lake market remains accessible and appealing to people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. One of the most important programs that we administer at Grand Lake is our CalFresh/EBT + Market Match program. In 2017, AIM distributed over \$28,000 in EBT benefits redeemable at the Grand Lake Farmers Market, along with a \$17,000 in Market Match incentives for free fruits and vegetables for CalFresh households. The Grand Lake Farmers Market is one of the top 100 redeemers of EBT benefits at farmers markets in the entire country. We also partner with the Alameda County WIC program and local Area Agency on Aging to support mothers who participate in WIC and low-income seniors ages 60+ to redeem their Farmers Market Nutrition Program checks at qualifying farmers' stalls.

### ***Expenses to City and County***

To give you a preview of coming attractions, as you'll see in our operating expenses, there's more than what meets the eye when it comes to payments to the City & County. In addition to our monthly rent payment to the City of Oakland, we are also paying regular fees to the following Oakland-based entities to operate the market:

- Oakland Unified School District
- WASTE MANAGEMENT-garbage and compost
- J.W. Enterprises-portable bathrooms/sinks
- CALIFORNIA WASTE SOLUTIONS-recycling collection services
- Alameda County Environmental Health
- Alameda County Agricultural Department
- Alameda County Tax Collector-Property Tax
- Oakland Chamber of Commerce

We also finance 20 Oakland based musicians to perform at the market on a rotating basis. Jonny, our "AIM-azing" Market Manager, is also planning opportunities for merchants on Lake Park and Grand to promote their businesses at the market, and has some exciting updates about Oakland-based farmers and businesses participating in the market.

### ***Creating a Better Market Experience***

Since I joined AIM several months ago, I am also committed to improving the community benefit programs that we offer—beyond the market itself—or plan to offer, at Grand Lake.

Currently, we offer the following programs at the Grand Lake Market:

- UC Cooperative Extension Master Gardener consultations
- Diggin' the Market, Diggin' the Classroom, and Diggin' on the Farm - our trio of agricultural educational programs for school-age children for which AIM provides scholarships to low-income children based on eligible for free or reduced price. This Fall, we expanded our farm-based partnerships to Chetwyn Farms, located in Hayward, and Happy Acre Farm, located in Sunol, to facilitate farm-based field trips for school-aged children in East Bay schools. We're also talking with Feral Heart Farms, but we're not quite ready for expanding our farm tour there. We're currently doing outreach to Oakland schools to set up these educational activities.

Creating new initiatives takes time, especially when the Health Department and Fire Department are inspecting our operations. We are poised to launch the following programs at the Grand Lake Market in 2019 to enhance the market experience:

- *Harvest Talks*, our new speaker series where farmers and leaders in food justice and agriculture deliver open talks at the market

- *Chef's Corner*, a rotating chef's education program where local chefs provide free cooking demonstrations to market patrons on healthy, seasonal recipes sourced from the farmers
- A Food Waste & Recovery program, where local food pantries can receive excess produce to re-distribute to families experiencing hunger - we are in talks with several local groups about this.

Next week, we will also present to our new Grand Lake Farmers Market brand and logo that we developed after receiving input from Jerry and market shoppers. This is the first of our markets to have its own identity! My colleague, Tanya, is also leading an effort through the National Farmers Market Coalition to capture market metrics at Grand Lake to demonstrate the social value of the market, and identify customer feedback for improvements in transportation and aspects of our market operations.

Please keep watch for a follow-up e-mail tomorrow regarding our income and expenses for Grand Lake.

Thank you,  
Andy