

An Appeal to the Community for support from Artisans at the Grand Lake Farmer's Market

June 24, 2023 (updated 5pm on 6/23)



In March 2023, a decision was made by the Agricultural Institute of Marin (AIM) leadership to relocate all artisan spaces to the outskirts of the market located on Lake Park Ave. A number of customers and community members have assumed we are outside of the farmer's market, which has completely changed the shopping experience. This impromptu decision was made without a plan, notice or artist input. In addition, the number of artisan spaces were decreased and AIM management no longer allows artists to "drop in" and take advantage of last minute or same day cancellations. This relocation has had dire implications for many, if not most artisans, directly impacting their livelihood (several artists are full-time working artists). **Our primary grievances are as follows:**

- ***plummeted sales (the financial impact is in the high double digits as much as 75%) due to reduction in foot traffic***
- ***lack of transparency of a written policy that prompted the relocation (Is this a new or existing policy?)***
- ***booth clearance is a challenge for a number of booth spaces, because the sidewalk is narrow and people are sometimes stationary blocking booth entrance as they wait for food/beverages from food trucks***
- ***delayed departures due to parked cars and trucks obstructing loading zone***

Artisans have long been a part of AIM's ecosystem and in reference to a business model, artisans would probably be listed, amongst others, a key stakeholder. The longevity and presence of artisans, who have been participating since the beginning have contributed to the growth and vibrancy of the market. For decades prior to the COVID pandemic, there were approximately eleven (11) reserved spaces for artisans within the market. When pandemic restrictions started to lift, artisans were rotated within the farmer's market depending on space availability. We pay an annual membership fee and booth fees and our concerns have largely been ignored and dismissed. Artists are requesting to return to the pre-pandemic spaces or accommodations to ensure viability and sustainability. AIM's leadership committed to hosting an artist town hall meeting as far back as **April 5, 2023** at the close of a town hall meeting to address escalating safety issues at the market; after artists expressed shared sentiments of frustration and disrespect about management's lingering silence. AIM's CEO, Andy Naja-Riese assured artists who were present that an artist meeting will be scheduled and the preferred platform will probably be Zoom. There was a follow up email sent on April 14 in his weekly updates that stated it would be scheduled later in the month and in good faith and spirit of collaboration, we waited.

UPDATE: In full transparency, this letter was sent to AIM's management on the afternoon of Friday, 6/23, shortly thereafter, an Artist Town Hall meeting was scheduled Wednesday, 7/26
Though we appreciate the move forward, the delay is unacceptable! We are asking for your support to be a champion for this small community of local artists.

How can the community help?

- 1) **We welcome and invite you to talk with us!**
- 2) Please consider emailing management to offer support:
Contact: Andy Naja-Riese, Chief Executive Officer, andy@agriculturalinstitute.org
Contact: Chase Pennington, Director of Market Operations chase@agriculturalinstitute.org
- 3) Call AIM main office: 415-472-6100
- 4) **Visit AIM's information booth to provide feedback or share your concerns**
- 5) **Please support local, handmade and handcrafted artisans!**

Thank you in advance for your support!