



Farmers' Market approved for Adams Park

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MANCHESTER - The Select Board unanimously approved the relocation of the Farmer's Market from the parks and recreation department to Adam's Park - the triangular park along Route 7A - on Tuesday.

"I was pleasantly surprised," said manager of the Farmer's Market Nicole Henry following the board's decision. "It was not a sure thing [going] into it."

The approval marks the culmination of approximately year long discussions between Manchester Town Manager John O'Keefe, planning director and zoning administrator Lee Krohn and Henry.

O'Keefe said that he, Henry, Krohn, and Alan Benoit - who will be redesigning the park - had discussed safety issues with Police Chief Manfred Wessner.

"He actually made the plan much more pragmatic. We had considered a much bigger build out on the crosswalk," said O'Keefe of the crosswalk that it was anticipated would have to be created across Route 7A to Adam's Park. "The chief's preference would be a temporary crosswalk operated by Kenny Linihan, the town's crossing guard."

O'Keefe said that they had also heard some concerns about traffic, but that the traffic volume was not expected to be greater than at events such as the concerts on the Town Green. Also, O'Keefe

indicated that he did not expect the traffic flow to be as bad as a Concert on the Green event because the Farmer's Market is a three hour operation with about two hundred people and it's expected that traffic would be more spread out.

Parking was also another major

concern surrounding the proposal. Henry said the owner of Candeleros had agreed to let them use their parking lot - which had 51 spaces - and that Podium had also agreed to let them use their parking lot, which would provide another 16 spaces. Additionally, an agreement was made that would enable patrons of the Farmer's Market to use the Rite Aid/Manchester Elementary Middle School (MEMS) parking. Henry said these lots coupled with parking along School Street totaled 224 spaces. However, Select Board Chairman Ivan Beattie later pointed out that not all of those would be able to be utilized by patrons and vendors of the Farmer's Market and wondered how many realistically would be available. Jack Gilbert, the owner of Candeleros, stated that 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. was not busy time at Candeleros and that there would plenty of spaces available in their parking lot. He didn't think there would be an issue concerning a lack of parking with his lot and the others in the area, he said.

There was also some concern that the size of Adam's Park may not be large enough to accomodate all the vendors and patrons. However, Benoit pointed out that there would only be 28 vendors in Adam's Park, which is about 12,600 square feet. By comparison the Dorset Farmer's Market located near H.N. Williams has 45 vendors in a space that is 13,900 square feet, Benoit said.

Though there were some concerns, many - including Beattie who said he thought the move was "an exciting idea" - were in favor of the concept.

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Krohn, speaking as a resident, said the move was a perfect fit with the goals set out in the Town Plan.

"When the town worked with the Vermont Council on Rural Development and worked through the Creative Economy project there were three key elements that this community decided we wanted to work on," said Krohn. "The third one spoke specifically to local food initiatives. So in my mind again, the Farmer's Market is a wonderful way to help build on that momentum, help good things happen in the heart of the downtown and help bring the downtown back as place that everyone can enjoy, especially the residents."

Executive Director of the Manchester and the Mountains Regional Chamber of Commerce, Berta Maginniss, also lobbied for the idea to be approved.

"It's absolutely a wonderful welcoming scene in the downtown," she said. "When Nicole came to see me there was absolutely no question."

For safety purposes the town is planning to install fencing on the mainstreet side of the park and wrapping around onto both Park Street and Center Hill. The town is currently looking for a material that not only provides a barrier for children, but safety for people from vehicles as well, O'Keefe said. The fencing is expected to be installed in July.

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