



REQUEST FOR DECISION

TO: Council **MEETING DATE:** February 5, 2025
FROM: Siobhan Smith, Manager of Community Services
SUBJECT: **Renewal of Agreement for the Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market**
FILE NO: 2240-20-2025

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- (1) That Council authorize staff to enter into an agreement, as described in this report, with the Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market to operate a weekly market on Cowrie St. between April to October 2025; and**
 - (2) That staff continue working with the Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market to determine a suitable new location for the 2026 Market season.**
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PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide background information, and to seek approval from Council to renew the Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market (the Market) Agreement for a one-year term.

OPTIONS

1. Council can enter into an Agreement with the Market for a longer term.
2. Council can choose to amend the fees proposed for the 2025 Market Agreement.

DISCUSSION

Summary

The agreement between the District of Sechelt and the Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market expired on December 31, 2024. The Market wishes to continue operating in its existing location and to renew the agreement for three years. However, with proposed new rental housing projected to begin construction on Shorncliffe Ave (creating construction and future resident traffic), and a planned new traffic signal at Shorncliffe and the highway, it is uncertain whether the Market's current location will continue to be viable beyond 2025.

Staff are recommending that the agreement with the Market be renewed for one year, instead of the usual three-year term. This allows time for the Market to explore alternative locations, and for staff to continue land use planning processes that may result in establishing a location that can better support the Market long-term.

In addition, staff are recommending a change in the Market's annual fee from a flat rate of \$2,500, to a rate based on the "Special Event (non-profit)" fees outlined in in the District's *Parks, Lands, and Roads Temporary Bylaw 480*, 2008. This new rate will be as follows:

- \$5/day special event (non-profit) permit x 30 Saturdays, April 5 – Oct 28, 2025 = \$150
- \$250 damage deposit
- \$50/day fee for electricity use x 30 Saturdays, April 5 – Oct 28, 2025 = \$1,500

TOTAL for 2025: \$1,900

The Market would also be responsible for the cost of any repair or replacement of equipment, infrastructure or other damage that results from Market activities, including the replacement or repair of electrical breakers and wiring.

Staff will work with operators of the Market to support their search for a suitable new location. It is possible that this new location will not be on municipal property, but all options remain under consideration at this time. It is recommended that both staff and the Market reach out to key stakeholders including Sechelt Downtown Business Association and the Chamber of Commerce to seek assistance in selecting an alternate location.

Background

The Market was founded in 1993 and is operated by the Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market Association, a registered member-funded non-profit organization. The Market runs every Saturday from 9am to 2:30pm between April and October and features approximately 60 local vendors each week. Volunteers and vendors begin setting up on Cowrie St. at 7am, and generally finish take down by 3:30pm.

The Market has operated in its current location on Cowrie St. since 2012. At that time, the District invested \$15,000 to make site improvements, such as electrical upgrades, to better accommodate the needs of the Market. From 2012 to 2019, the Market was offered an annual lease for the nominal sum of \$1/year. When the lease was renewed in 2020, the annual fee was increased to \$2,500 to offset the cost of staff time required to support the Market. No other fees for items such as electrical use or damage deposit were collected.

In a staff report to Council from September 7, 2022, it was noted that future development on Shorncliffe Ave might necessitate the relocation of the Farmers' Market.

"The future of the Farmers Market in its current location will need to be reviewed in light of the proposed development. Additional residential traffic will be generated from Shorncliffe through the Cowrie Street intersection and the Farmers Market location would be problematic. Shifting it further east along Cowrie Street would allow the District

to close a block off to traffic on the market day and more easily divert traffic around the area.”

In the minutes from that meeting the following was noted:

“In discussion it was noted a new location for Sechelt Farmers’ Market may need to be considered, however the project’s community amenity contribution (CAC) could assist in supporting costs related to a change of location.”

In June 2023, staff met with a representative from the Market and the Sechelt Downtown Business Association. At that meeting, staff discussed the challenge of keeping the Market in its current Cowrie St. location, but also reiterated the interest in keeping the Market downtown. Both the proposed rental housing development on Shorncliffe Ave., and the future light controlled intersection at Shorncliffe Ave and the highway, were cited as reasons for the need to relocate the Market. Some suggestions were made regarding possible alternate locations downtown, and following the meeting, staff circulated a draft design for relocating the Market to a section of Inlet Avenue (see attached). Following this meeting, the topic of relocation was discussed at a board meeting of the Farmers’ Market, and Market representatives did a walking tour of downtown Sechelt with District elected officials.

In August 2024, staff reached out to the Market to begin conversations about renewing their agreement, and at the end of September, the Market representatives requested a three-year term in the current location.

After receiving confirmation from the Market that they wanted to renew their agreement for another three-year term in the existing location, staff reached out to the following organizations to solicit feedback regarding the pending renewal of the Market Agreement:

- School District 46 (provides storage for barricades, and operates StrongStart Learning Centre on Shorncliffe Ave. on Saturdays)
- Sechelt Downtown Business Association
- Sechelt Fire Department
- Sunshine Coast Association for Community Living (SCACL)
- Sunshine Coast Transit
- Trail Bay Properties Ltd.

The community and neighbouring organizations and businesses are generally supportive of the Sechelt Farmers’ Market. There were some concerns raised that will need to be addressed for the 2025 season:

- The Market will need to ensure that a 6m wide fire lane is maintained between the two rows of tents, and all tents must be fire rated and spaced at least 1m apart.
- There is a need for stricter adherence to the electrical power guidelines. Electrical service has been a challenge in this area with heavy demand, breakers tripping and safety concerns, resulting in overtime call outs for District staff and contractors.

- Access to Shorncliffe Ave. needs to be maintained for staff, residents, and emergency services going to and from the SCACL residence at 5527 Shorncliffe Ave.

Future considerations for an alternative location:

- The Sechelt Downtown Business Association would like the Market to remain downtown and, if possible, move closer to the main shopping district.
- Sunshine Coast Regional District cited a significant impact on service, noting that the Market disrupts bus routes. This results in the need to reroute buses, set up temporary bus stops, install signage to keep bus riders informed, and address complaints from users who are required to walk further than usual. The rerouting also negatively impacts their on-time performance ratings in BC Transit's monthly performance assessments.

Staff also reached out to the BC Farmers Market Association and three municipalities that host farmers markets on municipal roads: City of Kamloops, City of Penticton, and the City of Delta. In these three examples, the cities described their markets as generally "self-sufficient". The cities provided the necessary traffic barricades, but the actual traffic management was the responsibility of the Market organizers. One city required the Market Manager to have Traffic Control Person certification. The fees charged were generally for the cost of a road closure permit and/or event business license. Some also charged a fee for electrical usage. The locations of these Markets did not require re-routing of public transit. Most made use of electrical from boxes and lampposts on the street. One city required the Market to retain the services of an electrician as a field safety representative.

Any new location will likely require some infrastructure upgrades. Components required for a successful market include:

- a central and accessible location
- a space for 60+ vendors
- the ability to use site from 7am – 3:30pm on a Saturday
- near public transit
- parking nearby
- access for emergency services
- maintaining access to residential properties

Additional requirements needed to meet the guidelines set by Vancouver Coastal Health:

- access to public restrooms (portable toilets are acceptable)
- access to electrical power (to keep prepared foods at correct temperature)
- access to potable water
- hand wash stations
- tents and flooring for all food vendors (e.g. if the Market is located on grass, gravel or dirt, a plywood floor must be placed under all food-vending tents)

POLICY AND BYLAW IMPLICATIONS

Continuing to host the Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market in or near downtown Sechelt aligns with Council's Strategic Plan, the Official Community Plan, and the Integrated Sustainability Plan.

Official Community Plan, Bylaw 492, 2010

A number of policies within the District's Official Community Plan (OCP) support having a Farmers' and Artisans' Market and support a downtown location for the Market.

Supporting Agriculture and Food Security

8.4 Growth, diversification and development of the local agricultural economy is supported, including farming and associated activities such as farm-gate marketing, farmer's markets, value-added agricultural processing, and agritourism opportunities that are ancillary to farming and support the viability of the farm use.

DPA 6 – Downtown Sechelt

Gateways/Pedestrian Orientation

Creating attractive pedestrian oriented entrances into the Downtown and minimizing the impacts of through traffic is a priority for Sechelt.

Downtown First

1.3 The majority of new growth, particularly higher density residential uses, shall be located in close proximity to the Downtown ... This approach will reinforce the role of the Downtown as the primary business, cultural and service centre for Sechelt.

6.1 The Downtown Centre designation ... includes the "main street" shopping and business areas. This designation is intended to bring a vibrant mix of uses and to increase the number of people living in the Downtown, and permits a wide mix of retail, office, tourist.

11.10 Sechelt supports the principle of "Downtown First" to retain the Downtown as the centre of cultural activities. Public art, theatres, art galleries, festivals and artists studios are encouraged to locate in the Downtown. The District will aim to integrate arts and cultural uses in existing and new community facilities and public open space.

Parks, Lands, and Roads Temporary Bylaw 480, 2008

This is a bylaw that provides for both mobile vending and special events permits in Sechelt parks, properties, and roads. According to the definitions found in this bylaw, a "Farmers' Market" would be considered a "commercial" event. However, the Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market is operated by a non-profit association. As well, this bylaw limits all types of events to a maximum duration of 4 months. Given the high level of public benefit of the Market, and the strategic alignment of the Market with the District's OCP, Strategic Plan, and Sustainability Plan, staff are

recommending that Council enter into an Agreement with the Market that applies the non-profit rate, and allows for a 7-month duration for the 2025 market season.

Vancouver Coastal Health & BC Centre for Disease Control

Both Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) and the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) have established guidelines for Farmers' Markets. The Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market will need to complete the VCH Market Manager application form and contact the local Environmental Health Officer in advance of the 2025 market season to review health requirements. As well, it is the responsibility of the Farmers' Market Manager to ensure that all provincial requirements outlined by the BCCDC are fulfilled.

BC Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch

The BC Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch (LCRB) allows liquor manufactures, such as cideries and distilleries, to provide samples and sell liquor products for off-site consumption at farmers markets. It is the responsibility of the Market Manager to ensure any of their vendors who sell liquor have the required market authorization from the LCRB.

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Renewing the Farmers' Market Lease as recommended aligns with the following goals of the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, 2018:

1. Social Sustainability and Community Well Being

Sub-Goal 3: Increase Access to Local Food Production

Action: Updating plans, policies, and regulation to support local food production, community gardens and farmers markets

2. Economic Sustainability

Sub-Goal 2: Diversity the Local Economy

Action: Supporting opportunities for local business, arts and culture, tourism, agriculture, and local foods

Action: Recognize Arts & Culture as an Economic Driver

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Renewing the Farmers' Market lease as recommended aligns with the following core values, goals of *Council's Strategic Plan 2023-2026*:

C. Community Safety and Wellbeing

- Working with grassroots community partners to grow sustainable food security
- Considering a parks, recreation and culture lens on our community service delivery

D. Ensuring Financial Balance

- Analyzing and reviewing service levels to ensure we are efficiently managing core services, improving as a team and planning for the future

F. Fostering a Vibrant Downtown Core

- Supporting a vibrant community with housing options and business opportunities, and community health and safety, particularly in our downtown core
- Considering an active network including, walkability, streetscapes, beautification and connection to neighbourhoods outside the downtown village area
- Cooperating with community partners

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Farmers' Markets in BC have shown substantial economic and social benefits. According to a 2023 study (see attached) the Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market attracts nearly 50,000 shoppers each year and generates an annual economic impact of \$3.2 million on the local economy. The BC Association of Farmers' Markets reported that in 2023, \$36,618 worth of produce and meat were purchased at the Sechelt Market with coupons from the "BC Farmers Markets Nutrition Coupon." The Nutrition Coupon Program provides farmers' market coupons to lower-income families, pregnant people and seniors and can be used to purchase vegetables, fruits, nuts, eggs, dairy, herbs, plants, honey, meat, and fish.

Staff recommend that the one-year Agreement rate change from \$2,500/year to \$150/year. This is based on \$5/day non-profit special event permit fee. If the Market were to be charged at the commercial special event fee, the rate would increase to \$100/day (\$3,000/season).

In addition to the annual fee of \$150, staff are recommending the market pay a \$250 damage deposit and a \$50/day (\$1,500/season) fee for electricity use. This would ensure the fees charged to the Market are consistent with those charged to other non-profit special events held in Sechelt.

Staff labour costs are anticipated to decrease under the one-year agreement. Instead of staff dropping off and picking up traffic barricades weekly, they will lend a set of barricades to the Market for the entire 2025 season.

Staff will provide the Market with specifications for the required surge-protecting power strip and the maximum number and type of electrical items that can be connected onsite. This should resolve the electrical issues experienced in 2024, thereby eliminating emergency and overtime staff callouts. The Market would be responsible for the cost of any repair or replacement of equipment, infrastructure or other damage that results from Market activities, including the replacement or repair of electrical breakers and wiring in the event that breakers are tripped.

A bear-proof garbage receptacle will be reinstalled on Cowrie St in the Market area for the 2025 Season. The District already owns this receptacle, and a cement pad is already in place allowing for ease of installation. The intended use of this receptacle will be for any waste the Market patrons may need to dispose of (coffee cups etc.). Market vendors will continue to be responsible for taking any of their own waste with them at the end of the day.

There will be some administrative staff time dedicated to assisting the market in finding a new location for the 2026 season.

COMMUNICATIONS

Any decision of Council regarding the Agreement will be communicated to the board of the Farmers' Market directly via email. All third parties who shared comments and concerns directly with staff in advance of this report (e.g. Sunshine Coast Transit, Trail Bay Mall, SCACL, Sechelt Fire Dept.) will be provided with a written update via email. As well, a news release will be shared via District social media pages to notify the public of the decision.

Respectfully submitted,

Siobhán Smith, MA

Manager of Community Services

Attachments:

1. Proposed 1-year Agreement
2. Location map of 2025 Market
3. Draft layout of Market on Inlet Ave.
4. 2023 BC Farmers' Market Economic Impact Study
5. Council Correspondence – 2025-01-30 J. Byrnes, SFAM Lease Renewal