Farmers market could take root in Clemson

City wants to join with university to create central site for selling food

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CLEMSON — Clemson is considering opening a farmers market facility that city leaders hope will give residents another local option when buying produce.

City planner Arzu Yilmaz said the city-sanctioned market could be combined with an existing produce market that opened last season on the Clemson University campus.

Yilmaz said some Clemson city residents are unaware of the campus facility and that combining the two into one city location could boost its visibility and add customers for the city and the school.

Several Upstate cities, including Easley and Travelers Rest, launched farmers markets in the past year in response, in part, to the statewide push to market more local wares and to the slumping economy.

The response in Easley was strong enough to push the city to offer it again this spring and summer.

Other cities, including neighboring Pendleton, Anderson and Greenville, have had farmers markets for years.

Yilmaz said local farmers have shown "some interest" in participating in a Clemson market.

She said preliminary discussions have identified a couple of locations for the proposed market, but no specific site has been identified. "We feel that this is something (the council) should consider," Yilmaz said.

City Administrator Rick Cotton said the staff is recommending that the market be set up similar to Pendleton, where temporary tables are set up on the day of the market.

"We're not talking about building a permanent structure," Cotton said. "It's going to be a very inexpensive initiative."

Councilman Butch Trent said he supports farmers markets and that a Clemson market could work if the university comes along.

The city has been home to a number of food co-ops over the past several years, and Mayor Larry Abernathy said this newest effort needs to go beyond that.

"I like the idea as a sustainability issue, but there are a lot of factors that need to come together for it to work."

Cotton said the city staff will begin talking with landowners in the city about possible sites for the proposed market and report back to the full council in April.

Clemson considering a farmer's market

BY GREG OLIVER
THE JOURNAL

CLEMSON — The city of Clemson could soon join neighboring Pendleton and Seneca in featuring a farmer's market.

City Planner Arzu Yilmaz told council a farmers' market makes sense.

"We are in the process of updating our Comprehensive Plan, and one of the goals under 'Sustainable Issues' is to enhance our food options," Yilmaz said. "It might be something you want to consider, at least on an experimental basis the first year."

Yilmaz said that while there is a market on the Clemson University campus, operated by student volunteers and another on campus initiated within the past year, she feels a city location would be "more visible and more successful in the long run."

"A lot of people are unable to find the locations on campus," she said.

According to the city planner, Clemson could tap into a 60-mile radius that includes Oconee, Abbeville, Greenwood and North Carolina and Georgia. An informal survey conducted among local farmers generated responses ranging from "interested" to "wait and see" to requesting that they be "kept in the loop."

Yilmaz said city staff has been seeking possible locations and that the planning department would also examine traffic flow in making a site selection.

City Administrator Rick Cotton said a farmers' market in Clemson would not require the construction of a permanent structure.

"It could be a tent and a collapsible table," Cotton said, adding, "We just want to be sure that council is on board. This is going to be a low cost initiative whether you support it or not."

Mayor Larry Abernathy said he supports the idea.

"The idea of a farmers' market, to me, is an attractive one because of the sustainability issue," Abernathy said.

Mayor Pro Tem Butch Trent said he feels the city and Clemson University must be brought together.

Abernathy requested that city staff research further and report back to council within 45 days.

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