

# Farm Stand

Marina Farmers Market fights city hall.

By Niko Kyriakou

Maybe some civic leaders found a worm in their apple or a pebble in their lettuce; it's hard to say. But something has led the city of Marina to run against statewide trends and require individual licenses for all vendors at its month-old farmers market.

Everyone's Harvest Certified Farmer's Market, as it is called, is host to 18 local farmers and 40 vendors. It joins the ranks of similar farmer's markets in Salinas, Carmel and Monterey. While throughout California, merchants are generally allowed to move from market to market without purchasing business licenses in each city, Marina has put a pick in their path.

The City claims that the market does not fall into "Category 15" of the municipal code. This means that vendors will not be allowed to huddle underneath an umbrella license purchased by the market's manager. Instead, they each will have to pay \$52 for an individual license and \$25 in yearly fees.

The market's four managers, including two recent CSUMB graduates Iris Peppard and Sarah Van Der Stad, have challenged the city on this point.

"It is just outrageous," says Peppard, who claims the market does fall into Category 15 and does not need licenses. The managers have asked that the decision be reconsidered at the next City Council meeting, but Mayor Ila Mettee-McCutcheon declined them, saying they would have to meet with city staff first.

Next week Peppard plans to ask the staff why Marina demands individual licensing when neither California law, nor other city's (including Monterey and Carmel) require it.

Linda R. Downing at the city Finance Department said Marina plans to stand firm on its position.

The low fees Marina vendors would have to pay for their licenses is actually not the real issue at hand. In fact, the licenses have all been purchased. One city Council member, Bruce Delgado, was so supportive of the market that he spent \$800 out of his own pocket to buy licenses for all the merchants. (He surely

Wellington's interpretation of the municipal code, he feels that ordinances should be adjusted to accord with the rules of countless other California cities that have farmers markets. He believes the market will bring people and business to the city. "Marina of all places," he said, "should be leading the way, not preventing it."

As Peppard sees it, the issue "is not about money. It's about precedent." She worries that if her market is the one to allow licensing requirements, it could send a dangerous ripple out into the wider world of farmer's markets.

Jamie Collins from Serendipity Farms in Moss Landing, who sells her live



Jamie Collins of Serendipity Farms in Moss Landing wishes that the Marina City Council would give local farmers a break.

organics at the Marina market, says, "We don't make much...I think they should give us a break."

For farmers who go from one open-air market to another, the prospect of doling out cash for numerous licenses is not attractive. However, the Finance Department's Linda Downing says Marina's arrangement may be cheaper than that of the Monterey farmer's market.

Still, Peppard thinks that the city has the wrong impression—"They seem to think the market is there to make a lot of money"—while she sees it a service for the community. In Watsonville, where a farmer's market began not long ago, city planners have taken this view, actively supporting their market, even financially.

Marina still has not made a final decision and Peppard is organizing her case. She has received letters of support from other farmers and farmer's markets