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Market Motives

P.G. Farmers Market organizer explains surprise twist in location debate.

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By Kera Abraham



Everyone's Harvest Executive Director Iris Peppard says she didn't expect political drama to dog her Pacific Grove farmers market.

After a day of rest, Iris Peppard is ready to talk about what happened at Pacific Grove's City Council meeting last Wednesday.

The executive director of Everyone's Harvest, which runs P.G.'s Monday evening markets on Lighthouse Avenue, says she didn't expect all the drama that erupted after Chamber of Commerce President Moe Ammar announced a compromise on the market's place and time.

On March 2, the day before the council meeting, Ammar, Peppard, Everyone's Harvest board member Candy Owens, P.G. Downtown Business Improvement District Chairman Bill Valuch and BID Treasurer Ron Schenk reached a consensus: The market could move to a parking lot just south of Lighthouse between 16th and 17th streets, and the time could change to Saturday mornings.

The Chamber and BID had been griping for more than a year about the market's current location, saying it hurts businesses on the affected blocks. Peppard maintained the market site is the result of a thorough public process, as well as many meetings with the Chamber and BID, and should not be changed.

So when the Council came to a March 3 agenda item about changing the market's location, everyone was surprised to hear about the compromise. To some—including three councilmembers—it looked like a back-room deal.

Today Peppard sent out a letter explaining the compromise and also spoke with the *Weekly* by phone, sounding flummoxed. The City Council appeared likely to change the market's location no matter what, she says, so she wanted to at least push for her preferred option among the four being considered. The shift from Monday to Saturday was a quid pro quo: Change the place, get a better time slot.

"[The March 2 meeting] was an attempt by all groups at the last hour to resolve it," she explains. "I was just trying to make the compromise before we were forced into something. But I was unclear and naive about this whole process and what legal rights we have."

Peppard now thinks the market can stay where it is, under the city-approved use permit. "For them to revoke it or change it, there is some question if legally they have the right to do that," she says. "[But] we know how to run farmers' markets. We don't know how to deal with these legal issues, and we don't have money for a lawyer either."