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Shame on the Shelburne Farmer?s Market board!

Shame on the board of the Shelburne Farmer's Market.

In March I was approved for a stall at the local Market and set happily about investing and financing my venture. Then ten days before Market opening I was informed that the board's word is not worth the electronic paper it is printed on.

I received an email saying they were ?So sorry? but they had made a mistake and approved two honey vendors when it was only their intention to approve one; they didn't ?believe? their small market could support two. They offered to refund all my money and as compensation, they would give me two free days at the community table. I could choose any two of the three peak-season weeks that the preferred vendor would not be attending the market. No further reason or explanation was given as to why Mulmur Hills Honey was excluded or any historical or hard evidence provided to back up their ?belief?. Nor was I invited to attend a board meeting to debate the issue. All communications were conducted by email with that irksome lag in conversations.

I was willing to compromise but no capitulate and suggested three possible solutions that would accommodate all parties. Firstly, the other vendor be given the opportunity to withdraw, as I was being forced to do. Secondly that we split the season into alternate weeks and thirdly, they do nothing and consider two honey vendors at the market a research project. Their benefit would be to gain insights and information into the demographics and preferences of the market's customers as well as an opportunity to gather evidence to support or refute their ?belief?.

I am curious to know how they justify a double standard. A honey vendor is protected from competition while vendors selling seasonal fruits and vegetables (of which there are a few) or baked goods are left to sink or swim at the discretion of the buying public's choice.

The incumbent vendor is not a threat to my livelihood nor I to theirs. They are targeting an upscale clientele with beautiful modern packaging; secondary products such as vinegars and a webpage with buzz words like ?naturally occurring,? ?beneficial enzymes? and ?artisan?. My group will not be buying from them whether I am at the market or not.

I do not have a webpage. My target is the people in and around Shelburne who appreciate a quality product in a no frills jar like the ones Gerald McConnell sold to their parents and grandparents. The upscale market would not give me a second glance. Mulmur Hills Honey is out of the Market but not down and out. I will sell honey from my front porch just like a garage sale. Surely the people who work tirelessly to protect agricultural land in this area will support an operation that is known to advocate for the health and protection of local pollinators. Luckily the front porch is located just three doors west of the market on First Avenue.

Sharon Holmes

Shelburne resident