

EST. 1837
HAMILTON FARMERS'
MARKET
OPEN YEAR ROUND

FEBRUARY 2026 BOARD MEETING PACKAGE





Hamilton Farmers' Market Board of Directors Meeting Agenda

**Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 5:00 pm
Council Chambers, Hamilton City Hall**

- 1. Approval of Agenda**
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
- 3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting – January 20, 2026**
- 4. Delegations**
- 5. Items for Information**
 - a) 2026 Programming Overview - Alexandra**
 - b) Q4 Marketing Overview – Terri**
 - c) Market Managers' Reports – Bill**
- 6. Items for Consideration**
 - a) Vendor Attendance Policy - Adam**
- 7. Motions**
- 8. Notices of Motion - None**
- 9. Private & Confidential - None**

Procedural motion to move into camera with only Directors, Adam Watson, Senior HFM Program Manager, Ray Kessler, Contract Manager, and the Market Manager (as required). Discussion of Items in closed session are subject to the following requirement(s) of the Operating Agreement and the Ontario Municipal Act, 2001, 239 (2) (b) personal matters about an identifiable individual, including municipal or local board employees.
- 10. Adjournment**

Next HFM Board Meeting: Tuesday, April 21, 2026, 5:00PM - Council Chambers, City Hall

Hamilton Farmers' Market Board Meeting

HFM Programming Report

Tuesday February 17, 2026

HFM Programming Preview: 2026

Programming at the Hamilton Farmers' Market serves as a strategic tool designed in alignment with broader City of Hamilton and Market priorities related to placemaking, economic viability, and community connection.

Strategic Focus for 2026

As discussed at the January HFM Board Meeting, HFM Programming plans are grounded in our learnings from 2025 and will continue to evolve as a strategic asset for the Hamilton Farmers' Market – supporting vendors, attracting visitors, and strengthening community connection.

Programming and activation volume will largely remain the same but laid out with clear intent and strategy. This includes:

1. Clear seasonal planning
2. Deeper Vendor Integration
3. Fewer one-off activations
4. Consistent Evaluative Touchpoints

2026 Core Programming Categories

The part-time Market Programming Coordinator role was staffed in August 2024, and transitioned to full-time in November 2025. Since August 2024 all programming has represented four core categories: **Community Programming, Vendor Driven/collaborative programs, Family Programming, and Revenue Generation.**

For 2026, these programming categories have been updated to better reflect current HFM programming goals: Seasonal/Calendar Driven Events (aligned with seasonal rhythms and City initiatives), Cultural + Community Activations, Vendor Centric Activations, Revenue Generation.

This straightforward categorization reflects City and HFM priorities, are intentionally grouped to support consistency and sustainability, and aligns with public-sector best practices for evaluative framework. This evaluative framework includes blended qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods and allows for a proportionate evaluation approach ensuring oversight that is informed, realistic, and aligned with the unique nature of Market operations.

Though there is occasional overlap, each category also broadly outlines intended audience and potential collaborators.

2026 Programming Preview

Category	2026 Sample Preview
Seasonal/Calendar Driven Events	<p>Spring/Summer 2026: Strawberry Festival</p> <p>Fall 2026: Harvest Festival (launch of 190th anniversary campaign)</p> <p>Holiday 2026, December</p>
Cultural + Community Activations	<p>Jan-June 2026: HFM Lil’ Kids Club (Thursdays)</p> <p>1/24/2026: Indian Cookies with Kathy Smoke (in partnership with the City of Hamilton’s Indigenous Relations Team, included rental of Chaton Baker’s oven)</p> <p>1/31/2026: Black History Month Celebration – Community Collage Workshop with stylo starr (in partnership with HSR)</p> <p>2/7/2026: Seedy Saturday ‘Ask An Expert’ activation (Green Venture)</p> <p>Feb-March 2026: Bi-Weekly Family Concerts with My Friend Christopher</p> <p>March Break 2026: Youth Vendor Market Cart pilot program, Construction Craft drop-in program, The Creative Parents scavenger hunt.</p> <p>3/28/2026: JUNOS Event, hosting Ampli5 community activation</p> <p>July-August 2026: HFM Kids Club</p> <p>7/11/2026: HPL Steel Town Love (Romance Reader Festival)</p> <p>Fall 2026: Harvest Festival (launch of 190th anniversary campaign)</p>
Vendor Centric Activations	<p>*Year-long New Series: Market Makers educational series</p> <p>*Year-long New Series: Field Trip Vendor Workshops</p> <p>*Year-long: Sample Saturday (expanded paid passport event)</p> <p>Initial Partner Programming Includes:</p> <p>2/14/2026: Coati Chocolate Valentines Day event</p> <p>5/2026: Ami Meal Café: Gimbap Workshop (Asian Heritage Month)</p> <p>5/9/2026: Mother Day Fashion Show, Artisan Market</p>

Revenue Generation	Market Cart Program: March Break Youth Vendor Market (collaboration with Hamilton Business Centre) York Blvd. Rentals: Spring Odder Seed Pop-Up Market, Blk Owned Pop-up, Hamilton Day 2026
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Hamilton Farmers' Market Board Meeting

HFM Marketing Report Tuesday February 17, 2026 HFM Marketing Strategy 2026

Overview and Objective

The 2026 Marketing Strategy outlines how the approved \$25,000 marketing budget will directly support Hamilton Farmers' Market's primary business objective: Increase total market foot traffic by +8% year-over-year in 2026.

The strategy is focused on measurable marketing activities that drive awareness, customer acquisition, and repeat visitation. It does not include vendor sales, sponsorship development, event production, or operational responsibilities.

Role of Marketing

Marketing's responsibilities in 2026 are clearly defined to ensure focus and efficiency.

Marketing will:

- Drive awareness and visitation to the market
- Promote events and vendor experiences
- Manage digital channels and content
- Execute paid advertising campaigns
- Produce visual and storytelling content that attracts visitors.

Strategic Pillars

Four strategic pillars guide all 2026 marketing activities:

1. Always-On Visibility

Maintain consistent presence throughout the year so Hamilton Farmers' Market remains top-of-mind for residents and visitors.

2. Discovery & Storytelling

Showcase the experience of visiting the market, including farms and how farms are connected to vendors in the Market, vendor diversity, prepared food offerings, artisan products, and the atmosphere that makes the market unique. Connecting features like Birks Clock, Market History and show a strong visual storytelling that will encourage more first-time visits, regular Market shopping and social sharing.

3. Program and Event Amplification

Programs and Events already draw attention, but attendance depends on strong promotion. Marketing will focus on increasing visibility and participation by promoting events across digital channels and advertising platforms.

4. Digital Foundation

Investments will strengthen owned digital channels, including website and email marketing, so marketing impact compounds over time rather than relying only on short-term campaigns. Together, these pillars balance immediate visitor growth with long-term brand and audience development.

Budget Allocation Summary

- Website and SEO improvements: \$5,000
- External advertising placements: \$5,000
- Social media advertising (Facebook, Instagram and TikTok): \$1,000
- Google Ads (Geotargeting and Programming) campaigns: \$2,000
- Print marketing materials: \$1,000
- Email marketing platform and execution: \$1,000
- Professional photography and videography: \$5,000
- Optimization and contingency reserve: \$5,000

This allocation supports both immediate visibility through advertising and long-term growth through content and digital infrastructure improvements.

Measurement & Success Indicators

Success will be evaluated through measurable performance indicators tied directly to audience growth and engagement.

Key performance targets include:

- +8% increase in foot traffic year-over-year
- +30% growth in website sessions
- +25% increase in organic search traffic
- +5% social media engagement rate
- Email open rates of at least 40%
- Paid advertising click-through rate of 10% or higher

Tracking of these metrics will be done with Metricool program and a KPI spreadsheet tracking.

Conclusion

The 2026 Marketing Strategy establishes a clear, disciplined path to increasing visitation and strengthening Hamilton Farmers' Market's long-term vitality. Through sustained visibility, strategic promotion, and elevated storytelling, the plan positions the Market as a vibrant year-round destination rooted in local farms, diverse vendors, prepared foods, artisan offerings, and its unique heritage.

By aligning focused investment with measurable outcomes, the strategy ensures marketing directly supports foot traffic growth while reinforcing the Market's role as a cornerstone of the community. Executed consistently, it is designed to build awareness, drive repeat visits, and achieve the targeted +25% year-over-year increase in 2026.



Hamilton Farmers' Market Board Meeting

Senior Program Manager & Market Managers' Reports (Combined)

Tuesday February 17th, 2026

HFM Vendor Transitions - Update

We have multiple vendors transitioning to new spaces currently under construction within the Market in January and into February. The former Coati Chocolate space located at the west end on the lower level of the Market has been divided into two stalls.

Sau. Bake, owned by Matheus de Brito Brasileiro, will be transitioning into his new space there alongside The Pleasant Cookie Company in late February affording him more space to expand production and provide more retail display space. Matheus has been in the Market since October 2024.

HFM Vendor Occupancy On The Rise

We are pleased to announce that Joanne Lusted will be joining the HFM vendor community in late February as she embarks on her new venture **Jo's Butcher Shoppe and Market**. Located on the lower level across from Thango Meats, Joanne will bring heritage meat products along with pork specialties, fresh sausage and ready-to-go dinner items.

In addition, we are currently vetting two additional business proposals to join the HFM.

HFM Security Update

As a result of the cold weather there has been an influx of visitors displaying behavioral issues in the Market. Council has approved our request for additional funds to address safety concerns by adding a full-time security guard for all Market hours.

Market One-hour Free Parking Update

The Parkade continues to offer our One-hour Free HFM parking program via their ParkWhiz app. Tracking data covers all Market days for the following periods,

Nov. 26th - Dec. 31st

Weekdays (16): 820 Free Hours / Ave. 51 per Weekday

Saturdays (5): 1060 Free Hours / Ave. 212 per Saturday

Total (21): 1880 Free Hours

Jan. 2nd - Jan. 31st

Weekdays (13): 540 Free Hours / Ave. 41 per Weekday

Saturdays (5): 1089 Free Hours / Ave. 218 per Saturday

Total (21): 1629 Free Hours



Hamilton Farmers' Market Board Meeting
Vendor Attendance Policy Revisions
Tuesday February 17, 2026

Background

Staff have consulted with the Vendor Association to review the draft policy and determine options for revisions based on input from the vendor community. The revised policy is provided below.

Policy Changes

The following are the agreed upon revisions to the draft Vendor Attendance Policy presented at the September 22, 2025 HFM Board meeting:

Section 2.1 – Permitted opening hours amended to allow for either 6- or 7-hour openings on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, and only 8am or 9am openings on Saturdays.

Section 4 – Vacation maximum remains at 16 market days per year, but no longer limited to a maximum of two vacation closures per year.



VENDOR ATTENDANCE POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Hamilton Farmers' Market Vendor Attendance Policy (HFMVAP) is to define the expectations of the Hamilton Farmers' Market Corporation (HFMC) relative to vendor attendance at the Hamilton Farmers' Market (HFM). This policy is designed to maximize the customer shopping experience, restore customer confidence, and establish clear rules for all vendors.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The HFM Vendor Attendance Policy applies to all HFM vendors under contract to run their business in the Hamilton Farmers' Market. The goals and objectives of this policy include:

- Ensure equitable compliance among vendors.
- Restore customer confidence that stalls will be open when expected.
- Improve vendor morale through consistent compliance.
- Build customer traffic through predictability of vendor attendance.
- Support the future vision for the Hamilton Farmers' Market.

DEFINITIONS

- "HFM" is defined as the Hamilton Farmers' Market
- "HFMC" is defined as the Hamilton Farmers' Market Corporation
- "HFMVAP" is defined as the Hamilton Farmers' Market Vendor Attendance Policy
- "Primary Producer" is defined as a vendor who grows, raises, or produces the primary or raw products, or utilizes these materials to make other value-added products, that are sold in their stall. This would include fruit, vegetable and flower growers, and livestock farmers, beekeepers, and dairies.

OPENING DAYS/HOURS

1. All Vendors must be open all 4 market days (Wednesday to Saturday), with the exception of primary producers/farmers who can be open 3 or 4 days each week.

- 1.1. A stall is considered “open” if there are vendor staff present and there is product available for sale.
 - 1.2. All areas of the stall facing the aisles or other common areas must be open and uncovered on all market days.
 - 1.3. Farmers/primary producers must open the same 3 days each week and notify the Market Office of any changes to their opening days at least 2 weeks in advance. This notice is required to update the website and prepare updated signage to be posted at the stall.
2. Vendors can choose to be open one of the following:
 - 2.1. Wednesday to Friday - 9am-3pm, 9am-4pm, 9am-5pm, 10am-4pm, 10am-5pm or 11am-5pm.
 - 2.2. Saturdays - 8am-4pm, 8am-5pm, 9am-4pm or 9am-5pm.
 - 2.3. These are set hours that will be posted at the stall and on the HFM website.
 - 2.4. Vendors are permitted to open their stalls outside of their posted opening hours at their discretion.
 - 2.5. Vendors are permitted to change their posted opening hours annually at their contract renewal date.
 - 2.6. Requests to change the opening hours prior to the contract renewal date can be made to the Market Manager, and approval for any changes is at the sole discretion of market management.
3. Local Showcase & Other Areas of the HFM Supporting Primary Producers and Temporary Vendors
 - 3.1. Areas of the market set up to host primary producers or temporary vendors on a one-time or recurring basis will be required to operate from 9am-3pm.
 - 3.2. Participating vendors may also choose to operate between 3-5pm on all open market days and 8-9am on Saturdays.
 - 3.3. Participating vendors must notify the market office of their planned operating hours at the time of registering/contract signing. This notice is required to update the website and prepare signage to be posted at the stall.

VACATION

4. Vendors are permitted to close their stall for vacation up to a maximum of 16 market days per year.
5. Vendors must inform the Market Office of any vacation or planned stall closure a minimum of 3 weeks (12 market days) prior to the first day of the closure. This notice is required to update the website and prepare closure signage to be posted at the stall.

- 5.1. For stall closures longer than 2 weeks (8 market days), vendors must provide an area of along the front of the stall for the Market Office to place a display during the stall closure. This display is intended to avoid a prolonged inactive area in the market and provide something of visual interest for market visitors in front of the closed stall.

LATE/EARLY DEPARTURES

6. Vendors are permitted a total of 5 late arrival or early departure occurrences (combined) per year without penalty (based on the license agreement term — prorated for licenses less than 1 year).
 - 6.1. Arrival more than 15 minutes after the posted opening time is considered a late arrival.
 - 6.2. Departure more than 15 minutes prior to the posted closure time is considered an early departure.
 - 6.3. Vendors are considered to be in compliance if they can transact business while either setting up at their posted opening time or packing up at their closing time.
 - 6.4. Late or Early Departure for the 6th to 10th occurrences will result in a \$50 per occurrence penalty.
 - 6.5. Late or Early Departure on the 10th occurrence will require a mandatory meeting with HFM staff to review attendance.
 - 6.6. Late or Early Departure for the 11th to 15th occurrences will result in a \$100 per occurrence penalty.
 - 6.7. Late or Early Departure on the 16th occurrence will result in termination of the vendor's license agreement.
 - 6.8. Occasional early-departure due to selling out of product will not be counted as an early departure, but will be tracked by the Market Office. A 5th occurrence will result in a mandatory meeting between the vendor and HFM staff to determine options to prevent further occurrences. Incidents of early-departure due to selling out of product beyond the 5th occurrence will be counted towards the vendor's early departure allowance.

UNPLANNED ABSENCES

7. Vendors are permitted a total of 5 partial or full day closures per year without penalty (based on the license agreement term – prorated for licenses less than 1 year).
 - 7.1. The intent of these days is to cover illness, emergencies, unanticipated product delivery problems, or a personal day-off.
 - 7.2. Vendors must provide notice of the closure to the Market Office by phone ((905) 546-2096), email (farmers.market@hamilton.ca) or in writing (delivered to the Market Office) in advance of market opening on the day of the absence. In the event of illness or emergency, vendors shall inform the Market Office as soon as they are able.

- 7.3. Multi-day illness or emergencies can be considered a single-day closure event provided the vendor communicates with the Market Office and a reopening date can be determined.
 - 7.4. Closure on the 5th occurrence will require a mandatory meeting with HFM staff to review attendance and discuss options to prevent further closures.
 - 7.5. Closures for the 6th to 10th occurrences will result in a \$75/day penalty.
 - 7.6. Closure on the 10th occurrence will require a mandatory meeting with HFM staff to review attendance and discuss options to prevent further closures.
 - 7.7. Closures for the 11th to 15th occurrences will result in a \$150/day penalty.
 - 7.8. Closure on the 16th occurrence will result in termination of the vendor's license agreement.
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8. A combined total of Late/Early Departures and Closures exceeding 20 occurrences per year (based on the license agreement term – prorated for licenses less than 1 year) will result in termination of the vendor's license agreement.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

9. All vendors will be notified in advance of the Vendor Attendance Policy launch in writing indicating the effective date.

APPROVAL

<INSERT DATE APPROVED BY THE HFMC>



Hamilton Farmers' Market Vendor Attendance Policy

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of the development of the draft Hamilton Farmers' Market Vendor Attendance Policy (HF MVAP) and provides explanation to HFMC Board Members on certain changes and additions that have been made since the initial draft policy was presented in 2024. The current draft policy is included at the end of this report for review.

TIMELINE

The first version of a proposed HF MVAP was presented to the HFMC Board of Directors in Q4 2024. Board members provided comment and staff proposed that a vendor survey be undertaken to solicit further input on the proposed policy. The main feedback received is summarized in the five points below:

- Vacations should be allowed and tracked separately from other types of absences.
- Penalties for contravention of the HF MVAP should be financial instead of mandated stall closures.
- Provide clearly defined attendance rules and absence allowances and remove sole discretion of the Market Manager for enforcement of the policy.
- Provide some flexibility in terms of opening/closing hours due to the differences in business types in the market.
- While not universal, the proposed 3 day/week allowance for farmers was supported by a majority of vendors.

In Q2 2025 staff carried out a follow-up vendor survey to gain further insight on a variety of market matters, including preferred operating hours. The following survey question was the most applicable in the development of the revised HF MVAP.

Survey Question: What Hours Would You Prefer to be Open?

Vendor Response	# of Responses
Keep the Same Hours	18
No Response	12
Stay Open After 5pm	5
Open at 10am	4
Open at 8am	2
Close at 4pm	1

(Total Survey Responses = 43)

Based on the survey responses and the daily monitoring of vendor attendance, offering the option of a later start or earlier closure time provides some flexibility to vendors while maintaining clear and reliable hours for market visitors.

LOCAL SHOWCASE & OTHER TEMPORARY VENDOR INITIATIVES

One new addition to the draft HF MVAP relates to new initiatives launched since the creation of the original HF MVAP.

Feedback from vendors who have participated in the Local Showcase has been positive overall, but a limitation noted from a few primary producers has been the long market hours. In comparison to other local markets, the HF M daily hours are approximately double and this presents a barrier to attracting new and interesting vendors to the HF M. In order to attract and maintain primary producers it is proposed that participating vendors be required to operate from 9am to 3pm, with the option of staying later, or opening earlier (on Saturdays).

IMPLEMENTATION

It is proposed that the Vendor Attendance Policy is enacted as of May 1, 2026. Upon approval by the HFMC Board of Directors, staff will inform all vendors and be available to discuss any anticipated compliance issue. It is also proposed that any vendor who does not wish to comply with the new attendance policy can request to be released from their existing stallholder contract.



HAMILTON FARMERS' MARKET - VENDOR ATTENDANCE POLICY

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 - 2.4. Vendors must provide a minimum of 2 weeks' notice to the Market Office prior to changing these hours. This notice is required to update the website and prepare closure signage to be posted at the stall.
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 - 3.3. Participating vendors must notify the market office of their planned operating hours at the time of registering/contract signing. This notice is required to update the website and prepare signage to be posted at the stall.

VACATION

4. Vendors are permitted up to 2 vacations per year to a maximum of 16 market days.
 - 4.1. No vacations/stall closures longer than 16 consecutive market days will be permitted.
5. Vendors must inform the Market Office of any vacation or planned stall closure a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the first day of the closure. This notice is required to update the website and prepare closure signage to be posted at the stall.
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<INSERT DATE APPROVED BY THE HFMC>