

To the members of the Beacon City Council:

As the owner and proprietor of Towne Crier Cafe, a performance venue and restaurant at 379 Main Street. I'm writing to you to express my concern about the possibility of the spring/summer farmers market moving back to Veterans Place, which is next to and along side the Towne Crier.

First, let me say again that I support local farms and farmers, and we purchase much of produce from them, so the concept of a "farmers market," with local producers and purveyors, was attractive to me when I was approached by Sara a couple of years ago, when she was soliciting support to relocate the market from the waterfront. I extended my support at that time; however, I also expressed my concern to her that, as my venue serves Sunday brunch and offers live music during the same time period as the farmers market, that there may be a conflict that would impact my business. I was assured that competition with the Towne Crier would be minimal; vendors' offerings would be different. However, that has not been the case.

There were food vendors (from out of area and from out of state) as well as live music. And to add insult to injury, some people who buy food from the vendors end up sitting at our outdoor tables -- which are set up for OUR customers -- and many come inside to use our restroom facilities. Farmers market vendors with trucks/vans and patrons also fill the parking lot. For all these reasons, the farmers market has been hurting our business when it is in operation on Sundays. We rely on a large portion of our food sales and revenue on Saturday and Sunday.

I have nearly five decades of experience operating this establishment, having started my business in the Town of Beekman/Hopewell Jct. in 1972 before moving to Pawling in 1988 and then to Beacon in 2013. I'm not aware of any other restaurant, performance venue in the United States that has been continuously run by the same owner for 46 years, going on 47. In October 2013, I was excited to move the Crier to Beacon and made a major investment, in what I felt is a potential thriving arts community with a potential food scene. The Towne Crier joined other fine eateries on Main Street; and we have received media praise for our menu and including from such notable publications as The New York Times and many others. In addition, our two stages provide local, regional and world-class entertainment that attracts people from all over the tri-state area and beyond. Besides the financial benefit we bring to Beacon, I feel that we have contributed to the thriving arts, dining and cultural scene of the city.

I would like to suggest the farmers market perhaps establish a permanent home/location and remain at the VFW location at the center of Beacon, or possibly relocate to another part of Beacon where it will have a lesser impact on local businesses; they will have a facility that could accommodate indoor and outdoor markets, as well as parking. Or possibly, for example, at the DMV parking lot, which is also is on Main Street with a larger parking area, with no conflict to other businesses - and it is not used on Sundays.

For the reasons outlined above, I would ask the Council and the City of Beacon to reconsider renewing the permit on Veterans Place and consider an alternative location. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Phil Ciganer
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