

Farm Marketing Workshop B: 101 Workshop

Thursday morning 9:00 am

Where: Gallery Overlook (upper level) Room D

Moderator: Kendra Wills, Community Food Systems Educator, MSU Extension, Grand Rapids, MI

- 9:00 am Guidelines and Good Tips when Working with the Media
- Jeremy Bakken, Senior Director, Lambert, Edwards & Associates, Grand Rapids, MI
- 9:40 am Growing Your Business Costs Money -- Be prepared with the right tools
- Tyson Lemon, Greenstone Farm Credit, Berrien Springs, MI
- 10:20 am Planning and Zoning Issues for the Agri-Tourism Operator
- Susan Odom, Hillside Homestead Farm, Suttons Bay, MI and MI AgriTourism Association Board Member
- 11:00 am Session Ends



GUIDELINES AND GOOD TIPS WHEN WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Presented by:

Jeremy Bakken

Lambert, Edwards & Associates

jbakken@lambert-edwards.com

As a spokesperson for your association and your profession, you have a critical role to play when approached by a media outlet. Your responses may be used to generalize an entire industry and should be delivered with that consideration in mind.

PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW:

Know who you are talking to

What is the media outlet? Who is the reporter? Have they written stories before?

What story are they trying to tell?

What is the focus of their story? Why did they approach you? What kinds of information are you being asked to provide?

Who is the audience?

Is this a trade publication or general consumer audience? What do they know about your business already?

What is your goal for the interview?

What are the key points that you want to communicate? How can you demonstrate their relevance to the story?

Know when – and who – to ask for help

Feeling unsure or unprepared? Reach out to one of the commodity groups or other associations (such as MAC, MATA, MIFMA, etc.) or MSU extension agents for help. Ask them to participate in the interview or give you common talking points to help stay "on message."

TAKING CONTROL OF THE INTERVIEW

Once you have determined what your priority messages are, look for opportunities to incorporate those into your responses. There are a variety of techniques to help you accomplish this including:

Blocking & Bridging – Change the direction of an interview.

Example: "No. But I can say this..."

Hooking – Forcing a follow-up question that sets the stage for a key message.

Example: "There are several ways to answer your question..."

Flagging – Using verbal cues to underscore importance of forthcoming comment.

Example: "The real issue here is..."

INTERVIEW DO'S & DON'T'S

Do's

- Do be truthful
- Do use specifics, examples
- Do immediately correct errors
- Do be a good listener
- Do be yourself (relaxed, casual and interesting)
- Do stay within your area of expertise
- Do smile
- Do be accurate – admit when you don't know

Don't's

- Don't fill dead air
- Don't say "no comment"
- Don't disparage the competition
- Don't wait to be asked the right question
- Don't repeat negative questions/statements
- Don't use jargon/technical language without defining
- Don't become defensive
- Don't go "off the record"



Michigan Agritourism Association

Planning and Zoning Issues for Agritourism Operations

Adding an agritourism component to your operation is a way to create a new income stream. But you might think planning and zoning issues can seem insurmountable. You might think reading a Zoning Ordinance is difficult. Don't let that stop you! Here are some steps to follow to help you navigate planning and zoning issues.

1. Reasons you probably need to go to Planning Commission usually center around a new use being added to your farm. A new use could include, a u-pick operation, a bakery, a farm stay, winery, etc. A new use means, a new and different land use from your current operations. Likely up to now you have maintained your original use as a farm, adding agritourism components would be new uses. Sometimes new uses require facilities, like wineries or bakeries. Sometimes new uses don't require much in facilities like farm tours.
2. Before you write a check or put a shovel in the ground, contact your local planner and zoning administrator to start a conversation about your proposed new plans. Start on the right foot by being fair, courteous and professional in your dealings with township officials. If you are antagonistic at your first contact, it will likely taint the entire process.
3. It is your responsibility to discover which rules apply to you. You must be your own advocate. Agritourism is still rather new and may not 'fit in' yet in your community's Zoning Ordinance. You could be the positive change to make that happen. You can contact the Michigan Agritourism Association for help at <http://www.michiganfarmfun.com/> . You can also check the resources available from MSU Extension. <http://msue.anr.msu.edu/resources/agritourism>.
4. Rules and ordinances vary from Township to Township and County to County. There are no State-wide regulations for agritourism.
5. Here are a few basics that will help you understand the structure of a zoning ordinance. Most Zoning Ordinances are now available online at your Township's website.
 - a. There are several different zoning districts in every Township. Some common ones are, agricultural, residential, commercial and industrial. Use the zoning map for your township to determine which zoning district you are in.
 - b. Each zoning district has different regulations based on what is best for the greater good of the Township.

- c. The Agricultural Zoning District is typically broken down into these basic sections.
 - i. Intent: The section describes what the intent is for the district. Read this section and understand it enough to quote it if you think your proposed use reinforces the Intent. The Intent is a short narrative of what the district should look like. Sometimes the Intent is a bit subjective and open to interpretation.
 - ii. Uses permitted by right: These are uses (things you can do on the property) in the district by right. No special permission is needed other than perhaps a building permit, health department permit, etc. This often includes, single family dwelling units, farming and usually a few other items.
 - iii. Uses permitted with conditions: These are uses that are permitted if you meet the conditions as listed in the Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Administrator usually oversees this, so you probably don't have to go to Planning Commission. This often includes items like, duplex homes, mobile homes, B&B's, home businesses, agricultural support industries, food processing plants, trails, parks and more.
 - iv. Special uses: These are uses that are permitted after the Planning Commission approves your site plan. You must go to a meeting, perhaps several, to try to get approval. This can take many months. The Planning Commission is not trying to stifle you; they are charged with looking out for the interests for the entire Township. They have a lot to consider with your proposal, it could be precedent setting. Special Uses often include; multiple family housing units, seasonal worker housing units, golf courses, sand and gravel extraction, solid waste facilities, wineries, cideries, microbreweries, distilleries, food processing plants, event venues, agritourism, campgrounds and more.
6. If your proposed use is not permitted it could be denied; if a use is not specified in the zoning language, technically, that means it is not allowed. If you are denied you can suggest/petition the Planning Commission to amend the Zoning Ordinance by adding your proposed use. This is where it is important that you started this conversation on the right foot. A zoning ordinance amendment can take many months to do. Public hearings are required by state law, it must be approved by the Planning Commission, the Board of Trustees and sometimes reviewed by the County. It can be difficult, but not impossible. Zoning Ordinances are amended all the time.
7. The Michigan Right to Farm Act is designed to protect farmers from nuisance law suits. You have the right to have a farm market at your farm and there is a GAAMP that helps regulate what that precisely means. Look here for the latest version of the Farm Market GAAMP, it is usually updated each year, http://www.michigan.gov/mdard/0,4610,7-125-1599_1605---,00.html. If you are covered by this GAAMP you can have a farm market, as outlined in the GAAMP, regardless of local regulation. A farm market can include a wide variety of agritourism activities.

Prepared by Susan Odom
Suttons Bay Township Planning Commission Chair
Board member of the Michigan Agritourism Association
Owner of Hillside Homestead Farm Stay, an agritourism operation in Suttons Bay Township
Susan@hillsidehomestead.com – please feel free to contact me with questions
November 2016