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# Press Release

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## Mayor Hedlund announces plans for new winter farmers market

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Weymouth, MA – Mayor Robert Hedlund announced today that the Weymouth Farmer's Market will host its first-ever winter market in 2018. Recruitment is currently underway, with more than a dozen vendors already expressing interest. The new winter market will operate Saturdays, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, January 27th through April 14th of 2018, at the Maria Weston Chapman Middle School's cafeteria.

"Our partnership with Union Point this summer was a great success," **said Mayor Robert Hedlund**. "Together, the Town and Union Point generated more vendors, more shopping, and more community engagement than either market has been able to accomplish on its own. A winter market is a chance to build on that success, to keep vendors and shoppers interested, and to possibly make access to a farmers market a year round reality for residents."

Plans for the winter farmers market include a rotating schedule of guest tables and special features, including art and music collaborations with Weymouth students. Display space will be reserved for one to two community organizations per market to encourage community engagement.

In addition to special features, the winter market will continue the Town and Weymouth Food Pantry's Farm to Family Program, enabling shoppers to use an EBT or debit card for market purchases. Families using an EBT card will receive a "market match" up to \$20 a day to double their federal food assistance. This same match will be provided to Food

Pantry clients who do not qualify for public benefits but still meet the pantry's low-income qualifications.

In 2017, Weymouth's Farm to Family Program helped low-income families purchase \$5,680 in local food and food products at the Union Point Farmers' Market – an increase of 12 percent from the program's performance in 2016. Half these purchases (49 percent) were funded with match dollars generously donated by the Weymouth Food Pantry. An additional \$5,410 was processed in debit card sales at Union Point, for a total program increase of 45 percent compared to last year. For every \$1.00 spent in EBT and debit card sales, \$0.59 cents was used to purchase farm-fresh fruits and vegetables.

The Weymouth Farmer's Market is operated by the Town of Weymouth and funded in partnership with the Weymouth Food Pantry and Mass in Motion, an initiative of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. This Town-run model is unique for a farmers market, as most communities rely on a citizen-based nonprofit to undertake the responsibility, including Braintree, Hingham, and Quincy. According to the USDA's 2014 Farmers Market Manager Survey, 75 percent of markets in the United States use volunteers to perform market operations, and 46 percent choose volunteers as their market manager.

In previous years, Town staff volunteered their time for market operations, creating a Steering Committee and appointing a Market Coordinator to manage the market's recruiting, social media, marketing, website development, programming, customer service, event planning, and more. For 2018, Lola Grace Events of Hanson will perform many of these responsibilities, having successfully run the farmers market at Kendall Square in Cambridge since 2014, as well as the Union Point Farmers' Market since 2015.

"We are thrilled to be working with the Town of Weymouth in bringing a community event such as the Winter Farmer's Market to its residents," **said Lola Grace Events' Founder and Creative Director Rachael Gross.** "Not only is accessible and affordable fresh food vital to a community but even more so is the community engagement that these events encourage."

Following the success of the 2017 summer season, Town staff and the Weymouth Food Pantry [recommended](#) testing a winter farmers market in 2018, in place of a second summer market. According to the Department of Agricultural Resources, Massachusetts hosts more than 240 summer and fall farmers markets but only 52 winter farmers markets, leaving room for new markets to compete. The addition of a winter market would also provide residents access to local food up to eight months out of the year, exceeding market services in surrounding communities, including Braintree and Hingham. The upcoming winter market will be a test case to determine whether adequate community support and engagement exists to sustain the initiative.

"Without a nonprofit organization to support us, sustainability is a big challenge," **said Administrative Services Coordinator Nicholas Bulens.** "Our experience this summer proved decisively that we could accomplish more with one market than two. There are simply too many summer markets and not enough shoppers and vendors to go around.

With a single market, we have a chance; and with a winter market, we think we have a chance. Vendors are interested. Shoppers are interested. It's worth the effort."

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