

Board of Park Commissioners

Statement in Support - Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department

By Tim J. Clark

June 25, 2019

My name is Tim J. Clark. I am resident of Brown County and a co-administrator on the Facebook Group Brown County Matters.

I support the position of the city of Bloomington's Parks and Recreation Department regarding the petition to remove a Farmers Market vendor in which they stated:

“To our knowledge, this vendor has not shared these views at the Market and has treated customers with respect” and that ...

“The City is constitutionally prohibited from discriminating against someone because of their belief system, no matter how abhorrent those views may be. The City may only intercede if an individual's actions violate the safety and human rights of others.”

When allegations were posted about a Nashville Farmers Market board member and vendor, we removed the respective posts from our site stating that “*Matters is not the site to go on record of disagreeing with someone in the community that (if true) may have an opposing view regardless of how offensive.*”

In response to our deleting these posts, we were immediately accused of being Nazis. To quote: “i really have to wonder if the goal was to defend their nazi brothern.”

The Nashville Farmers Market is not affiliated with the government but is a nonprofit 501c (3).

It appears that the recent controversy associated with the vendor in question was ignited by the conviction of Nolan Brewer. Brewer was convicted of a federal hate crime on Monday, May 20, 2019 and sentenced to three years in prison for spray-painting anti-Semitic graffiti and lighting fires outside a Carmel synagogue on July 28, 2018. Following the conviction, the court records were made available and

statements in a [transcript of an FBI interview](#) were taken out of context which led to allegations disseminated by the media.

[The FBI](#) is responsible for assessing any threats to individuals and the community. Based on the complete interview and any subsequent investigations, the FBI most likely concluded that there is little to no physical threat to our communities. This assessment can be collaborated by the local police and sheriff's departments. In fact, in Brown County, the concern by the Sheriff's Department was on the potential threats to the safety of the vendors and their family.

As the Parks and Recreation Department reinforced in their statement, citizens have the right to hold beliefs and make statements that others might find frightening, disturbing and objectionable. Illustrations of these beliefs were on full display at the meeting of the Bloomington Farmer's Market Advisory Committee on June 17, 2019. [The video of these comments is available at the Bloomingtonian website.](#)

The nature and tone of these comments to include posts on social media, illustrate that the concerns to our communities may not be so much from the views expressed by individuals, but from the intolerance and bigotry that many of these views represent.

Our challenges is to find better ways to address issues and concerns that respect our Constitution and will result in less divisive and more productive communities.

Thank you,

Tim J. Clark