

Honorable Chair and Members
of the City Council Ad Hoc Naming of Public Facilities Committee
City Hall
Torrance, California

Members of the Committee:

SUBJECT: Review Request to Name Torrance Farmers' Market in Honor of Mary Lou Weiss

RECOMMENDATION

The City Manager recommends that you consider Mayor Scotto's request to name the Torrance Farmers' Market in honor of Mary Lou Weiss.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

At the July 2, 2013 City Council meeting, Mayor Scotto convened the Naming of Public Facilities Ad Hoc Committee, requesting that the Committee consider naming the Torrance Farmers' Market in honor of Mary Lou Weiss. As Mayor Scotto noted, while City Council has taken the position that public facilities should not be named after a City employee, the Farmers' Market is a function, not a facility of the City.

Mary Lou began managing the Torrance Farmers' Market in April 1991, and under her leadership, the Market has become one of the most successful markets in the State of California. The attached article from *LA Times* online and the adjournment from the City Council meeting of June 25, 2013, summarize her numerous contributions to the Torrance Farmers' Market and the surrounding community, as well as to her commitment to the general governance of farmers' markets statewide.

The current official name of the market is, "Torrance Certified Farmers' Market." One method by which the Market can honor Mary Lou is by changing its official name to "The Mary Lou Weiss Torrance Certified Farmers' Market." Another method to name the Market in Mary Lou's honor is through the use of a tagline: "Torrance Certified Farmers' Market, in Honor of Mary Lou Weiss." If neither of these more formal names are appropriate, and you are interested in naming the market to reflect more of a hometown feel, you could call it "Mary Lou's Certified Farmers' Market in Torrance". If none of these choices are suitable, please provide staff some direction as to how you would like the name to be reflected.

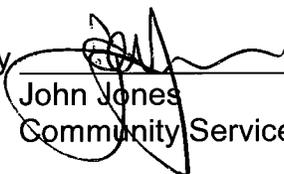
If your Honorable Body agrees with any of the actions mentioned above, staff are providing several suggestions for marketing elements for your consideration, you can choose one or all of these suggestions:

- Portable signage to be displayed at the opening of each market day and removed at the end of the day
- Reformatting of the existing Logo to include the approved title
- Signage on the Information Booth for the Farmers Market
- Paper Marketing: Brochures, business cards, letterhead, newsletter
- Online Marketing: City's website

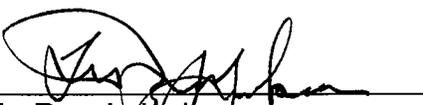
Should your Honorable Body wish to name the Torrance Farmers' Market in honor of Mary Lou Weiss, staff will forward the Committee's recommendation to the full Council, where public input is again received, and City Council can deliberate on the recommendation. If your Honorable Body does not wish to name the Torrance Farmers' Market in honor of Mary Lou Weiss, no further action is required.

Respectfully submitted,

LeROY J. JACKSON
CITY MANAGER

By 
John Jones
Community Services Director

CONCUR:


LeRoy J. Jackson
City Manager

Attachments:

- A) *LA Times* online, June 22, 2013, "Longtime farmers market manager Mary Lou Weiss dies"
- B) City Council Adjournment for Mary Lou Weiss, June 25, 2013

7/9/13

Longtime farmers market manager Mary Lou Weiss dies - latim

latimes.com/features/food/dailydish/la-dd-longtime-farmers-market-manager-mary-lou-weiss-dies-20130622,0,7867564.story

latimes.com

Longtime farmers market manager Mary Lou Weiss dies

By David Karp

4:38 PM PDT, June 22, 2013

Mary Lou Weiss, the longtime manager of the Torrance farmers markets, died Saturday morning at her home in Hermosa Beach. She was 75, and suffered cardiac arrest as a result of a pulmonary embolism, said her husband, Jim.

She was an indomitable and much-beloved figure in the farmers market world beginning in April 1991, when she started managing the Torrance farmers market, which was then held only on Tuesdays. She established a Saturday market at the same location, in Charles H. Wilson Park, on March 7, 1992.

“We knew within a month’s time that we had a winner,” she said in an interview in her office in March.

The Saturday market is now the third largest in the Southland, after Santa Monica and Hollywood, and is considered one of the best for its wide selection of both ethnic and mainstream produce.

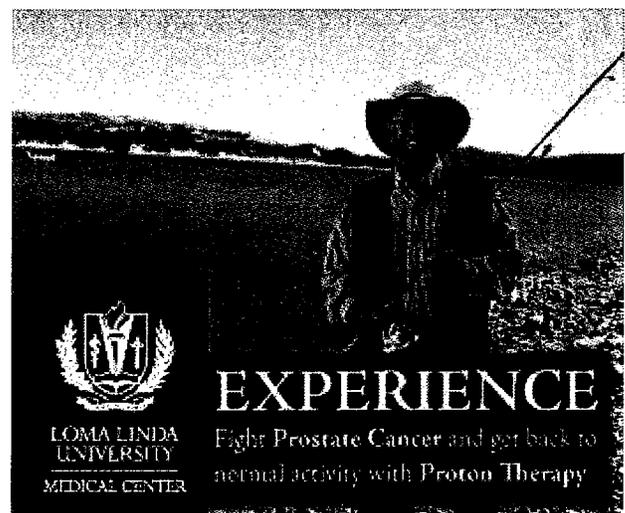
Weiss brooked no nonsense, but had a genuine human touch in dealing with farmers and customers. She was always very active in farmers market governance, and served for three terms, one of them as chair, on the state Certified Farmers’ Market Advisory Committee. She served as a mentor to a generation of new market managers and recently took the lead role in establishing a state training program for managers.

“She was always there when I needed her, always willing to take the time to help,” said Greta Dunlap, manager of the Beverly Hills farmers market.

Weiss had planned to retire in August and said in a phone interview Thursday that she was looking forward to training her successor. Several candidates, including some well-known figures in the farmers market world, have applied for the position, which will be chosen by the City of Torrance Community Services Department.

Mary Lou Haag was born Jan. 27, 1938, on a farm in Canal Fulton, Ohio; her mother was unable to make it to the hospital because the snow that day was 6 feet deep, she said. Her mother, Viola, was a homemaker, and her father, Harold, was a farmer and truck driver.

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She was educated at an old-fashioned country school with three rooms for the first eight grades, and later attended Kent State University for two years. She worked as a dental assistant, and then at Eastern Airlines in Chicago, where she met Jim, who became her second husband. They moved to Hermosa Beach in 1971.

In 1990 she started the Hermosa Beach farmers market, which remained close to her heart, although she opened many markets around the South Bay and other areas, including Palos Verdes, Lawndale, Carson, Manhattan Beach, Agoura Hills, Pierce College and Lomita. Her son Brian, a police officer and member of the SWAT team in Redondo Beach, also runs the Palos Verdes farmers market.

In addition to her husband of 41 years, who grows orchids that he sells at the Torrance market, and her son, she is survived by her sister, Susan Burton of Canton, Ohio; her son Steven, a firefighter in Kern County; and two grandchildren, Nikki and Jake.

ALSO:

Local Hangar 24 brewery tries fruit beers

At last, an affordable locally grown chicken!

Paso Robles farm-to-table restaurant moves

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MARY LOU WEISS

I ask that we adjourn tonight's meeting in memory of Mary Lou Weiss, long-time Torrance Certified Farmers' Market Manager, who passed away June 22, 2013 at the age of 75.

A native of Ohio, Mary Lou was fittingly born on a farm in Canal Fulton to Viola and Harold Haag. Viola was a homemaker and Harold, a farmer and truck driver. Mary Lou was educated in a small country school and later attended Kent State University. It was while working at Eastern Airlines in Chicago that she met future husband Jim Weiss. Mary Lou and Jim married and in 1971 settled in Hermosa Beach where they have spent the past 41 years. Mary Lou and Jim have two sons, Steven and Brian.

Mary Lou began her distinguished career with the City of Torrance in April 1991. Under her direction, the Torrance Certified Farmers' Market, held every Tuesday and Saturday at Charles H. Wilson Park, has become one of the most successful markets in the State of California. As a result, Mary Lou has been recognized with a number of special awards including the Torrance Parks and Recreation Commission Distinguished Staff Award, the Community Services Department Employee of the Year Award, and Special Commendations by Congresswoman Jane Harman and Los Angeles County Fourth District Supervisor Don Knabe. In April of this year, Mary Lou was

recognized as a 'Woman of Distinction' by California State Assemblyman Al Muratsuchi and the Soroptimist International of Manhattan Beach.

Always very involved with the governance of Farmers' Markets, Mary Lou served on several State Committees in addition to serving three terms on the State Farmers' Market Advisory Committee. Recently she was instrumental in establishing a State Training Program for Market Managers.

In addition to her duties as the Farmers' Market Manager, Mary Lou managed the Community Services Department's Community Gardens Program, overseeing 250 gardens located at Columbia and Lago Seco Parks, and served as the Community Services Department's Volunteer Coordinator, in which capacity she was responsible for the organization and implementation of an Annual Recognition Dinner and Awards event, attended by over 250 people. Mary Lou also served for 16 years as Trustee on the Hermosa Beach Unified School District Board, with six tours as President, and is a current member of the City of Hermosa Beach Civil Service Commission.

Well known for her warm and outgoing personality and wonderful sense of humor, Mary Lou made friends wherever she went. She had a genuine care and concern for others and touched the lives of all she knew in a very special way.

Mary Lou is survived by her loving husband of 41 years, Jim; son Steven and his wife Rochelle; son Brian and his wife Amanda; and grandchildren Nikki and Jake. In addition, Mary Lou was thrilled about the upcoming birth of her third grandchild, Gunner, due in November. Her sister, Susan Burton, resides in Canton, Ohio.

A memorial service will be held on Sunday, June 30, 5:00 p.m. at Rice Mortuary, 5310 Torrance Boulevard.

In lieu of flowers, the family is requesting donations be made to a charity of your choice which supports women's issues or the Torrance Community Services Department to be used toward a tree and bench to be placed at Wilson Park. Donations for a tree and bench can be mailed to: Torrance Community Services Department, ATTN: Mary Lou Weiss Memorial, 3031 Torrance Boulevard, Torrance, CA 90503

Our sincere sympathy is with Mary Lou's family, her many friends and co-workers. She will be deeply missed.

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