

JUL 15 2021

July 14, 2021

Director
542 Fourth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Re: APPEAL: Civil Penalty #153
Hello Hummus: Market Square Farmers' Market – Pittsburgh

Dear Director,

This letter is being submitted as an APPEAL of Civil Penalty #153 for a food safety violation on May 20, 2021 – Section 330/328: Operating a food facility without a valid health permit. The amount of this penalty is \$277. This appeal is due no later than July 29.

I have been a vendor at the Market Square farmers market for the past seven years. The process has been that your staff visit the farmers market every year within the first few weeks. They check to see if we have a permit; if not, they accept cash or check on the spot. This has become customary. On June 3, Marcelo Lob visited Market Square and I spoke with him about not yet having my permit. He said that he would send me the required information and he did not mention anything about a penalty assessment.

I received Marcelo's email on June 10 stating: "To apply for a Seasonal Permit for Farmer's Markets, go to <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Health-Department/Programs/Food-Safety/Opening-a-Temporary-Food-Business.aspx> to fill out your checklist. Mail the checklist and the 77\$ check for the permit fee to our office. You should get the permit in the mail in a few business days."

Our check for the permit was dated June 17 and sent into the department at that time. I have paid my permit fee every year without fail. The penalty assessed by your department feels excessive given my track record of timely payments in the past. I had no reason to suspect that the permitting would be handled differently than any other year (for 7 years going).

As you know, this past 1.5 year has been quite difficult for food establishments. We have suffered great losses due to COVID-19. I am a minority-owned, small business and my losses during this period have been more than 50%.

I would appreciate your consideration of this matter and remove the penalty assessment.

Thank you,
Zowhair Mkais, Owner – Hello Hummus

cc: Donna L. Scharding, Program Manager
Angel Costis, Supervisor