



The Good Fight.

I fight the good fight everyday. What ever that is. The struggle today to stay in business is a true fight. Guys like me are up against the worst odds. Rising costs on health care, utilities and fierce competition keeps me up at night. My health insurance is going up 20% next month, thanks Mr. Obama. Can I raise my prices to cover the extra \$400 a month I have to pay? Of course not. How about the thousands I just paid in license and permit fee's. Here's the rub. I sent in my food facility permit fee (btw - make sure your caterer has one. This is the permit that shows that we restaurants, caterers & food producers have an official inspected kitchen). So I send in my permit and fee, \$350 due on March 31st. April 10th I get my fee back and a note that I sent in my renewal late and that I had to pay the late fee of \$12 a day to get my permit. Stamped on the letter is the date they received my application of April 3rd, handwritten on the letter is the date April 5th (date they mailed back the permit). I received the letter April 10th. This is a full 15 days after I mailed in my renewal on March 25th. So I call the Health Department and ask how do I now get my permit. They tell me that I have to return the application with the current late fee. So I ask what is the late fee. They tell me that as of today April 10th it's \$96. So, ignorant me asks "You received my applications and fee on April 3rd, shouldn't my late fee be \$36." (that 3days at \$12 per day=\$36) The clerk replies, "That's not how we do it. The late fees accumulate until you pay the permit fee and correct late fee. Your late fee as of today is \$96". I reply, "If I mail it in today will I be Ok?". "If you have the correct late fee" she says. "What does that mean?". "Well, you have to have the right late fee as of the day we receive the application." "So even if I mail out the application today with the late fee of \$96, the late fee accumulates until you receive the application. Then if you don't have the correct late fee, you send everything back to me and the late fee keep accumulating until I send the correct amount in?" that's right." She says. To sum up. The health department charges a late fee that accumulates daily until the correct amount is paid. They have also set up a system that keeps the meter running on the late fees until they are paid. So one must either pay the fees in person at the health department, which I ended up doing or get caught in the endless fee loop.

Now comes the fun part. I start my inquiry into this practice by going up the chain of command at the health department. One supervisor onto the next I explain what has happened and ask to have the late fee eliminated or reduced to the \$36 fee, (I did pay the \$96 fee, that day. Each person told me the same thing "Well, that's just the way we do it". Every state and federal agency I deal with and all my vendors handle late fees basically the same way. The payment is late, here is a bill for your late fee, I send in the payment. But not the Health Department. They just keep the meter running. So I call my County Council Woman. I speak to her assistant a very nice guy who knows my business and has even been here to Mr Charles Mkt.. I explain what has happened, he understands fully and he agrees with me that the late fees are unfair and he'll bring it up with the council woman and the Head of the Health Department, to have the policy changed to be more business friendly. I even spoke to our esteemed County Executive, all around good guy, Kevin Kamenetz and great customer at Mr Charles Mkt. He agrees the policy stinks and should be changed. Well that was a month ago. I've spoke to that nice guy in my Council Woman's Almond's office 4 times so far (once a week) and to the County Exec. A couple of times. Well so far nothing has come of it. No call back from the Health Department, they even say they haven't heard anything from the Health Department on this issue. I just want the policy changed so it's more friendly to business' like mine. Guys like me, we can use all the help we can get.

Stuart Denrich
Mr Charles Market

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