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May Township to revisit rules on growers

by [Laura Yuen](#), Minnesota Public Radio

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ST. PAUL, Minn. — A metro township will likely repeal an ordinance that imposed restrictions on vegetable growers in the area.

The attorney for May Township in Washington County says its staff is recommending that the town board revisit the five-month-old ordinance. Among other things, it restricts the farmers from working before 7 a.m. and requires toilet facilities on site.

About 30 Hmong growers who rent land in the area worked with the Farmers Legal Action Group to contest the new rules. The group's executive director, Susan Stokes, said the new restrictions don't apply to traditional corn and soybean growers.

"There's something kind of patronizing about it because it assumes the Hmong farmers don't know how to intentionally and thoughtfully plan out their days and how they work. I don't really see what's behind that," Stokes said.

The farmers already arranged to have portable toilets on site before the rules were enacted, Stokes said.

"You can't be working on the farm before 7 a.m. or after a half an hour past dusk. Anyone who farms knows it's too hot to be farming in the middle of the day," Stokes said. "And these are also farmers markets' farmers, and they have to be at the market by 6 a.m., so they have to get to their farms much before 7 a.m."

Dave Snyder, attorney for May Township, says town officials grew sympathetic after hearing concerns from the growers that the restrictions in the ordinance would put them out of business.

Snyder said the ordinance grew from concerned residents over parking and other issues. He said officials look forward to visiting the farms and learning more about the growers' operations.

"It'll be a good series of meetings, I'm sure," Snyder said. "It'll either result in a better product, or in an observation that they don't need municipal regulation in this area."

May Township board will revisit the legislation Sept. 6 and vote whether to suspend or repeal it.