

Fish On Film: A Look at Market Web-Cams

BY RENA LANGILLE

Flying fish, steaming, on line; sounds like we're going to catch some serious salmon, and we are--only these fish aren't in the water.

The flying fish boys at Pike Place Fish Co. flew into a little controversy this past year over the set up of some modern technology. It had to do with a couple of web-cams the crew mounted near the customer area of their world famous stall, under the clock. The purpose of the web-cams was to catch those flying Salmon and send them upstream into the Pike Place Fish website. Owner John Yokoyama called a crew meeting to generate ideas for broadening their business. During some brainstorming, someone threw out the notion that a good goal would be to become (even more) world famous, and the web cam idea was born. PPFC is a savvy bunch. They have a website, recipes, motivational seminars, books, tapes, online shopping, and now the opportunity to watch flying fish on line. The cameras cost around \$200, and John hired a company to do the wiring, which was overseen by Steve Nelson, Manager



Can you spot the Pike Place Fish Co. web-cam? Hint: It is near the top of the pillar at the left of the photo.

of Market Maintenance. One cam is focused on the back counter where the cooked shellfish are displayed, and the other on the flying fish. The web-cams do not film customers. The City of Seattle Historic Commission, a regulatory agency appointed by the Mayor to set

guidelines that maintain the historic use of the Market, caught wind of the web-cams, declaring their use as an expansion of business, and had them shut down. In the Market, merchants may not expand by selling products that are not related to their established use, i.e. bakeries may not sell umbrellas along with their fruitcake.

In April, Ryan Dehn (pronounced Dane), Shipping Manager for Pike Place Fish, attended a hearing on the matter, during which he submitted a written statement to the Commission, defending the use of the web-cams to promote their business of selling and packaging fish and seafood to a world wide customer base. The letter explained that people from all over the world come by as tourists and then went home and looked up the website to buy products. Catherine Stanford, then Director of the PDA, and Craig Nelson,

former PDA assistant commercial property manager, also attended the hearing and defended the web-cam use. Catherine stated that Pike Place Fish has been a tenant, [selling fish] for forty years and Craig testified that the cams would not change the current use of the business.

A question was posed, during the hearing, asking for clarification on how the cams would be used to sell fish and voicing a concern that it would be used to promote the business' motivational training seminars, which would indeed be an expansion of use. The issue centered around guideline 2.1 where it says, "Uses in the Market should reinforce the Market's unique qualities rather than emulate shopping opportunities found elsewhere in the city."

The petition was denied. Denial breeds appeal. Ryan appealed to the City of Seattle Hearing Examiner who overturned the Commission's decision. The issue then had to go up before the Design branch of the Commission for proper placement of the technology. It was ordered that the cams must conform with the historic features of the Market. They must be "hung unobtrusively" and "painted Market Green."

The whole process took around five months, during which the cameras were off. They are now back on and in a testing phase. The connections are being adjusted to the web site and the appropriate software is being installed. They should be running soon. The Pike Place Fish crew maintains they get more business as a result of streaming fish to their site, and that the cams will run only during business hours.

Web-cam technology has existed for some time and are increasingly

WEB-CAMS
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