

**10th Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
September 14th, 2016
Fargo Commission Chambers**

Members Present:

Heidi Durand, Moorhead City Council, Chair
Arland Rasmussen, Cass County Commission
Mike Thorstad, West Fargo City Commission
Jenny Mongeau, Clay County Commission
John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Jon Evert, At-Large Member
Mindy Grant, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council
Jessica Arneson, At-Large Member
Stephanie Reynolds, At-Large Member
Dana Rieth, At-Large Member

Others Present:

Megan Myrdal, Project Coordinator
Kim Lipetzky, Fargo Cass Public Health
Hali Durand, Cass County Planning
Abby Gold, Cass-Clay Food Systems Initiative
Deb Haugen, Cass-Clay Food Systems Initiative
Joleen Baker, Cass-Clay Food Systems Initiative
Michael Dahl, Minnesota Food Charter Network
Adam Altenburg, Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments

Chair Durand called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM.

1(a). Approve Order and Contents of the Overall Agenda

A motion to approve the order and contents of the overall agenda was made by Mr. Evert and seconded by Mr. Rasmussen. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1(b). Review and Action on Minutes from July 13, 2016

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Evert and seconded by Mr. Thorstad. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

Mr. Strand arrived at 10:32 AM.

1(c). Welcome to Commissioner John Strand

Chair Durand welcomed new Fargo City Commission member John Strand. Mr. Strand stated that he was eager to begin his term with the Food Commission.

1(d). New Name – Cass Clay Food Commission

Ms. Myrdal stated that a decision had been made by the Steering Committee to change the name from the 'Cass Clay Food Systems Advisory Commission' to the 'Cass Clay Food

Commission'. She explained that the reason for this name change was to help make it easier for the public to remember the name. Mr. Evert asked if the name change required Commission approval. Ms. Myrdal answered that the name change did not require Commission approval and that it would not have an effect on any of the prior agreements or contracts.

Mindy Grant arrived at 10:35 AM.

2. Commission Check-In

Chair Durand informed the Commission that at the beginning of each meeting, members would have an opportunity to give an update on any news or events happening within the community.

Deb Haugen arrived at 10:36 AM.

Ms. Harden stated that Extension with U of M would be holding a community garden workshop on September 24. She explained that this workshop was in response to a request by the Clay County Commission.

Ms. Lipetzky stated that the North Dakota Department of Health has extended its Chronic Disease Grant for the upcoming year. She stated that this funding would be for continued support for Ms. Myrdal, Ms. Baker, and Metro COG with future Commission activities and programs.

Ms. Gold informed the Commission of an activity conducted by the Steering Committee on September 9 that traced the activities and progress of the Commission since its inception. She stated that a full report would be given to the Commission at a later date.

3. Farmers Market and Produce Stands Blueprint

Chair Durand asked Ms. Baker if there were any updates or revisions made to the farmers markets and produce stands blueprint. Ms. Baker informed the Commission that no major changes had been made to the blueprint since it was first brought forth to the Commission in July.

Chair Durand asked how many blueprints had now been approved by the Commission. Ms. Myrdal answered that the farmers markets and produce stands blueprint would be the sixth blueprint to be approved. Ms. Baker stated that a blueprint on direct sales would be presented at the meeting in November.

A motion to approve the farmers market and produce stands blueprint was made by Ms. Mongeau and seconded by Mr. Thorstad. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

4. Minnesota Food Charter Network

Mr. Dahl, Executive Director of the Minnesota Food Charter Network, provided the Commission an update of its activities happening in Minnesota.

Mr. Dahl explained that the Minnesota Food Charter Network is working to change policies and systems to increase and expand healthy food choices for all Minnesotans. He explained that there are five domains within the Charter which include: food skills, food affordability, food availability, food accessibility, and food infrastructure. He stated that he is hearing from multiple communities about the desire to expand urban agriculture.

Mr. Dahl summarized his tour of the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area in the summer which started with an initial meeting with the Cass Clay Food Systems Initiative to understand the

different food systems issues and challenges it was working on. He summarized meetings he had with small area producers about the need for support for small farmers and resources for food incubators, as well as getting technical schools to provide sustainable agriculture education and techniques. He also spoke about a meeting he had with Dana Reith, Food Service Director for West Fargo Public Schools, and the challenge in providing healthy food at low-cost. He touched on additional meetings he had with City of Moorhead Mayor Del Rae Williams about community agriculture, Jon Evert about incentives to small farmers and how counties can play a greater role, and Andrea Baumgardner of BernBaum's in downtown Fargo. He stated that he was hearing similar concerns in other parts of Minnesota, as well as concerns relating to food deserts, issues relating to rural grocery stores, and general access to healthy food.

Mr. Dahl explained that an example of policy systems and environment changes as they relate to food skills include incorporating healthy food skills at early childhood center through credits, incentives, and community gardening programs. He gave an example of food affordability being addressed through 'market bucks' and 'veggie prescription' programs for healthy food purchases at stores and farmers markets. He explained that strategies for food availability include increasing the amount of healthy foods, decreasing the amount of unhealthy foods, and providing a greater variety of healthy foods that are culturally familiar to customers distributed by food banks, food shelves, and other institutions.

Mr. Dahl stated that the domains of food accessibility and food infrastructure are addressed in the newly completed Minnesota Food Access Planning Guide, which provides tools, resources and policy strategies to better design communities that promote access to healthy, safe, and affordable food. He stated that additional examples of food infrastructure strategies include establishing affordable statewide liability, specialty crops, and health insurance programs for small farmers, and creating and offering training with a focus on basic farm ownership, food production, and farm management skills.

Mr. Dahl explained that the Minnesota Food Charter was a multi-month process involving input from thousands of people throughout the state. He explained that the Minnesota Food Charter Network is needed to better address hunger, how it hurts the economy, and address the need for more farmers and farmers markets in the state. He stated that 20 percent of Minnesotans face hunger and food insecurity, with the state incurring over 2.8 billion in obesity-related health care costs, and 900,000 residents (including 200,000 children) having insufficient access to grocery stores in the state.

Mr. Dahl stated that there are 99 strategies identified within the Charter to better enable differing communities to address specific concerns and issues. He stated that many communities are taking advantage of SHIP funding to implement various Charter strategies as they may be applicable, including the support of approximately 70 food policy councils and food commissions across the state.

Mr. Dahl stated that on November 28 and 29, the Minnesota Food Charter Network will host a convening of Minnesota food network leaders in Minneapolis, with the goal of supporting, connecting, and building capacity of food networks to contribute to the implementation of Charter strategies. He also spoke about newly formed action teams to identify strategic goals and build action plans for coordinated efforts over the coming years.

Mr. Strand stated that approximately 24 percent of students in Fargo Public Schools are on free or reduced-cost lunches and that may be a good indicator of hunger. He spoke of his experiences of canning while he was growing up and asked whether canning is included in any of the education measures of the Charter. Mr. Dahl stated that a number of food preparation

skills are included in the Minnesota Food Charter and that canning is just one of many ways of food preservation.

Mr. Evert iterated the points made by Mr. Strand and Mr. Dahl and stated that he would like to see Extension take a greater role in education on canning and other food preservation measures. Ms. Harden stated that the community garden workshop on September 24 will include sessions on food preservation techniques such as canning, freezing, and dehydration of fruits and vegetables.

Mr. Dahl iterated his support of home economics/healthy lifestyles courses in schools, as well as sustainable agriculture courses at higher education institutions. Chair Durand stated that M|State's program on sustainable foods was cut. Mr. Dahl stated that it is unfortunate that many programs like those at M|State are being cut. Mr. Evert stated that a reason some of these programs are cut is due to a lack of student interest. Chair Durand responded that programs with 10 to 12 students are sometimes cut because they are not considered 'efficient' to program directors.

5. Update: Heart-n-Soul Community Café

Leola Daul provided the Commission an update on the Heart-n-Soul Community Café, a pop-up café dedicated to serving local, organic food and offering volunteer opportunities and wellness education.

Ms. Daul explained that the Heart-n-Soul Community Café is open to everyone in the community, regardless of their ability to pay. She said that menus do not list prices for meals, with pay-what-you-can pricing in the form of donations. She stated that the two main goals of the café are to provide healthy, nutritious meals and to help individuals make connections with others in the community. She expressed her appreciation to local area farmers who have provided food used in the meals and to the team of volunteers who prepare and serve the food.

Ms. Daul stated that since its inception in June 2016, the café has provided meals to 376 individuals, with 18 percent paying what they can or receiving a complementary meal, 57 percent paying the suggested amount (\$5 to \$8), and 25 percent paying it forward.

Ms. Daul explained that there have been six pop-up cafés to date, with most utilizing Josie's Corner Café in downtown Fargo. She stated that the café is licensed through Fargo Cass Public Health. She stated that, with pop-ups, the café is able to go to different location throughout the community, with the idea bringing groups from diverse backgrounds together. She stated that she hopes to expand locations to south Fargo near K-Mart and the City of West Fargo. She informed the Commission that the next pop-up would be at Josie's Corner on September 25.

Ms. Daul stated that the café uses locally grown foods and is working to preserve food for the coming months for future pop-ups. She also explained that she would be participating in SNAP education in partnership with Extension and public health at the Red River Market on September 17.

Ms. Mongeau asked if the Heart-n-Soul Community Café had a website or any social media presence. Ms. Daul stated the café has a Facebook page and Instagram account, and has discussed creating a website in the future. She stated that she works with various organizations to help get the word out for upcoming events.

6. Update: FARRMS/Growing Together Future Farmer Training Grant

Verna Kragnes provided the Commission an update on 'Farm Beginnings' and the 'USDA Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program Grant' in collaboration with FARRMS and Growing Together.

Ms. Kragnes stated that FARRMS stands for Foundation for Agricultural and Rural Resource Management and Sustainability. She explained that FARRMS is a non-profit founded in 2000 to address specific educational needs of organic producers and processors and to promote rural development, with its offices based out of Medina, ND.

Ms. Kragnes stated that the definition of a farm is any place where a \$1,000 of agricultural products are produced and sold during the year. She stated that nearly a quarter of what could be considered farms do not produce any sales in a given year, and that an additional 30 percent have positive sales less than \$1,000. She stated that, had the produce grown by Growing Together community gardens been sold, it would have produced more income than 55 percent of farms in the entire United States. She explained that there is a need for new farmers and that this may require a new picture of what a farm is.

Ms. Kragnes stated that nearly 85 percent of farms have off-farm income. She stated that this may be a continued social impact of farm prices from the 1980's. She explained that many young farmers work second jobs to make it easier to pursue farming as a passion.

Ms. Kragnes explained that, according to the USDA, a beginner farmer is someone in their first ten years of farming. She explained that the FAARMS program would be available to anyone who is in their first ten years of farming. She stated that the first year of farming is considered the exploration phase, followed by a second year of planning or interning, three to seven years of establishing one's own farm, and seven to ten years of a person beginning to manage a farm on their own.

Ms. Kragnes stated that over 50 percent of the people involved in the program will be those with limited resources or those who fit the USDA's definition of 'socially disadvantaged' as farmers, which includes: New Americans, African-Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, veterans, and women.

Ms. Kragnes explained that an important component of the FARRMS/Growing Together Future Farmers Training Grant would be a learning circle to help build up the conversation around sustainable agriculture. She stated that the four phases of the learning circle would include: 1) practical experience at Growing Together; 2) FAARMS intern program; 3) Farm Beginnings training; and 4) incubator farming opportunities.

Mr. Evert asked how much money was included in the grant. Ms. Kragnes answered that the grant amount was \$513,000, which required a 25 percent local match. She stated that match came from a number of local partners, including a large contribution from Lutheran Social Services. She further explained that part of the grant is intended to replicate the Growing Together community gardening model to other cities in North Dakota. She stated that the total project amount was nearly \$700,000 over a three-year time period.

Mr. Strand asked whether small farm entities would qualify for disaster relief as part of the program. Ms. Kragnes answered that this is a complicated issue, especially as crop insurance relates to vegetables.

Ms. Baker asked how FARRMS would be choosing people to participate in the program, whether it would be application-based or needs-based. Ms. Kragnes answered that she didn't anticipate turning down anyone who initially applied with Farm Beginnings training or internship opportunities.

Mr. Evert stated that this program was very timely as there is a greater need for supply to accommodate the growing demand for local food production. He congratulated Ms. Kragnes on her efforts to secure funding for the Farm Beginnings program and the Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program Grant.

7. Update: Buzz Lab 3.0 Teen Internship

Isabetta Herrera, Emma Swenson, and Joslin Forness provided the Commission an update from the Buzz Lab 3.0 Teen Internship held at the Plains Art Museum.

Ms. Herrera explained that Buzz Lab is an internship program which has been held at the Plains Art Museum for the past three years. She stated that this summer, the program has been more active in providing the community information on the importance of pollinators, as well as trying to dispel some of the safety concerns people have with honey bees and other pollinators.

Ms. Swenson stated the pollinators are important in many of the fruits, nuts, and vegetables that people eat. She stated that part of the educational component of Buzz Lab was providing information on the difference between honey bees and yellow jackets and other stinging insects.

Ms. Forness stated that she lives near West Fargo and that she and her family have a farm where they keep several bee hives. She explained that the Buzz Lab helped her to learn the importance of pollinators in the ecosystem and some of the factors which have led to their decline in recent years. She stated that Paul Luthi of Three Bears Honey has provided education on best practices for bee keeping and also keeps additional bee hives near their property.

Ms. Herrera iterated Buzz Lab's concerns about a recent ban on honey bees within the City of West Fargo. She asked the Commission for support in revisiting the issue and working with the City of West Fargo next year when the new internship program starts.

Ms. Mongeau stated she was pleased to hear the information from Ms. Herrera, Ms. Swenson, and Ms. Forness and that they were very inspiring leaders.

Mr. Strand asked about chemical applications for mosquitos and the effect some have had on bee populations while combating the Zika virus. Chair Durand stated that she had reached out to vector control in the City of Moorhead and that they informed her that the chemical nalen is not used in the area. She stated that she did have concerns about other chemicals that are still used and their effects on pollinators. Ms. Forness added that certain crops such as corn and other monocrops are not as healthy for bee populations as a more diverse ecosystem.

Ms. Harden stated the Governor Dayton had recently taken step to protect pollinators by restricting the use of neonicotinoid pesticide applications in Minnesota.

8. Public Comment Opportunity

Chair Durand informed the Commission that time would be allotted for public comments.

Mara Solberg of Solberg Farms expressed her gratitude to the Red River Market in allowing her to bring her products to market. She iterated her appreciation of their support and of the Market's SNAP Double Bucks program and stated she believed it helped more people purchase healthy, affordable foods.

Jack Wood of Growing Together informed the Commission there would be a welcome meal at Rabanus Park on September 17, with all of the food coming from the area's community gardens. He

stated that an additional potluck would be held on September 22 at The Gathering at 3910 25 Street S. He stated that 2,000 pounds of squash and pumpkins are also available at their produce market.

Abby Gold informed the Commission that Probstfield Farm will be open the next four weekends for people to come to their heirloom squash and pumpkin patch, which includes 18 different varieties.

9. Commission and Steering Committee Roundtable

Chair Durand asked for the Commission and the Steering Committee to share any additional updates.

Ms. Myrdal iterated that the new Commission Check-In at the beginning of meetings will be a time for any Commission members to bring forth any food systems issues they may have seen or discussed within the community. She stated that Prairie Roots Co-Op had hired Kurt Kopperud as their new general manager as they prepare for their opening in the spring of 2017. She explained that, with the discussion of the SNAP Double Bucks program at the Red River Market, a total of \$1,500 had been spent to date and that it has grown exponentially.

Ms. Haugen encouraged Commission members and members of the audience to consider volunteering with Growing Together in 2017. She expressed her support for the program and the role it has filled in helping people grow food who may not otherwise have land or space for gardening where they live.

Ms. Grant stated that she appreciated the presentation by Michael Dahl on the Minnesota Food Charter Network and the need to take a closer look at food infrastructure and policies that better enable people to provide food for themselves.

Ms. Harden stated that she is looking forward to working with jurisdictions to move ahead with some of the policies contained within the six blueprints approved by the Commission.

Mr. Evert thanked everyone from Extension and public health for all of their hard work and effort with the Commission.

10. Commission Action Steps

Chair Durand stated that the next meeting would be held on November 9, 2016.

Chair Durand adjourned the meeting at 11:58 AM.