

**38th Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
March 9, 2022
Virtual Meeting**

Members Present:

Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council, Chair
Arlette Preston, Fargo City Commission
Deb White, City of Moorhead
Duane Breitling, Cass County Commission
Mandy George, West Fargo City Commission
Jenna Kahly, Clay County Commission
Jeremiah Utecht, At-Large Member
Jeff York, At-Large Member
Anna Johnson, At-Large Member
Joan Kopperud, At-Large Member
Jeffrey Miller, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

Chelsey Johnson, Horace City Council

Others Present:

Michelle Draxten, Fargo Cass Public Health
Rory Beil, Clay County Public Health
Noelle Harden, U of M Extension
Mary Larson, NDSU – Community Health Sciences Specialization
Janice Tweet, Great Plains Food Bank
Erika Franck, Clay County Planning
John Devries, United Prairie Foundation
Leola Daul, Heart-n-Soul Community Café
Crystal Rayamajhi, City of Moorhead
Kristy Rott, Norman-Mahnomen Public Health
Adam Altenburg, Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments

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

1a. Approve Order and Contents of the Overall Agenda

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

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from January 12, 2022

A motion to approve the minutes for January was made by Ms. White and seconded by Mr. Breitling. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

2. Commission Introductions

Chair Aasness lead Commission and steering committee members in a brief round of introductions.

3. At-Large Commissioner Spotlight – Jeremiah Utecht

Mr. Utecht provided the Food Commission’s first at-large member spotlight. He highlighted some of the entrepreneurial successes and challenges he experienced through his two businesses: Off the Deck Hot Sauce, a homemade, fermented hot sauce using locally grown ingredients; and Flannel Fizz, a craft soda and tonic company.

4. Update on Letter of Support for Multicultural Urban Food & Ecology Initiative

Ms. Harden provided an update on the Prairie Rose Agricultural Institute for Research, Innovation, and Education (PRAIRIE) grant application from Minnesota’s AGRI Urban Grant Program. She mentioned that this was in response to Rick Hall’s ask for a letter of support by the Commission to develop a Multicultural Urban Food and Ecology Initiative in the FM area. She noted that the steering committee worked with Mr. Hall to craft a letter of support but that, ultimately, PRAIRIE did not receive funding in this funding cycle.

5. Public Engagement Strategies from Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future

Ms. Draxten discussed ways to increase public engagement for the Cass Clay Food Partners and the Food Commission based on a “curbside consult” with Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future.

Ms. Draxten explained that benefits of public input include but are not limited to: getting a better understanding of the community’s needs and aspirations, hearing diverse perspectives on empowered decision making, increased transparency through community engagement, a smoothly run initiative as a result of community engagement, and creating a greater sense of community ownership. She explained that some strategies that came about based on the curbside consult included: creating videos or educational materials on how to provide input at Commission meetings, engaging public officials during Facebook Live events, encouraging written comments prior to meetings for people who may be apprehensive about public speaking, capitalizing on participation opportunities at First Friday events, highlighting the 20 different policy brief developed by the Commission, and participating in group events throughout the community.

6. Clay County Comprehensive Plan Update – Erika Franck

Ms. Franck provided the Commission an update on Clay County’s comprehensive plan.

Ms. Franck explained that Clay County’s comprehensive plan update was taking a look at a number of different areas that impact the county’s character, preservation and growth, and fiscal condition. She noted that the county had a robust community engagement schedule which included virtual and in-person public input meetings, a community input survey, township and city feedback, state agency responses to issues and concerns, personnel meetings with county staff, and focus groups and other targeted outreach held with stakeholders.

Ms. Franck noted that issues and opportunities related to agriculture and food systems were among the numerous comments the county received. She noted that members of the public were interested in ways the county could encourage new farmers, connect locally grown food to local markets and farm to table opportunities, support sustainable farming practices, protect agricultural land from erosion and sediment control, and assist with transportation access to food, healthcare, and childcare. She explained that many of these issues and opportunities were addressed in the plan’s goals and objectives, which describe different strategies for carrying out future aspirations for the county. She also noted that the comprehensive plan update included implementation tables with information on funding mechanisms and further steps the county could take to achieve its goals and objectives.

Ms. Franck stated that the Clay County Planning Commission would be holding a public hearing on March 15 and that the Board of Commissioners would be holding a future public hearing to approve the plan.

7. AARP Funding Opportunities

Mr. Altenburg informed the Commission about AARP's Community Challenge Grant Program. He noted that the program provides small grants to fund quick-action projects to help communities become more livable for people of all ages. He stated that over a five year period, the program has awarded \$9.3 million to over 800 different municipalities and non-profit organizations. He shared that these projects have included raised garden beds, community gardens, pollinator and rain gardens, and community events which promote active and healthy living.

Mr. Altenburg noted that grants up to \$50,000 had been awarded, and that grants did not require any sort of local match. He stated that grant applications were due March 22, and the Metro could assist with applications.

8. Planning Ahead for Pollinators

Jeffrey Miller and John Devries discussed ways that the Cass County Soil and Water Conservation District and the United Prairie Foundation are working to improve pollinator habitats. Mr. Miller stated that urban areas have a real potential improve the habitat of pollinators and discussed how cost-share programs can help implement pollinator gardens on publically-owned or private property in the metro area. Mr. Devries explained that many of the plants provided for the Cass County Soil and Water Conservation District cost-share program come from United Prairie Foundation's greenhouse in Enderlin, ND.

9. Public Comment Opportunity

Chair Aasness informed the Commission that time would be allotted for public comments. He noted that members of the community are able to submit comments via a comment link when Commission packets are emailed out.

No comments were made.

10. Commission and Steering Committee Roundtable: Community Updates and Meeting Reflections

Chair Aasness asked for the Commission and the steering committee to share any additional updates or meeting reflections.

11. Commission Action Steps

Chair Aasness stated that the next Commission meeting would be held on May 11, 2022. He also mentioned that the next First Fridays event would be held at 701 Eateries in Fargo on April 1 at 8:00 AM.

Chair Aasness adjourned the meeting at 11:45 AM.