

**17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the  
Cass Clay Food Commission  
November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
Fargo Commission Chambers**

**Members Present:**

Arland Rasmussen, Cass County Commission, Chair  
Mike Thorstad, West Fargo City Commission  
Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council  
John Strand, Fargo City Commission  
Jon Evert, At-Large Member  
Kayla Pridmore, At-Large Member

**Members Absent:**

Jenny Mongeau, Clay County Commission  
Heidi Durand, Moorhead City Council  
Mindy Grant, At-Large Member  
Chris Olson, At-Large Member  
Dana Rieth, At-Large Member

**Others Present:**

Kim Lipetzky, Fargo Cass Public Health  
Gina Nolte, Clay County Public Health  
Hali Durand, Cass County Planning  
Megan Myrdal, NDSU Extension  
Noelle Harden, U of M Extension  
Nikki Johnson, U of M and NDSU Extension  
Deb Haugen, Cass Clay Food Partners  
Barb Witteman, Cass Clay Food Partners  
Whitney Oxendahl, Cass Clay Food Partners  
Adam Altenburg, Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments

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

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

Chair Rasmussen welcomed Barb Witteman from Concordia College to the Steering Committee. Ms. Witteman explained that two of her classes work on hunger issues with area schools in the Fargo-Moorhead area, including Washington Elementary and Carl Ben Eielson Middle School.

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

Kim Lipetzky arrived at 10:31 AM.

**1(b). Review and Action on Minutes from September 13, 2017**

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

### **1(c). Commission Check-In**

Chair Rasmussen stated that Commission members had an opportunity to provide updates on news or events happening in the community.

Whitney Oxendahl arrived at 10:35 AM.

Mr. Aasness informed the Commission of the new Aldi's food market that opened in Dilworth. He explained that future markets are planned for Fargo and West Fargo.

Mr. Altenburg stated that he had spoken to the Horace City Council on October 2 about the possibility of the city appointing a member to the Food Commission. He explained that council members were receptive but that, since only three of the five city council members were present, the city would revisit the issue at their meeting on November 20.

Ms. Myrdal informed the Commission that the Red River Market concluded its third season on October 28. She explained that the market saw over 50,000 attendees during its 17 weeks and that vendors earned over \$500,000 in direct sales. She also informed the Commission about the Future of Food event on November 20 at the Bluestem Center for the Arts. She stated that this event will look at the growth and evolution of food systems issues in the community as well as the development of a food action network in early 2018. She also provided additional information on her role as an extension agent for Cass County and as a SNAP educator focusing on food skills and food education classes for low-income residents.

Ms. Lipetzky stated that the next Heart-n-Soul Community Café will be held at Fargo Cass Public Health on November 15 from 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM.

### **2. Ruby's Pantry**

Marisa Gonzalez from M|State provided information on the Ruby's Pantry program.

Ms. Gonzalez stated that Ruby's Pantry is a non-profit organization that collects and distributes surplus food items to members in the community. She explained that the program started in response to an M|State survey which found that up to 30 percent of students face food insecurity or have difficulties being able to afford food. She stated that the program is open to both students and the public.

Gina Nolte arrived at 10:42 AM

### **3(a). Food Access: Introduction and Survey Discussion**

Mr. Altenburg provided an introduction to food access issues. He explained that food access was one of the six original implementation areas included in the Metropolitan Food Systems Plan and that priorities in the plan included: supporting and promoting charitable food programs, removing barriers to SNAP and soliciting funds for bonus bucks programs, developing incentives for farmers to sell to low-income markets, and implementing healthy food service guidelines for public institutions. He also touched base on survey results from the previous Commission meeting which asked members their current understanding of food access issues and practices and the importance of food access issues to policy makers and fellow community members.

### **3(b). Video: Minnesota Food Charter**

Commission members watched a video produced by the Minnesota Food Charter describing food access strategies and potential implementation areas.

### **3(c). Food Access Facilitation Activity**

Ms. Harden facilitated a group activity with Commission and Steering Committee members on sections included in the Minnesota Food Charter. She asked members to form groups and to pick one of five charter sections including: food access, food skills, food availability, food affordability, and food infrastructure. She asked member to record specific challenges and strategies for their selected topic and to share their views on what it would look like to address a selected issue in the community. She also asked Commission and Steering Committee members what they thought their roles may be in making progress on each of the charter sections.

### **3(d). Healthy Corner Store Initiative Blueprint**

Ms. Oxendahl informed the Commission that the Steering Committee had developed a new food access blueprint examining healthy corner store initiatives. She explained that a corner store, or convenience store, is typically less than 2,000 square feet, with up to four aisles and one cash register. She stated that some municipalities such as the City of Minneapolis had begun to pass ordinances aimed at requiring retail stores to carry a certain amount of produce and other staple foods such as whole grains, meat, beans, and dairy. She explained that, because of convenience stores failing to meet requirement standards, municipalities have turned to healthy corner store programs that can assist with education and marketing campaigns which promote the benefits of healthier foods at smaller stores.

Ms. Oxendahl explained the framework for evaluating healthy corner store initiatives including health, environment, social, and economic aspects. She explained several benefits of healthy corner store initiatives including: better access and availability of fresh produce and whole grains, opportunities for in-store nutrition lessons, enhanced customer and community health, and increased profits from healthy foods. She stated that concerns include availability of funds to invest in programs to ensure that they are successful as well as concerns from store owners that customers may not purchase fresh produce.

### **4. Public Comment Opportunity**

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

Mara Solberg of Solberg Farms shared several stories with the Commission about groups she had the opportunity to work with and being able to share her knowledge of healthy, local foods in the Fargo-Moorhead area.

### **5. Commission and Steering Committee Roundtable**

Chair Rasmussen asked for the Commission and the steering committee to share any additional updates.

### **6. Commission Action Steps**

Chair Rasmussen stated that the next meeting would be held on January 10, 2018.

Chair Rasmussen adjourned the meeting at 11:52 AM.