

**5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the  
Cass-Clay Food Systems Advisory Commission  
November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
Fargo Commission Chambers**

**Members Present:**

Arland Rasmussen, Interim Chair  
Jenny Mongeau, Clay County Commission  
Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council  
Andrea Baumgardner, At-Large Member  
Jon Evert, At-Large Member

**Members Absent:**

Heidi Durand, Moorhead City Council  
Mike Thorstad, West Fargo City Commission  
Mike Williams, Fargo City Commission  
Jessica Arneson, At-Large Member  
Janet Paul, At-Large Member  
Dana Rieth, At-Large Member

**Others Present:**

Megan Myrdal, Project Coordinator  
Kim Lipetzky, Fargo Cass Public Health  
Gina Nolte, Clay County Public Health/PartnerSHIP4Health  
Whitney Oxendahl, Cass-Clay Food Systems Initiative  
Adam Altenburg, Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments

Mr. Rasmussen 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. Aasness. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

**1(b). Review and Action on Minutes from September 9, 2015**

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. Mongeau and seconded by Ms. Baumgardner. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

**2(a). Ugly Food of the North: Urban Agriculture**

Ms. Myrdal informed the Commission that on October 19, the organization Ugly Food of the North held a community conversation event on urban agriculture at the Rourke Art Gallery Museum in Moorhead. Ms. Myrdal explained that this event was tailored to allow community members to bring questions and opinions about urban agriculture in the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area. Ms. Myrdal stated that a panel comprised Abby Gold (NDSU School of Public Health), Noelle Harden (University of Minnesota Extension), Travis Luthi (Three Beers Honey Co.), Whitney Oxendahl (Cass Clay Food Systems Initiative Steering Committee), and Kayla Pridmore (Woodchuck Community Farms) were available to answer questions.

## **2(b). Urban Agriculture Community Interest Survey**

Ms. Myrdal reminded the Commission that in June and July of 2015, a survey was sent out the community that asked residents interest in urban agriculture. Ms. Myrdal stated that urban growing came across as the most important topic from the community. Ms. Myrdal explained that this survey helped to inform the direction of the Steering Committee on the development of blueprints before the Commission.

Ms. Myrdal asked the Commission for a more comprehensive survey of the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area to get a better sense of what the community's thoughts and interests are with regard to urban agriculture and to try to get a larger representation of area residents. Ms. Myrdal stated that the survey completed in June and July was online only and that this survey would include a postage-paid hard copy of the survey through Metro COG.

Mr. Evert asked if people would need to make a request in order to take a hard copy of the survey. Ms. Myrdal stated that the survey would be strongly promoted in the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area and that it would be similar in nature to the recent survey by the City of Fargo on single-sort recycling.

A motion to approve the urban agriculture community interest survey was made by Mr. Aasness and seconded by Ms. Mongeau. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

## **3(a). Urban Chickens Education**

Ms. Myrdal reminded the Commission and community members that no action was being taken with regard to allowing urban chickens in the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area. Ms. Myrdal stated that the purpose of the discussion was to give a baseline understanding of what the issue is, how it can be evaluated, information on what other regional jurisdictions are doing, and best practices throughout the United States.

Ms. Myrdal explained that the interest in backyard chickens may be attributable to the growing interest in people wanting to know where their food comes from, how it is grown or raised, and also being able to have a closer connection to their food. Ms. Myrdal stated that chickens provide a food source for a family, with one hen being able to provide three to four eggs a week. Ms. Myrdal stated that chickens may be viewed as companion animals and a source of comfort. Ms. Myrdal explained that backyard chickens may also be a way to teach children about nature, agriculture, and how to responsibly care for animals. Ms. Myrdal concluded that chickens are omnivores and are able to help with food waste reduction.

Ms. Myrdal stated that there are many different breeds of chickens that are available and are adaptable to a backyard environment. Ms. Myrdal explained that breeds often used in an urban setting have been bred to have a mellow temperament, good long-term egg laying production, and northern climate tolerance. Ms. Myrdal provided several examples of heavier breeds including the Buff Orpington, Ameraucanas, and the Speckled Sussex.

Ms. Myrdal explained that a proper diet and fresh water are important for backyard chickens. Ms. Myrdal stated that chickens will eat grains, fruits, vegetables, and insects, as well as kitchen and garden scraps. Ms. Myrdal stated that feed requirements may increase in the winter and decrease in the summer due to metabolic changes. Ms. Myrdal explained that chickens need to be let out of their coops each morning and put inside their coops at dusk, and that their eggs need to be picked up twice a day.

Ms. Myrdal stated that hens begin egg production at around six months and can continue for five to ten years. Ms. Myrdal explained that peak production occurs in the first two years and drops each year

as hens molt, or replace their feathers in the early fall, and also as daylight hours are lost. Ms. Myrdal stated that hens need at least 12 to 14 hours of daylight each day to continue laying eggs and that a regular light bulb inside coops is sufficient to supply this light.

Ms. Myrdal explained that a quality coop is essential for egg production, including nest boxes – one per four to five birds. Ms. Myrdal stated that chickens also like to be up high and a place to roost is important. Ms. Myrdal stated that coops must provide protection from weather and predators and be well-insulated. Ms. Myrdal also stated that coops should have a light bulb or heat lamp for winter months, as well as ventilation for fresh air. Ms. Myrdal stated that it is recommended that coops have a minimum three to five square feet per bird. Ms. Myrdal explained that another component called the run is important to provide chickens a fenced, protected area while they are outside.

Ms. Myrdal explained that chickens raised in backyard settings generally stay healthy and are not easily susceptible to diseases. Ms. Myrdal stated that monitoring changes in a chicken's personality or energy level is important in monitoring a chicken's health. Ms. Myrdal also stated that sanitation is vital and that coops and outdoor areas should be cleaned weekly or as needed to control manure and odor build-up. Ms. Myrdal explained that feeders and waterers should be cleaned and disinfected regularly, and that thorough cleaning of the coop and yard is done once a year. Ms. Myrdal stated that cleaning before the introduction of new birds is important to limit the spread of disease.

Ms. Myrdal informed the Commission of common concerns that are expressed with raising backyard chickens and how they may be addressed or debunked. Ms. Myrdal explained one concern in that roosters are loud and that allowing chickens in an urban setting is a nuisance. Ms. Myrdal stated that egg-laying hens are female while roosters are male and that most urban settings ban roosters. Ms. Myrdal explained that hens at their loudest speak at the same decibel level as human conversation.

Ms. Myrdal stated that another common concern is that birds carry diseases, including salmonella, and that people will get sick from backyard chickens. Ms. Myrdal explained that live poultry may have salmonella germs in their droppings and on their bodies and that people become infected with salmonella when they put their hands on areas that have been in contact with feces in or around their mouth. Ms. Myrdal provided information from the Centers for Disease Control on guidelines to reduce salmonella infections from live poultry including: washing hands thoroughly with soap and water, thoroughly cooking eggs, and cleaning any equipment or materials associated with raising or caring for live poultry. Ms. Myrdal stated that most outbreaks of salmonella have been linked with people bringing live poultry into their homes.

Ms. Myrdal explained that another common concern is that urban chickens attract unwanted pests such as flies. Ms. Myrdal stated that flies and other pests lay their eggs in droppings because of the moisture content and that waste should be removed every four to five days. Ms. Myrdal also stated that proper bedding care is important to prevent pest breeding.

Ms. Myrdal stated that an increased presence of predators such as rats, raccoons, and hawks has also been listed as a common concern. Ms. Myrdal explained that chickens should not attract urban predators more than a cat or dog. Ms. Myrdal stated that most predators are nocturnal while chickens are active during the day, and that enclosing chickens at night should prevent predators from accessing them.

Ms. Myrdal addressed another final common concern in which the egg-laying potential of chickens is limited to only a few years and concerns with what to do with chickens after that period. Ms. Myrdal explained that hens do outlive their ability to produce eggs but that there are options to do after that period including: slaughtering and processing options in the region, donating to local producers, or choosing to keep birds as companion animals regardless of egg production.

### **3(b). Urban Chickens Blueprint**

Ms. Oxendahl informed the Commission that hundreds of local jurisdictions in the United States, including approximately twenty in Minnesota, that allow backyard chicken keeping. Ms. Oxendahl listed a number of common issues addressed in local ordinances on urban chickens including: number of birds permitted per household, permit and fee processes, regulation of roosters, enclosure and containment restrictions, location and setback restrictions, written consent by neighbors, and slaughtering restrictions. Ms. Oxendahl stated that within the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area, chicken keeping is permitted in Cass County, Clay County as an accessory use, and Fargo with conditions.

Ms. Oxendahl explained the framework for evaluating urban chickens including health, environment, economic, and social aspects. Ms. Oxendahl explained a health benefit of urban chicken includes an increased access to nutritious food source, while a concern would be disease risk. Ms. Oxendahl stated that environmental benefits include keeping yards clean of bugs, pests, and weeds, utilizing chicken droppings as fertilizer, and reducing overall food waste, while a concern may be the attraction of unwanted predators. Ms. Oxendahl explained that economic benefits include possible financial relief for low-income families and the potential for individuals to sell backyard chicken eggs, while concerns may be cost of permitting fees and costs associated with setting up a coop along with concerns about disposal of dead birds. Ms. Oxendahl stated that social benefits include regarding chickens as companion animals and increasing awareness of the food cycle, while concerns may include noise, odor, visual worries, and difficulty in keeping chickens in winter.

Ms. Oxendahl addressed further concerns for backyard chickens including: disease, pest attraction, predator attraction, costs to low-income families, disposal, noise, smell, and winter keeping. Ms. Mongeau provided additional information on animal disposal services offered by North Dakota State University.

Ms. Oxendahl informed the Commission that several regional jurisdictions allow backyard chicken keeping including: Duluth, MN, Lincoln, NE, Rochester, MN, and Sioux Falls, SD. Ms. Oxendahl stated that an additional jurisdiction, Mankato, MN, passed a temporary ordinance in 2010 allowing urban chicken keeping but no one applied during the two-year period and the ordinance expired. Ms. Oxendahl stated that Bismarck, ND and Grand Forks, ND do not allow backyard chickens.

### **3(c). Public Input**

Ryan Pierson, dietetic intern for Fargo Cass Public Health, provided a written statement on behalf of Laura Devick. Ms. Devick stated that for the past six year, her family has enjoyed keeping backyard chickens and have shared the experience with friends, neighbors, and extended family. Ms. Devick explained that the benefits include: utilizing droppings as a high-nitrogen fertilizer, companion animals with unique personalities, fresh eggs, building responsibility and stewardship, and being able to feed food waste to the chickens. Ms. Devick voiced support for an ordinance allowing backyard chickens for those residents who would want them.

Cole Hooey, north Fargo resident, stated that he and his wife had spoken of having chickens but were concerned about the gray area on whether chickens are allowed or not. Mr. Hooey stated that he would like there to be a clearer answer on whether urban chickens are allowed. Mr. Hooey explained it would also be better to think of chickens along the same lines as other companion animals such as cats or dogs.

Erin Mayer stated that she has done research on raising chickens as humanely as possible and has begun raising three chickens earlier in the summer. Ms. Mayer gave an account of all the details involved in raising chickens and the practices she utilized.

Donna Hinton of Fargo gave an account of an autistic family member who had connected with a chicken and how it helped the family member to overcome some of their social anxieties. Ms. Hinton stated that it was her belief that chickens have strong benefits as companion animals.

Rick Hall stated that he and his wife, Verna Kragnes, are CSA farmers and have been farming for more than 25 years. Mr. Hall stated that many children would come to his farm on educational trips and that chickens were an important component of those trips. Mr. Hall explained that he and his wife also worked with people with disabilities and that chickens were a great way to connect to those people. Mr. Hall stated that, as a Moorhead resident, he would love to be able to have backyard chickens to continue that tradition.

Kathy Gohl of Fargo stated that she had strong reservations about the allowance of urban chickens. Ms. Gohl stated that she had a neighbor who had chickens and that on one occasion, the chickens had gotten out of their coops and had roamed on her property. Ms. Gohl also stated concerns that chickens attract pests and predators such as chicken hawks. Ms. Gohl expressed her views that regulating chickens could be difficult.

### **3(d). Commission Discussion**

Mr. Evert stated that he appreciated all of the input and discussion from the public. Mr. Evert asked if chickens need both light and darkness and whether lights inside chicken coops should have timers or not. Tyne Stormo and Ben Kragnes of Kragnes Farms stated that it was good to have a timer for light and that chickens do indeed require both light and dark.

Mr. Rasmussen asked how many residents have chickens in Fargo. Ms. Lipetzky answered that there currently is no permitting process and that she wasn't sure how many families in the Fargo-area have backyard chickens.

Mr. Rasmussen stated this was the right venue to discuss the issues brought up during the public input and that the jurisdictions would need to consider the impacts allow backyard chickens. Ms. Baumgardner iterated Mr. Rasmussen's comments that this was the right process.

Ms. Mongeau expressed that the Commission may need to be more proactive in dealing with continued gray areas concerning the allowance of urban chickens.

Mr. Rasmussen stated that discussion of urban chickens would continue at the next Commission meeting to allow for more comments from absent members.

### **4. 2016 Communications Plan**

Ms. Myrdal informed the Commission that NDSU students would be helping to develop the 2016 Communication Plan and that Commission members could be expected to be contacted in the coming weeks.

### **5. Online Community Input**

Ms. Lipetzky explained that community members who may not be able to attend Commission meetings are able to submit public comments through the City of Fargo Let's Eat Local website. Ms. Lipetzky stated that two public comments had been received between September and October 2015. Ms. Lipetzky stated that one commenter, an NDSU student studying dietetics, would like to see a small, student-run grocery store to address the lack of food options in downtown Fargo. Ms. Lipetzky stated that another commenter was interested in winter vegetable production and other local production opportunities.

## **6. Public Comment Opportunity**

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

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

Mr. Rasmussen asked for the Commission and the Steering Committee to share any additional updates.

## **8. 2016 Commission Chair Appointment**

Mr. Altenburg stated that earlier in 2015, the Commission approved a rotation schedule determining the Commission Chair and alternate amongst jurisdictions, with the Commission Chair rotated annually amongst jurisdictions. Mr. Altenburg explained that it had been recommended to the Steering Committee to allow for Chair Durand to continue on as Chair for 2016. Mr. Altenburg stated that this would be permissible according to the stipulations of the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) which established the Commission.

A motion to approve the reappointment of Ms. Durand as Commission Chair and Mr. Rasmussen as alternate for 2016 was made by Mr. Evert and seconded by Mr. Aasness. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

## **9. Commission Action Steps**

Ms. Myrdal stated that the next meeting would be held on January 13, 2016 and that the 2016 schedule was included in each of the packets.

Mr. Rasmussen adjourned the meeting at 11:51 AM.