

**11th Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
November 9th, 2016
Fargo Commission Chambers**

Members Present:

Heidi Durand, Moorhead City Council, Chair
Arland Rasmussen, Cass County Commission
Mike Thorstad, West Fargo City Commission
Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council
Jessica Arneson, At-Large Member
Jon Evert, At-Large Member
Mindy Grant, At-Large Member
Stephanie Reynolds, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

Jenny Mongeau, Clay County Commission
John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Dana Rieth, At-Large Member

Others Present:

Megan Myrdal, Project Coordinator
Kim Lipetzky, Fargo Cass Public Health
Noelle Harden, University of Minnesota Extension
Abby Gold, Cass Clay Food Systems Initiative
Deb Haugen, Cass Clay Food Systems Initiative
Joleen Baker, Cass Clay Food Systems Initiative
Kellie Kish, City of Minneapolis Recycling Coordinator (via WebEx)
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

Ms. Myrdal asked to add agenda item 4(c) 'Take Jack Back' to the overall agenda.

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

1(b). Review and Action on Minutes from September 14, 2016

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

2. Commission Check-In

Chair Durand informed the Commission that members would have an opportunity to give an update on any news or events happening in the community.

Ms. Haugen informed the Commission that an additional community garden will be developed in Moorhead in 2017. She stated that she didn't have any additional specifics as to where it would be located.

Ms. Baker informed the Commission that she had recently returned from San Diego where she represented the Northern Small Farm Alliance at an event there. She stated that she was excited to bring back knowledge on how better to engage with other community organizations and how to work with other small agricultural producers.

Ms. Harden stated that the University of Minnesota Extension would be holding an event on November 15 called 'Farm to Institution MythBusters' which would discuss how to help school districts, hospitals, and other institutions interested in purchasing local food. She explained that food safety and regulations would also be topics of discussion.

Ms. Grant explained that the FARRMS/Growing Together grant just started its first session of its Farm Beginnings course. She stated that 20 participants from 16 area farms had signed up.

Jessica Arneson arrived at 10:37 AM.

3. Municipal Composting Education

Ms. Reynolds provide the Commission information and an overview on municipal composting.

Ms. Reynolds stated that 30 to 40 percent of all municipal solid waste comes from organics and that composting can help to reduce methane emissions from landfills and reduce leachate which may seep into the ground. She iterated that composting creates a soil amendment that can be used for gardening and flowerbeds and that the soil amendment increases organic matter, improves drainage and moisture infiltration rates, reduces soil erosion and runoff, improves moisture holding capacity, and aids in the proliferation of beneficial microbes.

Ms. Reynolds stated that there are three types of municipal composting: yard waste, source separated organics (SSO), and municipal solid waste (MSW) compost. She stated that yard waste includes grass clippings, leaves, and garden/flowerbed waste (with food waste not allowed); SSO includes organics such as food and yard waste collected separately from other municipal solid waste material; and MSW compost includes organics separated at a dirty materials recovery facility (MRF), transfer station, or landfill.

Ms. Reynolds informed the Commission that the collection of food waste and yard waste can happen through either residential drop-off sites or curbside pick-ups and that services are separate for SSO. She stated that materials such as ashes, animal waste, cigarettes, milk cartons, diapers, and microwave popcorn bags are not considered organic materials. She explained that mixing food and yard waste occurs on a clay, hard-packed, or all-weather surface and provided the Commission an example of a hoop house and tar pad in Becker, Minnesota. She iterated that mixing includes two-parts food waste to one-part yard waste and that waste materials are placed into lines called windrows.

Ms. Reynolds explained that the moisture content for composting needs to be 60 percent to support the life of microorganisms and bacteria, and to maintain a temperature of 131 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 days. She stated that this is called the Process to Further Reduce Pathogens (PFRP) and that windrows need to be turned every three to five days during this period. She explained that materials are composted within six to eight months. She stated that after this period, compost is screened for unwanted material such as plastics, tested for pollutants,

nutrient content and carbon, and finally distributed for landscaping, residential gardening, construction projects, and farm land.

Ms. Reynolds concluded that the average tonnage of yard waste in Moorhead from 2011 to 2015 was 2,709 tons and the average for Fargo from 2014 to 2015 was 8,993 tons. She stated that the FM area has the potential to divert 23,404 tons of food waste per year.

Chair Durand asked if it was known how much the cities were actually composting or if there were any efforts to increase composting. Ms. Reynolds answered that the City of Fargo does yard composting only and the City of Moorhead and Clay County may be interested in pursuing municipal composting initiatives.

Terry Ludlum, Director of the Solid Waste Department in Fargo, stated that Ms. Reynolds was on point in that it is beneficial to limit food waste from going to a landfill in order to limit methane emissions. However, he stated that since 2001, the City of Fargo has been very aggressive in capturing methane to use as a renewable energy source and that, with previous investments, Fargo earns about \$500,000 a year from capturing efforts. He stated that there were two ways of looking at the issue on whether a jurisdiction should focus on limiting methane or try to capture methane to use as an energy source. He stated that the City of Fargo is one of about 10 cities in the nation capturing methane for energy needs.

Chair Durand asked if there were any certified organic efforts for municipal composting. Ms. Reynolds stated she was unaware of any such efforts in the country.

Chair Durand stated it may be good to take a look to see and verify what efforts are being made with regard to municipal composting. Mr. Evert said there may be more of an incentive to pursue municipal composting in the City of Moorhead and Clay County as there currently are no efforts to try to recapture methane as a renewable energy source. Ms. Gold stated that it may be possible to pursue both options, both methane recapture and composting.

4a. Minneapolis Municipal Composting Program

Kellie Kish, Recycling Coordinator for the City of Minneapolis, provided the Commission information on the municipal composting program in Minneapolis.

Ms. Kish began by saying that program began as a neighborhood pilot project for source separated organics (SSO) in 2008 which tested a free “opt-in” system for participants, determined participation levels, and looked at the effectiveness of public outreach methods and route design and efficiencies. She explained that after the pilot project, a consultant study on source separated organics was completed in 2013 to further study costs for collection, participation rates, greenhouse gas emissions, and obstacles and barriers to going citywide. She explained that a number of collection methods were studied including commingled collection (SSO and yard waste placed together in one cart) and co-collection (SSO placed in a bag and put in the same cart as yard waste).

Ms. Kish stated that before the citywide municipal composting initiative, seven organics drop-off sites were set up throughout the city to help build awareness of the program and provide education on potential contamination issues. She explained that the number of participants and the amount of organics collected were closely tracked to better understand what the collection needs would be.

Ms. Kish explained that in December 2014, a citywide municipal composting program was approved through adoption of the Mayor’s budget for the City of Minneapolis. She explained

that the program included a robust communication campaign which included: direct mailings, city website information, social media, billboards (still and digital), public access and YouTube promotional videos, Council Member newsletters, refrigerator magnets, neighborhood and community events, and an internal call center. She explained that in 2016, communication efforts focused on areas with lower sign-ups and targeted non-English speaking advertising outlets. She stated that these additional efforts included geo-targeted ads, mobile ads, advertising at bus stops, door-to-door information, and radio ads.

Ms. Kish informed the Commission that as of November 2016, nearly 40 percent of households had signed up for the municipal composting program and that 34,065 small organics carts and 1,025 medium organics carts have been distributed. She further explained that nearly 1,400 residents switched to smaller garbage carts since the organics program roll-out began.

Ms. Kish explained a couple of recommendations for starting an organics recycling program. She explained that municipalities first need to contract with a permitted composting facility to process organics (smaller scale facilities less than 120 cubic yards do not require a permit in Minnesota). After that, she explained that contracts with haulers to collect organics need to be drawn up and that they include required metrics for volume needs. She stated that pilot programs are beneficial in getting early adopters on board so they can help promote and expand a municipal composting program. Finally, she explained that it is vital to develop effective educational materials and methods to distribute information to residents and to monitor the quality of material collected.

Ms. Kish concluded by explaining that planning ahead of time is extremely important when starting an organics recycling program. She said that when moving to a citywide program, select a program manager and set realist timelines for necessary tasks such as contracting with vendors, purchasing trucks and carts, hiring and training of collection crews and office staff, timing and type of educational materials, and to not be discouraged if not a lot of people sign up initially since it will be a brand new concept for many people.

Ms. Kish stated that with regard to organic composting in the previous presentation, the United States Composting Council is currently working on that issue. She stated that the biggest issue comes from yard waste and that it is difficult to know whether chemicals were used on a yard. She stated that this is also an issue for kitchen scraps, whether they are from residential or commercial kitchens.

Ms. Gold asked whether there was any data or information on the number of businesses converting to compostable containers or packaging materials. Ms. Kish stated that the Green to Go Ordinance, enforced by the Minneapolis Health Department, is a phased-in ordinance with the first phase banning the use of expanded polystyrene and styrofoam. She stated that the ordinance requires all food containers be reusable, refillable, recyclable, or compostable, with the compostable component going into effect in April 2017.

4b. Local Input: Red River Market/Zero Waste Initiative

Joe Burgum from Folkways provided information to the Commission on the Red River Market's Zero Waste Initiative.

Mr. Burgum explained that there are five separate bins for waste at the Red River Market: landfill, disposable plastic, recyclable materials, food waste, and liquid. He stated that 120 people had filled out a survey on the market's Zero Waste Initiative and that he was interested to see comments from people who could now better visualize the waste stream and what items were going to the landfill. He

stated that the Red River Market is the only organization he is aware of that is working on this initiative.

Mr. Burgum stated that his goal for next year is to start tracking metrics for weight to better understand how much waste is going into each of the bins. He also explained that he hopes to phase out the use of styrofoam containers.

Mr. Burgum informed the Commission that Folkways is currently conducting a waste audit to determine daily/weekly waste outputs by businesses abutting the alley between Roberts Street and Broadway in Fargo. He explained that the purpose of this study is to see if there may be any recommendations to consolidate waste disposal practices, such as a central trash compactor. He stated that it would be important to try to divert food waste from a trash compactor so that it could be better utilized for composting needs and to lessen potential odors.

Chair Durand asked what type of outreach Mr. Burgum would like to do with regard to the zero waste efforts he discussed. Mr. Burgum explained that his organization is open to sharing any information with the community or helping to develop a pilot program. He stated that he saw higher education institutions as thought leaders and the best locations to expand zero waste initiatives. He said he was surprised that the Red River Market was the first to implement any type of zero waste initiatives.

Mr. Burgum concluded by saying that a potential barrier could be the prohibition of certain waste materials across state lines and explained he would like to not have this be a barrier to any sort of future pilot program.

4c. Take Jack Back

Maggie Gruber from the Clay County Solid Waste Department provided information on the Take Jack Back program.

Ms. Gruber explained that the program began in 2014 as a way to dispose of pumpkins in a manner that diverts them from area landfills. She said the program partnered with Doubting Thomas Farms for disposal and Fuchs Sanitation for collection. She stated that in 2014, 14.5 tons were collected and that in 2015, 23.2 tons were collected and diverted from area landfills.

Ms. Gruber explained that there are 15 drop-off locations throughout Clay County; nine dumpsters provided by Fuchs Sanitation and seven carts provided by the county. She stated that collection of pumpkins in 2016 started on November 1 and runs through November 14.

Ms. Gruber stated that pumpkins are mixed with hay at Doubting Thomas Farms to turn into compost. She stated that compost is used by Serenity Assisted Living charity garden and that NDSU conducts research on the compost.

5. Municipal Composting Blueprint

Ms. Baker informed the Commission that the Steering Committee had developed a new urban agriculture blueprint examining municipal composting. She stated that there are over seven large cities and states that have commercial food waste disposal bans, meaning that restaurants, hotels, hospitals, and other large organizations have to divert their food waste from the landfill to composting facilities. She provided additional information from a Concordia College 2014 food waste study that found that 220 to 270 pounds of food can be wasted per day. She stated that, because food waste programs generally do not create a profit, private companies such as Full Circle Organics Recycling Cooperative can take over municipal composting in a community.

Ms. Baker explained several tables in the blueprint including what can and cannot be composted, landfills servicing Cass and Clay Counties, composting sites in the areas, and sanitation companies. She also explained a number of health, environmental, social, and economic benefits from municipal composting such as keeping waste out of landfills, creating compost-enriched soil, and raising awareness about the amount of food waste produced as residential, institutional, and commercial levels.

Ms. Grant asked what was the value of the compost that came out of this system and if there was any profit to be made diverting food waste to compost. Ms. Baker responded that it is not a highly profitable venture but could not provide any direct numbers or statistics. Chair Durand stated that it would be a good idea to get a better sense of potential revenues that could be generated. Mr. Ludlum stated that only half of the compost generated is given away and that rest is sold commercially for \$12 cu/yd.

Ms. Haugen asked whether it would be a benefit to have organics separated in the City of Fargo. Mr. Ludlum stated that he didn't believe it would be a benefit as it removes moisture content which is needed to produce methane. He also thought it would double some of the costs and potentially create different waste streams that would disrupt methane production.

Ms. Myrdal iterated that the Steering Committee was aware of the unique situation with the City of Fargo and its methane capturing system and explained that this blueprint may serve better as a guide for the City of Moorhead and Clay is they were to pursue any type of municipal composting initiative.

Ms. Grant stated that she would like to see Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) guidelines integrated and incorporated into the blueprint.

Mr. Thorstad noted that Table 2 of the blueprint should state that the Fargo City Landfill also serves the City of West Fargo.

Chair Durand stated that the Commission would hold off on a vote approving the blueprint until the items discussed had been incorporated.

6. Public Comment Opportunity

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

No public comments were made.

7. Update: Fargo City Commission: Backyard Chickens

Ms. Lipetzky informed the Commission that Fargo Cass Public Health will begin working with the City of Fargo to develop an ordinance allowing backyard chickens in residential areas with specific stipulations as discussed in the previously approved blueprint. She stated that this would be the first step in resolving the issue of backyard chickens and that, once drafted, it would go before the city for three readings and public comment.

8. Commission and Steering Committee Roundtable

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

9. Commission Action Steps

Chair Durand stated that the next meeting would be held on January 11, 2017.

Chair Durand adjourned the meeting at 12:05 PM.