

**42<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the  
Cass Clay Food Commission  
January 11, 2023  
Fargo Commission Chambers**

**Members Present:**

Arlette Preston, Fargo City Commission, Chair  
Heather Nesemeier, Moorhead City Council  
Jace Hellman, Horace City Council (proxy)  
Anna Johnson, At-Large Member  
Joan Kopperud, At-Large Member  
Jeffrey Miller, At-Large Member  
Carin Engler, At-Large Member

**Members Absent:**

Tony Grindberg, Cass County Commission  
Mandy George, West Fargo City Commission  
Paul Krabbenhoft, Clay County Commission  
Dave Steichen, Dilworth City Council  
Jeff York, At-Large Member

**Others Present:**

Michelle Draxten, Fargo Cass Public Health  
Lisa Meader, Fargo Cass Public Health  
Rory Beil, Clay County Public Health  
Rita Ussatis, NDSU Extension  
Noelle Harden, U of M Extension  
Janice Tweet, Great Plains Food Bank  
Zoe Absey, Great Plains Food bank  
Adam Altenburg, Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments

Chair Preston noted that a meeting had been scheduled in the Fargo Commission Chambers for 12:00 and that the Food Commission would need to adjourn several minutes early.

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

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

**1b. Review and Action on Minutes from September 14, 2022 and November 9, 2022.**

A motion to approve the minutes for September and November 2022 was made by Ms. Nesemeier and seconded by Ms. Kopperud. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

**1c. Welcome to New Food Commission Members**

Chair Preston noted that Moorhead City Councilmember Heather Nesemeier, Dilworth City Councilmember Dave Steichen, Horace Community Development Director Jace Hellman, Cass County Commissioner Tony Grindberg, and Clay County Commissioner Paul Krabbenhoft had been appointed to serve on the Food Commission.

## **2. Approve Appointments of At-Large Members**

Mr. Altenburg explained that the steering committee had sought applicants for one new at-large member to replace the opening left by Mr. Utecht. He stated that the steering committee reviewed and recommended the appointment of Carin Engler as a new at-large member. He further noted that current at-large member Jeff York had agreed to serve an additional two-year term.

A motion to approve the appointment of Carin Engler and the reappointment of Jeff York to the Commission was made by Ms. Kopperud and seconded by Ms. Nese-meier. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

## **3. Cass Clay Food Commission Onboarding and Orientation**

Mr. Altenburg provided new Commission members with a brief onboarding and orientation presentation that included a definition and overview of food systems, the beginnings and timeline of the Cass Clay Food Partners initiated in 2010, and the history, purpose, and work of the Cass Clay Food Commission since its formation in March 2015.

## **4. At-Large Commissioner Spotlight**

Mr. Miller provided the meeting's commissioner spotlight and offered insights from his work as Director for the Cass County Soil Conservation District including habitat restoration, working with farmers and ranchers, and the urban conservation program which helps to establish pocket prairies, community gardens, and includes other cost share opportunities for residents and organizations in the area.

## **5. Steering Committee Updates**

Ms. Draxten provided information to the Commission regarding the Regional Food Policy Council Community of Practice program as well as an update on the Food Partners video project. She noted that three additional informational videos had been finalized and were available to preview on the City of Fargo's YouTube channel, each highlighting the work of the Cass Clay Food Partners and local food systems. The videos include: The Impact of Pollinators on our Food System, Eating Fresh and Local on a Budget, and Backyard Chicken Keeping.

## **6. Great Plains Food Bank Pop-Ups Presentation**

Zoe Absey, Community Initiatives Manager for the Great Plains Food Bank, provided information to the Commission regarding its pop-up pantries program that started in September 2022.

Ms. Absey noted that there are recognized challenges in New American, immigrant, and refugee community leaders reaching out and connecting with food assistance resources for their communities in the Fargo-Moorhead area. She explained that to address these challenges, the Great Plains Food Bank put together a program to create low-barrier pop-up distributions with culturally relevant and medically tailored foods. She described the program as including a task force with key individuals from multiple communities that helped to create a program framework including: purchasing products from local international stores, a food voucher system with local markets, and distribution logistics.

Ms. Absey noted that a total of 2,527 households were served between September and November and that 300 food vouchers were distributed through community partners in December. She stated that, while pop-ups were efficient, they are not sustainable and that the next steps included working with existing partners in the community to help spread resources and culturally and medically relevant foods.

## **7. Letter of Support for Multicultural Urban Food and Ecology Initiative**

Ms. Harden informed the Commission about the Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) Urban Agriculture Grant Program, a program designed to promote urban youth agricultural education and urban agriculture community development within urban or areas adjacent to urban areas in Minnesota. She noted that the program funds projects that help non-profit organizations, for-profit businesses, schools, Native American Tribal communities, and local government entities obtain the materials and services necessary to successfully promote urban youth agricultural education and urban agriculture community development.

Ms. Harden stated that in early January 2023, the steering committee was asked to develop a letter of support for the Multicultural Urban Food and Ecology Initiative by the Prairie Rose Agricultural Institute for Research, Innovation, and Education (PRAIRIE). She explained that PRAIRIE is a non-profit that demonstrates regenerative and organic agricultural practices with hands-on education in Clay County. The initiative brought forth by PRAIRIE would work to provide increased access to fresh food in the area, promote efforts that better enable young people and members of the BIPOC community entry into farming, develop demonstration gardens and test sites that utilize season extenders and other best practices, and create pathways for food and ecology careers in the community.

Ms. Harden explained that the initiative would support the Commission's mission and core values and that the steering committee developed a letter of support for the Commission's review and approval.

A motion to sign the letter of support for the Multicultural Urban Food and Ecology Initiative as part of its application for the Minnesota AGRI Urban Grant Program was made by Ms. Nesemeier and seconded by Mr. Miller. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

## **8. Commission Priorities and Processes in 2023**

Ms. Harden explained that at the Commission meeting in November 2022, members took time to discuss priorities and processes for the upcoming year. She stated that after that meeting, the steering committee conferred and reviewed ideas and proposed three priorities for the Commission in 2023:

- Address food needs and opportunities with New American community members
- Understand social determinants of health and actions that may strengthen the local food system
- Examine strategies for community food system development in underserved neighborhoods, in alignment with the FM Wellness Coalition

In addition to these priorities, she stated that the steering committee recommended the implementation of new group processes to strengthen its work and connection with the broader community:

- Host "Coffee with the Food Commission" in each of the five cities in 2023
- Invite commissioners to attend monthly steering committee meetings held the fourth Monday of each month from 1:00 to 2:30 PM at Fargo Cass Public Health
- Host one or more additional community events using the stipend from the Regional Food Policy Council Community of Practice.

A motion to approve the steering committee's recommendations for priorities and group processes in 2023 was made by Mr. Hellman and seconded by Ms. Johnson. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

## **9. Kudos and Community Recognition**

Ms. Draxten highlighted several people and organizations for their work in the community including:

- Rick Hall and Verna Kragnes were the recipients of the 2022 Moorhead Human Rights Award in the Education and Non-Profit category. The award recognizes significant contributions to human rights in the community and was presented by the Moorhead Human Rights Commission on December 12, 2022. Rick and Verna started the New Roots organization to help new farmers become successful and independent in the region.
- Fourteen-year-old Gowri Pillai hosted her 10th annual food drive in Grand Forks. Over the years, she has collected 5,227 pounds of food and \$4,387 for the Great Plains Food Bank. She was named one of the 2021 Hunger Relief Champions of North Dakota by the Great Plains Food Bank.

## **10. Public Comment Opportunity**

Chair Preston informed the Commission that time would be allotted for public comments. She noted that members of the community may also submit comments via a comment link when Commission packets are emailed out.

Verna Kragnes mentioned that there would be a community discussion on the book Reinventing Food Banks and Pantries on March 22 at the Indigenous Association in Fargo. She also noted that First Congregational UCC in Moorhead had received two grants in its work with the Multicultural Food and Ecology Initiative, one through the FM Area Foundation and one through West Central Initiative. She noted that grant funds were being used to purchase additional copies of the mentioned book as well as for pollinator plant and education resources.

## **11. Commission and Steering Committee Roundtable: Community Updates and Meeting Reflections**

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

## **12. Commission Action Steps**

Chair Preston stated that the next Commission meeting would be held on March 8 and noted the schedule for the remainder of 2023. She also mentioned that the next First Fridays event would be held at 701 Eateries in Fargo on February 3 at 8:00 AM.

Chair Preston adjourned the meeting at 11:38 AM.