

**43rd Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
March 8, 2023
Fargo Commission Chambers**

Members Present:

Heather Nesemeier, Moorhead City Council, Interim Chair
Dave Steichen, Dilworth City Council
Joan Kopperud, At-Large Member
Carin Engler, At-Large Member
Jeff York, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

Arlette Preston, Fargo City Commission
Jace Hellman, Horace City Council (proxy)
Tony Grindberg, Cass County Commission
Mandy George, West Fargo City Commission
Paul Krabbenhoft, Clay County Commission
Anna Johnson, At-Large Member
Jeffrey Miller, At-Large Member

Others Present:

Michelle Draxten, Fargo Cass Public Health
Rory Beil, Clay County Public Health
Noelle Harden, U of M Extension
Janice Tweet, Great Plains Food Bank
Erika Franck, Clay County Planning and Zoning
Deb Haugen, Cass Clay Food Partners
Ben Lien, Northwest and Central Minnesota Office of Senator Klobuchar
Emily Reno, Creating Community Consulting/Mezclada
Mike Zastoupil, Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Don Kinzler, NDSU Extension, Cass County
Adam Altenburg, Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments

A quorum was not present at the meeting. Non-actionable items were presented as information to the Commission and no action was taken on any items.

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. Kopperud and seconded by Ms. Engler. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from January 11, 2023.

No action was taken.

2. Commission Introductions

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

3. 2023 Farm Bill Update

Ben Lien, with the Northwest and Central Minnesota Office of Senator Klobuchar, provided Commissioner members with a brief update on the 2023 Farm Bill process.

Mr. Lien explained that Senator Hoeven, Senator Smith, and Senator Klobuchar are each on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry which oversees the farm bill process. He noted the biggest portion of the bill is the nutrition title, which makes up about 80 percent of the bill's spending and helps manage federal nutrition assistance programs. Other key points of negotiation include crop insurance, rural development, research, and conservation.

4. West Central Minnesota Regional Food Systems Plan Update

Emily Reno, project lead with Creating Community Consulting/Mezclada, and Mike Zastoupil, Agricultural and Food Systems Planner with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, provided an update on the West Central Minnesota Regional Food Systems Plan.

Mr. Zastoupil explained that the project kicked off in November 2022 and that plan's purpose is to engage community stakeholders in improving their local food system, supply chains, economies, food producer capacity, and provide best practices for environmental sustainability. He noted that the plan covers six counties: Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin in Minnesota; and additional outreach to Cass and Richland counties in North Dakota.

Ms. Reno stated that as part of the plan's initial outreach, the project team held three community asset mapping input meetings in November and December to better understand projects, resources, and existing food infrastructure in the region. These sessions included meetings with farmers and local food producers, distributors, co-ops, food shelves, farmers markets, food advocates, and other members of the public. She explained that the project team was working on the next phases of the plan which include a 15-question survey and preparations for online and in-person community engagement events in the spring and summer. She noted that the plan's expected completion date was August 2023.

5. North Dakota and Minnesota Legislative Updates

Ms. Tweet provided the Commission updates on the current legislative sessions in both North Dakota and Minnesota. She noted details and the status of two house bills in North Dakota on school lunch appropriation and school lunch policy, and two Minnesota house/senate files regarding free school lunch and breakfast and food shelf appropriation.

6. Great Plains Food Bank Statistics Update

Ms. Tweet provided information on 2023 statistics from the Great Plains Food Bank. She explained that the food bank has 193 partner agencies across 100 communities, 52 of which are in Cass and Clay counties. She noted that 138,439 individuals were served in 2023, 34 percent were children, and 15 percent were seniors. She further noted that a total of 11,895,254 pounds of food was distributed in 2023, and that need increased by 14 percent compared to the year prior while food distribution decreased by 21 percent. She also provided statistics on network changes which saw food sources from donations decrease from 70 percent in 2019 to 56 percent in 2023, with food purchases increasing from 5 percent to 16 percent during the same period.

Ms. Tweet also provided the Commission information regarding Hunger on the Plains 2023, a hunger study that is conducted every four years to capture neighbor experience and partner agency capacity. One of the keynotes from the study is transportation as a barrier to accessing food, with one in three respondents noting that they did not have access to a vehicle that runs and 45 percent of respondents having trouble accessing free meals and groceries because they didn't have access to a car or public transit or had difficulty in paying for gasoline.

Ms. Tweet noted that there would be a community meeting on the hunger study on March 14 at 2:00 PM and that a registration link could be found online at the United Way of Cass-Clay.

7. Cass Clay Food Partners Resource Review

Mr. Altenburg explained that in the past eight years, the Cass Clay Food Partners had developed nearly two dozen resource documents highlighting urban agriculture, food access, sustainability, and other food systems topic areas relevant to the Fargo-Moorhead area. He noted that these documents have included blueprints, which look at food systems from a land development code perspective; and issue briefs and snapshots, which provide more of an overview of an issue the community may have seen locally.

Mr. Altenburg provided a brief overview of two original blueprints, Backyard Chickens and Community Gardens, and noted how they had been utilized or implemented. He noted that the steering committee would likely be reviewing additional resources at future Commission meetings.

8. Steering Committee Updates

Ms. Draxten provided information regarding the Food Partners video project, with a new video on gleaning and food insecurity available in the coming days. She noted that this was the fifth and final video in addition to previous videos for The Impact of Pollinators on our Food System, Eating Fresh and Local on a Budget, Backyard Chicken Keeping, and a general informational video on the Cass Clay Food Partners and food systems. She also provided a recap on the Food Partner's first Coffee with the Commission event that was held at Twenty Below Coffee on February 28.

9. Kudos and Community Recognition

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

- The MHS Career Academy is offering culinary arts courses to educate students about the career possibilities in the food industry. The culinary arts program is intended as a sampler to allow students to try their hands at a profession they may not have previously considered. Students learn food safety and sanitation, knife skills, meal assembly, flavor profiles, and more. The program is pioneered by Culinary Instructor Johanna Heigaard and the Chair of the Family and Consumer Science Department Cheryl Adams.
- NDSU Extension horticulturist Don Kinzler and The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead reporter John Lamb began Growing Together: A Gardening Podcast in late February. The podcast is intended to give novice and experienced gardeners throughout the Midwest insight into making successful gardens grow through conversation, audience questions, and a shared curiosity for plants. Mr. Kinzler provided additional information to the Commission on the podcast.

10. Public Comment Opportunity

Interim Chair Nesemeier 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.

No comments were made.

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

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

12. Commission Action Steps

Interim Chair Nesemeier stated that the next Commission meeting would be held on May 10, 2023. She also mentioned that the next First Fridays event would be held at 701 Eateries in Fargo on April 7 at 8:00 AM and that the next Coffee with the Commission event would be held at Roasted Rail Coffee House in Dilworth on April 12 at 4:00 PM.

Interim Chair Nesemeier adjourned the meeting at 11:58 AM.