

**44th Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
May 10, 2023
Fargo Commission Chambers**

Members Present:

Arlette Preston, Fargo City Commission, Chair
Heather Nesemeier, Moorhead City Council
Tony Grindberg, Cass County Commission
Paul Krabbenhoft, Clay County Commission
Dave Steichen, Dilworth City Council
Joan Kopperud, At-Large Member
Carin Engler, At-Large Member
Jeff York, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

Jace Hellman, Horace City Council (proxy)
Mandy George, West Fargo City 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
Chandler Esslinger, Fargo Cass Public Health
Eric Hegg, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Adam Altenburg, Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments
Ben Griffith, Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments

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 Mr. York. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from January 11, 2023 & March 8, 2023.

A motion to approve the minutes for January and March 2023 was made by Ms. Kopperud and seconded by Ms. Engler. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

2. Commission Introductions

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

3. Social Determinants of Health

Chandler Esslinger, Community Liaison with Fargo Cass Public Health, provided Commissioner members with an informational presentation about social determinants of health and their relationship to food insecurity.

Ms. Esslinger explained that social determinants of health are conditions in the environment where people are born, live, and work that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. She noted that examples include safe housing, transportation, education, job opportunities, access to nutritious foods and physical activity, language and literacy skills, discrimination, and violence.

Ms. Esslinger informed the Commission that food insecurity is defined as a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food. She noted that, in 2020, 13.8 million households were food insecure at some time during the year. She stated that food insecurity does not necessarily cause hunger, but hunger is a possible outcome of food insecurity. and

Ms. Esslinger explained that some of the root causes of food insecurity are overlapping institutional and systemic disparities like poverty, inequity, racial injustice, lack of affordable housing, social isolation, location, and transportation. She noted that food-insecure adults and children have higher rates of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, and are at high risk for chronic diseases. She also noted that hungry children are sick more often and can suffer from physical, developmental, and cognitive impairments, resulting in lower academic achievement than that of their peers. She concluded by noting that food insecurity can be addressed and mitigated through advocacy, political will, and policy interventions.

4. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) Garden Initiative

Eric Hegg, Refugee Agriculture Partnership Program Coordinator for LIRS, provided an overview of their garden initiative program and work to date.

Mr. Hegg stated that the objective of the Refugee Agriculture Partnership Program is to encourage the development of agricultural and food systems and improve the livelihoods of refugee families resettled in the United States. He noted that their primary focus is the production of market fresh produce for consumption or sale but that other focus areas include food safety, food preservation, season extenders, floriculture, and seed saving. He further noted that participants of the program gain access to growing space, technical support, educational opportunities, increased access to fresh produce, and access to culturally significant foods.

Mr. Hegg informed the Commission that LIRS, in partnership with NDSU Extension and Growing Together Community Gardens, had recently acquired a 0.9-acre plot at Village West Park with the help and assistance of the Fargo Park Board and Fargo Parks staff. He also explained that more than \$800 of vegetable seeds had also been donated. He noted that members of the community are welcome to assist with the garden initiative every Sunday from 3:00 to 5:00 PM, and that produce could be found at the GTCG Market on Tuesday from 2:00 to 6:00 PM from August to September.

5. 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 Composting and Farmers Markets and Produce Stands, and noted how they had been utilized or implemented.

6. Steering Committee Updates

Ms. Draxten provided information to the Commission regarding the Regional Food Policy Council Community of Practice program as well as information regarding the Food Partners video project and its final video on gleaning and food insecurity. She noted that this was the last 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 Coffee with the Commission event that was held at Roasted Rail Coffee House in Dilworth on April 12.

7. Kudos and Community Recognition

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

- The 50th annual Women of the Year event, which was held on April 24, included nominees with passion, service, and significant achievements. Pastor Megan Tee of West Fargo Eats and Lutheran Church of the Cross was one of this year's nominees. West Fargo Eats is a food share alliance between Lutheran Church of the Cross, Gate City Bank, YWCA Cass Clay, and Great Plains Food Bank, which offers a shopping-style experience bringing empowerment, respect, and dignity to individuals and families experiencing food insecurity. In-person shopping and grocery pick-up options are available with specific information listed on their website. In 2023 alone, West Fargo Eats served over 2,500 individuals, 800 households, and 950 children, and additionally provided over 53,000 meals and 34,000 pounds of food.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. Commission Action Steps

Chair Preston stated that the next Commission meeting would be held on September 13, 2023. She also mentioned that the next First Fridays event would be held at 701 Eateries in Fargo on June 2 at 8:00 AM and that the next Coffee with the Commission event would be held on a date and time to be determined.

Chair Preston adjourned the meeting at 11:50 AM.