

**54th Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
May 14, 2025
Metro COG Conference Room**

Members Present:

Heather Nesemeier, Moorhead City Council, Chair
Tim Flakoll, Cass County Commission
Paul Krabbenhoft, Clay County Commission
Amy Zundel, West Fargo City Commission
Paul Hankel, Horace City Council (proxy)
Amber Borah, Dilworth City Council
John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Anna Johnson, At-Large Member
Joan Kopperud, At-Large Member
Carin Engler, At-Large Member
Jeff York, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

Amber Borah, Dilworth City Council
Jeffrey Miller, At-Large Member

Others Present:

Cheryl Stetz, Fargo Cass Public Health
Rory Beil, Clay County Public Health
Noelle Harden, U of M Extension
Jillian Patrie, U of M Extension
Janice Tweet, Great Plains Food Bank
Erika Franck, Clay County Planning and Zoning
Eric Hegg, Global Refuge
Chelsi Bormann, West Fargo Eats
Ron Ellingson, Peace Lutheran Church Food Pantry
Shania Alder, REACH
Chandler Esslinger, FM Coalition to End Homelessness
Patrick Hollister, PartnerShip 4 Health
Adam Altenburg, Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments
Karissa Pavek, 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. Kopperud and seconded by Ms. Johnson. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from March 12, 2025

A motion to approve the minutes for March 2025 was made by Ms. Zundel and seconded by Mr. Strand. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

2. Commission Introductions

Chair Nesemeier led the Commission and steering committee members in a brief round of introductions.

3. Commission and Steering Committee Roundtable

Chair Nesemeier asked for the Commission and the steering committee to share comments on news and updates from their communities.

4. Cass Clay Connect

Ms. Harden and Mr. Altenburg a new agenda item, the Cass Clay Connect. Ms. Harden explained that this was a new item that featured news and updates from the steering committee. Items that were shared included:

- Food Access: Links to the Great Plains Food Bank Food Assistance Map and FM area community garden and farmers market lists
- Urban Agriculture: Information on the 2025 One Vegetable One Community, including public events in Moorhead, Barnesville, and Hawley
- Outreach and Education: U of M Extension would be hosting Gardening Field Days at Probstfield Farm from May to August
- Economic Development: Nova Eatery and Supper Club opens in downtown Fargo, updates on North Dakota's cottage food law, and insights from farmers and NDSU Extension on the impacts of tariffs on local farmers
- Food Infrastructure: Subscription options available through the Red River Harvest Cooperative and information on impacts of federal funding cuts to the North Central Regional Food Business Center and other food system projects in the area

Mr. Krabbenhoft expressed his desire for the Commission to address several items discussed, including tariff impacts and impacts on federal funding cuts on SNAP-Ed and other programs. Mr. Flakoll indicated that Commission members have the option to opt in or opt out of being signatories, if desired.

A motion for the steering committee to create a draft letter to state officials addressing federal funding cuts to food programs, including data on local impacts on child nutrition, was made by Mr. Krabbenhoft and seconded by Mr. Strand. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

5. Food Access 101

Ms. Tweet provided a brief informational overview of food access from the Great Plains Food Bank. She stated that the Great Plains Food Bank has three goals: ending hunger today by filling immediate needs, ending hunger tomorrow by tackling the root causes of hunger, and ending hunger for good by constructing a future where hunger doesn't exist. She informed the Commission that the Great Plains Food Bank operates nine programs to recover and distribute food, with over 2,000 volunteers and 200 partner food pantries, shelters, and soup kitchens in North Dakota and Clay County. She stated that more than 100,000 individuals are served each year. In 2024, 5.5 million pounds of food were distributed, which helped to prepare 4.6 million meals and 289,000 congregate meals. Additionally, 9.8 percent of individuals in the Great Plains Food Bank service area were food insecure, with 9.5 percent of individuals in Cass County and 11.7 percent of individuals in Clay County being food insecure.

6. Food Pantry Experience Panel

Mr. Beil led a panel discussion with area food pantry professionals, including Chelsi Bormann of West Fargo Eats, Ron Ellingson of Peace Lutheran Church Food Pantry, and Shania Alder of REACH. Each shared information on the operations of their food pantries, intake processes, the variety of food and on-food items available, and the different ways clients can receive their food.

7. Homelessness and Hunger

Chandler Esslinger, Director of the FM Coalition to End Homelessness, provided the Commission with information regarding homelessness and hunger in the FM area.

Ms. Esslinger stated that 1,050 people are homeless on any given night in the community, a five percent increase since 2023. She explained that this includes people who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including those whose residence is a shelter or transitional housing program, those living in unstable and non-permanent situations, and those forced to stay temporarily with family members because they have no other place to stay. She informed the Commission on the five pillars of the homelessness response system, including: outreach and coordinated entry, emergency shelters, supportive housing and rapid rehousing, affordable housing and stabilization, and homelessness prevention and diversion. She also provided information on a newly formed Cass Clay Interagency Council on Homelessness that is intended to offer a regional framework rooted in state and federal best practices in ending homelessness.

8. Public Comment Opportunity

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.

Mr. Altenburg informed the Commission that Janice Tweet, current chair of the steering committee, has accepted a new position and would be stepping down from her role. Commissioners and steering committee members thanked Ms. Tweet for her work and dedication to the Cass Clay Food Partners.

9. Future Meetings and Commission Action Steps

Chair Nesemeier stated that the next Commission meeting would be held on September 10. She noted that the next steering committee meeting would be May 27 at Metro COG and that Commissioners and others were welcome to attend. She also noted that the next Food Action Network monthly newsletter would be emailed on June 6 and that people could visit the Cass Clay Food Partners Facebook page to sign up to receive those.

Chair Nesemeier adjourned the meeting at 11:57 AM.