

**9th Meeting of the
Cass-Clay Food Systems Advisory Commission
July 13th, 2016
Fargo Commission Chambers**

Members Present:

Heidi Durand, Moorhead City Council, Chair
Arland Rasmussen, Cass County Commission
Mike Thorstad, West Fargo City Commission
Jenny Mongeau, Clay County 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
Dana Rieth, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

None

Others Present:

Kim Lipetzky, Fargo Cass Public Health
Hali Durand, Cass County Planning Office
Abby Gold, NDSU Extension (joint appointment with U of M)
Rita Ussatis, NDSU Extension
Joleen Baker, Cass-Clay Food Systems Initiative
Molly Soeby, Town Square Farmer's Market
Caryl Lester, Town Square Farmer's Market
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

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

1(b). Review and Action on Minutes from May 11, 2016

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

2. Approve Appointment of New At-Large Member – Mindy Grant de Herrera

Chair Durand stated, per information provided in the packet, that in addition to the six jurisdiction members, the Joint Powers Agreement for the Commission makes the provision for an additional five at-large members to serve on the Commission. It is the intent that at-large members will bring additional and varied expertise to the Commission as it relates to food systems issues. At-large members are to be initially vetted by the Steering Committee before being brought to a vote by the Commission. Each at-large member will serve a two-year term.

In May, Janet Paul informed the Steering Committee that she had taken a new position as Director of Dining Services at the University of Northern Iowa and would step down from the Commission. The Steering Committee sought new applicants for a new at-large member from May 20 through June 17. In that time, the Steering Committee received three applications and resumes. Following the June 17 deadline, each candidate was ranked according to expertise, how they would fill potential gaps as they relate to food systems issues, time commitment, and advocacy.

With the completion of this process, the Steering Committee recommends the appointment of Mindy Grant for new at-large member to the Commission.

A motion to approve the appointment of Mindy Grant to the Commission was made by Mr. Evert and seconded by Mr. Aasness. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

3. Season Extension Blueprint

Ms. Lipetzky reminded the Commission that at the May 2016 meeting, Ms. Pirozhkov had provided information on the draft blueprint for season extenders which includes hoop houses, greenhouses, and other structures. Ms. Lipetzky stated that, based on input received by the Commission at the last meeting, Ms. Pirozhkov included additional sections in the draft blueprint including information on materials and construction of season extension structures and additional jurisdictional considerations as they relate to current ordinances and codes.

A motion to approve the season extension blueprint was made by Mr. Rasmussen and seconded by Mr. Aasness. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

4(a). Farmers Markets Education

Molly Soeby and Caryl Lester from Town Square Farmer's Market in Grand Forks provided the Commission information on the city's downtown farmers market. Ms. Soeby stated that she is involved in the farmers market through Extension Services and through her involvement through the Park Board. Ms. Soeby and Ms. Lester explained that they began collaborating several years' prior by working on several grants for the market and securing several EBT machines.

Ms. Lester stated that the Town Square Farmer's Market began in 2002 and that there are between 30 and 45 vendors every Saturday throughout the season. Ms. Lester explained that this year, the market has begun the Fork's Well Fed Program for SNAP/WIC benefit recipients. Ms. Lester explained that this grant program provides fresh produce, as well as education on proper storage and preparation, for 30 families at no cost.

Ms. Soeby informed the Commission that the market is preparing to launch a mobile trolley food market and online market to better provide fresh produce to the community. Ms. Lester stated that, as part of their mission, non-profits are invited to the market to provide information on their organizations and the services they provide, information which is included on the market's social media pages.

Ms. Soeby and Ms. Lester spoke of a project run through the market called Stable Days Youth Ranch, in which children and young adults learn more about agriculture, art, nature, and horses. Ms. Lester explained that this is a cost-free program geared towards all kids and that the program had 92 participants during its previous session. Ms. Lester explained that in tandem with the youth ranch is a garden program called the Green Thumb Club. Ms. Lester stated that children and young adults typically work in half hour increments on the garden and that produce is then donated to local area food pantries and other participating entities. Ms. Lester also

informed the Commission of a new program called the Farmer's Markets Kids Club which focuses on additional agriculture-based projects and raising awareness of local foods and active, healthy living.

Ms. Soeby and Ms. Lester explained that an emerging issue is producers stating that there is a lack of support in smaller scale agriculture. Ms. Lester stated that a new program the market is working on would provide land and greenhouse space, as well as training to interested producers. Ms. Lester stated that this would be a four-year program where participants would assume more responsibility as the program progressed.

Mr. Evert asked how vendors are chosen for the produce used in the trolley mobile market. Ms. Lester answered that vendors apply and are then chosen each week and that there is usually a produce vendor, a vendor with baked goods, and a vendor supplying honey or other miscellaneous goods.

Ms. Arneson asked a clarifying question as to whether the Town Square Farmer's Market is privately run and how it is set up and operates. Ms. Lester explained that the market is a private corporation and is funded primarily through grants rather than vendor fees. Ms. Lester stated that the City of Grand Forks provides a sizable portion of its funding for the market's special events. Ms. Lester stated that currently the market operates on a number of grants equaling \$130,000 for the season.

Mr. Thorstad asked what the website for Town Square Farmer's Market. Ms. Lester stated that the website address was tsfarmersmarket.com.

Mr. Rasmussen asked whether private businesses are allowed to participate in the market. Ms. Lester stated that as long as the goods are home-made or if produce is home-grown that businesses would be able to participate, pending health department guidelines.

4(b). Farmers Market Blueprint

Ms. Baker informed the Commission that the Steering Committee had developed a new urban agriculture blueprint examining farmers markets. Ms. Baker stated that the definition of a farmers market is a multi-stall market at which farmer-producers sell agricultural products directly to the general public at a central or fixed location, particularly fresh fruit and vegetables but also meat products, dairy products, and grains.

Ms. Baker explained that a number of benefits have been implemented throughout the country to allow better access to farmers markets for customers and vendors. Ms. Baker stated that benefits such as SNAP are important to increasing accessibility to fresh produce and other goods. Ms. Baker explained that there are additional economic and marketing incentives provided for farmers and buyers at markets and referenced several examples from Greenmarket in New York City, the Los Angeles and Southern California Markets, the Town Square Farmer's Market in Grand Forks, and the Red River Market in Fargo. Ms. Baker stated that uniform zoning regulations can help clarify rules regarding where markets may set up and other important issues such as season duration and manager's duties.

Ms. Baker informed the Commission that there are 10 farmers markets in the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan area, which amounts to 0.044 markets per 1,000 individuals. Ms. Baker stated that, as of November 2015, farmers markets are permitted in select zones in Fargo, Dilworth, and Clay County; and not addressed in the zoning regulations for Moorhead, West Fargo, and Cass County.

Ms. Baker explained the framework for evaluating farmers markets including health, environment, social, and economic aspects. Ms. Baker explained health benefits of farmers markets include increased access to fresh, healthy local foods, increased access to a larger variety of products, increased consideration of origin of food, and contribution to community food security, while a concern includes markets and stands following separate food safety standards which may increase health risks for consumers. Ms. Baker stated that environmental benefits include limiting potential food waste from produce not accepted by supermarket specifications, reducing the need for packaging material, and reducing greenhouse gases due to produce being transported shorter distances. Ms. Baker stated that social benefits include consumers experiencing “food with a face,” attracting a broad spectrum of people who might not otherwise meet or interact, and better allowing vendors to mentor one another and to sell their goods amongst friends. Ms. Baker explained that economic benefits include the potential for some producers to retain a higher proportion of the usual retail price, increased spending in the local economy, and providing a new site to sell products and an opportunity for farmers to access new markets through consumer interaction, while a concern may be that produce is more expensive due to increased costs from small farm sustainability.

Ms. Baker informed the Commission that most other regional jurisdictions do not specifically address farmers markets including: Bismarck, ND, Duluth, MN, Grand Forks, ND, Rochester, MN, and Sioux Falls, SD. Ms. Baker stated that farmers markets are addressed in the city food code in Lincoln, NE and considered on an individual basis in Mankato, MN. Ms. Baker noted one example ordinance for farmers and public markets from Des Moines, IA. Ms. Baker concluded with a fact sheet for farmers markets in Fargo and West Fargo which discussed home-processed, home-canned, home baked foods, labeling requirements, and what may or may not be sold at markets.

Mr. Thorstad asked if any distinction was made in the operations between public versus private markets. Mr. Thorstad noted that one farmers market listed for West Fargo is run by the Park Board while another is a more private entity. Ms. Baker stated that no delineation was currently made but that the Steering Committee could research the issue. Chair Durand stated that this would be a good question to bring back to respective jurisdictions to see if this would have an effect on the types of incentives offered.

Mr. Rasmussen asked whether the notion of sellers antagonizing each other by setting up close to one another and undercutting prices should be an issue to consider. Mr. Rasmussen provided an example of a similar situation where law enforcement officials needed to become involved. Ms. Baker answered that by having cities run markets and having clear zoning laws on the delineation and placement of markets that these types of issues can be avoided.

Mr. Evert asked a clarifying question on double SNAP benefits and who usually pays the difference. Ms. Baker answered that at the Red River Market, double SNAP benefits are currently paid through a grant, but that in some jurisdictions, cities will provide the additional benefit. Ms. Mongeau asked if the Steering Committee might provide additional research on how cities and/or counties might provide the difference on double SNAP benefits.

4(c). Farmers Market Updates

Chair Durand asked Mr. Altenburg to introduce and invite area farmers markets’ representatives to share information with the Commission.

4(c)(i). Great Plains Producer Association’s Community Farmers Market

Mr. Altenburg asked if a representative from the Great Plains Producer Association’s Community Farmers Market was in the audience to present information to the Commission. No representative was present.

4(c)(ii). Legacy Gardens

Toni Bach provided the Commission information on Legacy Gardens, part of Probstfield Living History Farm in north Moorhead. Ms. Bach stated that Legacy Gardens is organically farmed and is open Sundays from 11:00 to 3:00. Ms. Bach explained that harvest is also provided at the Red River Market. Ms. Bach stated that tomatoes, potatoes, and squash make up the bulk of their produce and that over 20 families participate in Legacy Garden's CSA program.

4(c)(iii). Moorhead Farmers Market

Kim Wangler informed the Commission that this was the third year of the Moorhead Farmers Market on the southwest corner of Moorhead Center Mall. Ms. Wangler stated that the market is open Tuesdays from 3:00 to 7:00 and that the staggering of schedules amongst the markets in the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan area benefit all of the markets. Ms. Wangler stated that the market currently has five vendors and works closely with the mall and is able to move indoors in case of inclement weather.

4(c)(iv). Red River Market

Katie Preston provided the Commission an update on the Red River Market in downtown Fargo. Ms. Preston stated that this was the second year of the market and that the number of vendors had increased from 15 vendors in 2015 to 45 vendors in 2016. Ms. Preston stated that over 3,500 people had visited the market during its opening week. Ms. Preston stated that the market is open on Saturdays from 10:00 to 2:00. Ms. Preston explained that the market is focusing on growing and expanding relationships with the community and that it is able to provide SNAP double bucks benefits through a grant with Cass-Clay Alive. Ms. Preston stated that the market had also partnered with MATBUS to provide free transit service to community member coming and going from the market from 9:00 to 3:00. Ms. Preston also explained that the market had partnered with the Great Plains Food Bank to donate extra produce.

Mr. Evert whether the Red River Market was still looking for a permanent site, as it had moved from 2nd Street N in 2015 to 4th Street N in 2016. Ms. Preston stated that the current location was adequate but that if the market continues to expand they may look for an alternative location.

4(c)(v). Whistle Stop Market

Cheryl Stetz informed the Commission that the Whistle Stop Farmers Market in Dilworth is a voluntarily run market through the Park Board. Ms. Stetz explained that this was the sixth season of the market and that the market averages five to six vendors each week. Ms. Stetz stated that the market is open every Thursday from 3:00 to 7:00 at Whistle Stop Park north of Highway 10. Ms. Stetz explained that in previous years it had been difficult to secure vendors but that it had been easier this year, though the market would still like to see more produce vendors. Ms. Stetz stated that the market is heavily supported by the surrounding neighborhood and that vendors cooperate and work together with one another. Ms. Stetz stated that the cost to participate in the market was \$50 per season, with vendors able to take one free day off if needed.

Mr. Evert asked whether vendors set up in the shelter at the park. Ms. Stetz confirmed that this was where the market was located.

Ms. Gold asked what would help to get the area farmers markets and vendors to coordinate and cooperate more with one another. Ms. Stetz stated that a regional farmers market coordinator would be beneficial for coordination and communication amongst various farmers markets in the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan area.

Ms. Lipetzky asked whether there were any potential issues with vendors crossing the border to participate in farmers markets. Ms. Stetz stated that she wasn't aware of any issues and that it would be prudent to follow state safety guidelines for either North Dakota or Minnesota.

4(d). Northern Small Farms Alliance

Ross Lockhart addressed the Commission as a representative of the Northern Small Farms Alliance. Mr. Lockhart explained that he operated Heart and Soil Farm located near Grandin, ND and sells products primarily through its CSA share program. Mr. Lockhart stated that Heart and Soil Farm had 30 community members participating in its CSA share program in 2016 and that it also sells produce at the Red River Market. Mr. Lockhart stated that this was his fourth year of operation.

Mr. Lockhart stated that for the past 18 months, he helped to form the Northern Small Farms Alliance – an alliance intended to support new and emerging small-scale growers in both North Dakota and Minnesota. Mr. Lockhart explained that Northern Small Farms Alliance is committed to raising awareness of local foods within the community, farmer education and raising the professionalism of small-scale farmers, focusing on ways to aggregate both buying and selling, and assisting new and emerging farmers.

Mr. Lockhart stated that there is a shortage of small-scale producers in the region and that there is a need to look at new food entrepreneurs as potential drivers of economic development. Mr. Lockhart stated that some of the barriers to new and emerging farmers are start-up costs for setting up a stall at a farmers markets, unpredictability of foot traffic at farmers markets, weather, predicting quantity to bring to markets, consumer preferences, other vendors, produce dumping, time, and planning.

Mr. Lockhart explained some ways of expanding the pool of food entrepreneurs. Mr. Lockhart stated that some of these ways include creating a community space with a mix of different vendors, encouraging farmers markets to support to new vendors, raising the professionalism of new producers through education and marketing, creating year-round markets for producers who utilize various season extending structures, and jurisdictional support of new and emerging farmers who invest in their communities – including microfarms and urban farms.

4(e). Public Input

Chair Durand informed the audience that time would be allotted for public comments on farmers markets and the information that was presented.

No public comments were made.

4(f). Commission Discussion

Mr. Evert stated the discussion had been very informative, with Chair Durand highlighting points brought up by Mr. Lockhart regarding microfarms and urban farms.

Mr. Thorstad wondered if farmers markets have parameters to make sure there is a balance between producers and other craft vendors. Ms. Gold stated that controls are commonly put in place but that initially it can be beneficial to have a variety of crafters to generate initial interest in farmers markets.

5. Online Community Input

Ms. Lipetzky explained that community members who may not be able to attend Commission meetings are able to submit public comments through the City of Fargo Let's Eat Local website. Ms. Lipetzky stated that one public comment was received between May and June 2016.

Ms. Lipetzky explained that the commenter works at an assisted living facility in Fargo and wondered if the Commission might be able to develop a toolkit to help organize and develop open spaces for gardening and other activities.

6. Public Comment Opportunity

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

No public comments were made.

7. Commission and Steering Committee Roundtable

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

Ms. Arneson stated that the Commission should think about whether it should take on the role as coordinating entity for all of the area farmers markets that had been brought up by Ms. Stetz.

Ms. Baker brought up of the idea of the Commission and the Steering Committee creating a regional food booklet that could serve as a guide for local area farmers.

Mr. Altenburg informed the Commission that the Minnesota Food Access Planning Guide was completed and that this could be an important document for jurisdictions to use when developing comprehensive plans or updating zoning and other land development codes.

Mr. Evert stated that he was very encouraged by all of the discussion brought up with regard to small-scale farmers and that it would be beneficial to work with large land owners to identify potential odd-sized plots of land for smaller scale farming.

Ms. Durand stated that she had recently participated in a regional workforce study for Cass County and thought it would be relevant in marketing and attracting small scale farmers. Ms. Durand also spoke of potential economic and marketing incentives to attract new farmers to the area.

Ms. Mongeau spoke about the Clay County Soil and Water Conservation District taking a closer look at urban agriculture issues, specifically relating to pollinators. Ms. Mongeau also gave a plug to the Clay County Fair in Barnesville, MN and the 4-H events which would be taking place there.

Ms. Gold reiterated that the Minnesota Food Access Planning Guide will be a good tool for the Commission and the Steering Committee to utilize when working with future food access issues in the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan area.

Ms. Reynolds reiterated that it was beneficial listening to all of the information presented at the Commission meeting.

8. Commission Action Steps

Chair Durand stated that the next meeting would be held on September 14, 2016.

Chair Durand adjourned the meeting at 11:58 AM.