

Attachment 1

**37th Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
January 12, 2022
Virtual Meeting**

Members Present:

Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council, Chair
Arlette Preston, Fargo City Commission
Deb White, City of Moorhead
Duane Breitling, Cass County Commission
Jenna Kahly, Clay County Commission
Jeremiah Utecht, At-Large Member
Jeff York, At-Large Member
Anna Johnson, At-Large Member
Joan Kopperud, At-Large Member
Jeffrey Miller, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

Chelsey Johnson, Horace City Council
Mandy George, West Fargo City Commission

Others Present:

Michelle Draxten, Fargo Cass Public Health
Rory Beil, Clay County Public Health
Rita Ussatis, NDSU Extension
Noelle Harden, U of M Extension
Mary Larson, NDSU – Community Health Sciences Specialization
Taylor Syvertson, Great Plains Food Bank
Janice Tweet, Great Plains Food Bank
Deb Haugen, Cass Clay Food Partners
Jennifer Illich, FirstLink
Chelsea Akason, FirstLink
Cheryl Stetz, Fargo Cass Public Health
Rick Hall, Prairie Rose Agricultural Institute for Research, Innovation, and Education
Adam Altenburg, Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments

Chair Aasness called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM.

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. White and seconded by Mr. Utecht. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from November 10, 2021

A motion to approve the minutes for November was made by Ms. White and seconded by Mr. York. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

Mr. Breitling arrived at 10:32 AM.

1c. Welcome to New Food Commission Member: Jenna Kahly, Clay County

Chair Aasness noted that Clay County Commissioner Jenna Kahly had been appointed to serve on the Food Commission.

2. Commission Check-In

Chair Aasness stated that Commission members and the steering committee had an opportunity to provide updates on news or events happening in the community.

Chair Aasness noted that several new food businesses would be opening soon in the City of Dilworth.

3. Approve Appointments of At-Large Members

Mr. Altenburg explained that the steering committee had sought applicants for two new at-large member to replace the openings left by Ms. McConnon and Ms. Tweet. He stated that the steering committee reviewed and recommended the appointments of Anna Johnson and Joan Kopperud as new at-large members. He further noted that current at-large member Jeffrey Miller had agreed to serve an additional two-year term.

A motion to approve the appointments of Anna Johnson and Joan Kopperud and reappointment of Jeffrey Miller to the Commission was made by Mr. York and seconded by Ms. White. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

4. Mental Health and Food Insecurity

Mr. Beil gave a brief presentation on food insecurity and its effects on mental health. He noted stressors such as food insecurity, poverty, discrimination, and others had a direct impact on mental health and that hunger can lead to issues such as toxic stress and limited focus and concentration. He stated that chronic hunger can impair brain development affecting learning, information processing, and academic achievement.

Mr. Beil further described that post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms are not uncommon for people affected by food insecurity, especially for expectant mothers, children, and teens.

5. FirstLink Presentation on Food Questions from Callers

Jennifer Ilich and Chelsea Akason provided information on caller needs to FirstLink's 211 Helpline in 2021.

Ms. Akason noted that FirstLink received a total of 1,157 calls for food insecurity and food-related community needs in 2021, with 977 callers from Cass County and 180 callers from Clay County. She noted that of these total calls, 720 calls were for information on regional food pantries, 136 calls were related to SNAP assistance, 74 calls were for Thanksgiving assistance programs, and 57 calls were for information on area soup kitchens. She explained that there were additional calls regarding formula and baby food assistance, pet food assistance, WIC, home delivered meals, and food vouchers. She also highlighted FirstLink's community resources for food assistance on the organization's website.

Ms. Ilich and Ms. Akason detailed FirstLink's search function and data dashboard, including detailed information about the region's 24 food pantries and distribution sites as well as other statistics.

6. Public Comment Opportunity

Chair Aasness informed the Commission that time would be allotted for public comments. He noted that members of the community are able to submit comments via a comment link when Commission packets are emailed out.

Rick Hall, Prairie Rose Agricultural Institute for Research, Innovation, and Education (PRAIRIE), informed Commission members that he was applying for a grant from Minnesota's AGRI Urban Grant Program to develop a Multicultural Urban Food and Ecology Initiative in the FM area. He explained that this initiative was intended to provide increased access to fresh food in the area, promote youth and BIPOC engagement in farming and gardening, develop demonstration gardens and growing test sites, and promote careers in food systems and ecology. Mr. Hall stated that he had drafted a letter of support and asked if the Food Commission would consider signing it to support PRAIRIE's grant application. He noted that the grant application was due January 13.

After some discussion, Ms. White made a motion for the steering committee to work with Mr. Hall to review the draft letter of support and finalize any points of clarification. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kahly.

7. Commission and Steering Committee Roundtable

Chair Aasness asked for the Commission and the steering committee to share any additional updates.

Mr. Utecht noted that Folkways would be having its first winter market on February 5 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the Moorhead Center Mall.

Ms. Harden shared that Mr. Biel was recognized by the City of Moorhead with the 2021 Human Rights Award for his work in increasing COVID-19 awareness and providing resources and assistance to the New American community.

8. Commission Action Steps

Chair Aasness stated that the next Commission meeting would be held on March 9, 2022. He also mentioned that the next First Fridays event would be held at 701 Eateries in Fargo on February 4 at 8:00 AM. He noted that this was a correction from the agenda which stated February 7.

Chair Aasness adjourned the meeting at 11:54 AM.