

Attachment 1

**30th Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
September 9th, 2020
Virtual Meeting**

Members Present:

Jenny Mongeau, Clay County Commission, Chair
Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council
Arlette Preston, Fargo City Commission
Sara Watson Curry, Moorhead City Council
Mandy George, West Fargo City Commission
Beth McConnon, At-Large Member
Janice Tweet, At-Large Member
Jeremiah Utecht, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

Chelsey Johnson, Horace City Council
Ken Pawluk, Cass County Commission
Jeffrey Miller, At-Large Member
Kayla Pridmore, At-Large Member

Others Present:

Kim Lipetzky, Fargo Cass Public Health
Kayla Carlson, NDSU Extension
Noelle Harden, U of M Extension
Timothy Hiller, Concordia College – Community Engagement
Deb Haugen, Cass Clay Food Partners
Don B., Public Citizen
Clara Bowman, Prairie Roots Community Fund
Greta Gramig, Weed Biology/Ecology Specialist, NDSU
Megan Myrdal, Food of the North/Northern Harvest Bean Growers Association
Adam Altenburg, Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments

Chair Mongeau 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. Watson Curry and seconded by Mr. Utecht. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from March 11, 2020

A motion to approve the minutes for January was made by Ms. Watson Curry and seconded by Ms. Tweet. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1c. Welcome to New Food Commission Members: Arlette Preston, Fargo City Commission and Mandy George, West Fargo City Commission

Chair Mongeau noted that Commissioner Arlette Preston had recently been appointed to represent the City of Fargo and Mandy George had been appointed to represent the City of West Fargo on the Food Commission.

Ms. Preston arrived at 10:36 AM.

2. Commission Check-In

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

Ms. Haugen stated that, because of the freeze on September 8, she was unsure whether Growing Together would continue with their market garden on Tuesdays. She mentioned that they have been able to share a lot of food with non-profits as well as families that are part of the gardens this season.

Mr. Utecht mentioned that, in speaking with his producers, pepper plants had survived the freeze overnight.

3. Cass Clay Food Partners COVID Response

Ms. Harden provided the Commission an update on the Food Partners' community response to Covid-19. She stated that the Food Partners had created a number of documents since March, the most comprehensive being a community food resource list with up-to-date information on free meals and groceries, food assistance, employment and volunteer opportunities, and other food resources. She noted that other documents created during this time also include an FAQ on urban agriculture and gardening in the region, a policy statement and policy recommendations for Covid-19, and a food sovereignty guide that is currently being finalized.

Ms. Harden also noted that the Food Partners had taken advantage of its Facebook site to provide live video updates on various food and food-related issues. She stated that 45 Facebook Live video updates were made from March through August featuring members from the Commission and steering committee, with a number of videos reaching between 400 and 850 people.

Ms. Harden concluded with an update on policy changes in the City of Fargo implemented during Covid-19 including: clarifications on beekeeping in Fargo, a temporary increase in the number of urban chickens allowed per residence, and a temporary boulevard garden program.

Chair Mongeau thanked the steering committee for its efforts and especially thanked Ms. Harden for all of her content work and assistance in preparing the Facebook Live updates.

4. Food of the North Update

Megan Myrdal provided an update from Food of the North and its monthly First Fridays events. She explained that Food of the North had held four virtual meetings since the beginning of Covid-19, the most recent being on regenerative grazing practices. She noted that virtual meetings can be viewed using either Zoom or Facebook Live and that past presentations can be viewed on the organization's Facebook page.

Ms. Myrdal stated that the upcoming meeting in October will feature information on the U.S. food supply chain and issues facing distributors, growers, and consumers during Covid-19. She noted that November's presentation will center on Native American Heritage Month and that December's meeting will focus on locally-made dairy products.

Ms. Myrdal concluded with information on Food of the North's website updates and different resources available for the community on the site.

5a. Food Justice Event and Follow-Up Survey Results

Ms. Carlson provided the Commission an update on the virtual Food Justice in the North event held on July 28. She explained that the event was developed in collaboration with Food the North, NDSU Extension, U of M Extension, and the Cass Clay Food Partners. She explained that the event centered on ways to create a more just and equitable food system to meet local needs in the area and that over 75 people attended the live conversation, with an additional 500 views since its initial broadcast.

Ms. Carlson stated that in feedback from a follow-up survey from the event, individuals stated that they would like to see the community look at food justice on a more systemic level, open up opportunities for more culturally-appropriate foods to be grown and distributed in the area, and work on food sovereignty policies. She noted that she would share the full survey results with the Commission after the meeting via email.

5b. Great Plains Food Bank Update

Ms. Tweet provided an update on the Great Plains Food Bank and its activities since March. She explained that the Great Plains Food Bank runs mobile distributions throughout North Dakota and that, from March to July, they had seen a 61 percent increase in households served compared to the same time in 2019. She stated that many of their partner agencies saw a spike in attendance numbers in March, with gradually decreasing numbers in May and June but numbers again increasing in the latter half of the summer as people become more comfortable with Covid-19 safety measures. She also noted that the Great Plains Food Bank had been able to bring the USDA's Farmers to Families Food Box Program to Cass and Clay counties, with over 280,000 additional pounds of produce serving almost 9,000 families.

Ms. Tweet also noted a sharp increase SNAP referrals at the beginning of the pandemic, with referral numbers dropping as people began receiving stimulus checks and additional unemployment benefits as part of the CARES Act. She explained that referrals had been increasing again with the expiration of the enhanced unemployment benefits at the end of July.

Ms. Tweet concluded by noting that the third annual Hunger and Health Summit will be held virtually Thursday, October 29 from 8:00 to 12:30.

5c. Moorhead Resiliency Task Force Update

Mr. Hiller provided an update on the Moorhead Resiliency Task Force.

Mr. Hiller started off by noting that Concordia College is hosting its annual symposium on September 22 and 23. He stated that the topic this year is "Food for Good" and that a number of national speakers will be doing online events.

Mr. Hiller noted that the Resiliency Task Force was founded in 2019 with the goal of defining what it means to be a resilient community in light of climate change and social disruptions, and more recently with the current pandemic. He stated that the task force has five working groups focusing on different areas including: the economy, ecology, energy and resources, health and wellness, and social equity and governance.

Mr. Hiller explained that several of the initiatives undertaken by the task force included a public health initiative with New Americans, a community garden initiative, several different seminars including discussions on entrepreneurship and mental health, and an intercultural development inventory to assess and increase awareness of intercultural competencies.

6. Pesticide Use on School Grounds Snapshot

Ms. Lipetzky presented a draft community snapshot regarding pesticide use on school grounds. She stated that the issue brief explains why children are more vulnerable to the effects of pesticide use including: their rapid development, children being more likely to be exposed to pesticides by playing at ground-level, and by children putting their hands on their face and mouth regularly. She explained that an important thing local school districts can do is have a pesticide application notification system for parents and the community.

Ms. Lipetzky explained that the draft snapshot provides information on what school districts in Cass and Clay counties do for pest control options and weed control, as well as any notification systems that they use. She also noted that there is contact information for who to get in touch with at the school districts should parents or community members have any questions.

Ms. Lipetzky concluded by noting a community actions section included in the draft snapshot with actions including: continuing to implement integrated pest management strategies, improving pesticide application notification systems, considering no-spray buffer zones around playgrounds and school gardens, and collaborating with parent groups or local gardening and wildlife groups to hand-weed problem areas. She noted that the West Fargo Public Schools has a hand-weeding program for mulch beds and that Moorhead Area Public Schools is testing a no-spray test site and Ellen Hopkins Elementary. She also noted a table at the end of the snapshot that shows the pesticide and herbicide products used by each school district.

7. Discussion on Formation of Pesticide Working Group

Ms. Harden informed the Commission that the steering committee had been considering the formation of an herbicide and pesticide working group since early 2020. She explained that this issue first arose in 2017 when Growing Together and FARRMS were planning a community garden and incubator farm on City of Fargo land in south Fargo. She explained that Cass County Weed Control reached out to the two organizations and the city to inform them that they had sprayed an herbicide on the site that can remain in the soil for several years, thus rendering the site unusable for farming and gardening activities.

Ms. Harden expressed that there seems to be some level of interest in looking at alternative practices for weed and pesticide control at a regional level. She asked the Commission their thoughts on forming a smaller working committee that would include Cass County Weed Control and the Clay County Soil and Water Conservation District, members from the steering committee, and other interested individuals to both examine current practices and potential alternatives.

Chair Mongeau expressed that this may set a negative precedent for individuals who each decide on what treatments they apply on their own property. She stated that this working group could facilitate good conversations but did not want to alienate certain growers.

Ms. Lipetzky stated that Fargo Cass Public Health had received a letter from a concerned resident about chemical spray drift damage to their garden from an adjacent property and that it's difficult to respond to those types of situations. She also noted articles in regional newspapers addressing the same issue.

Ms. Watson Curry expressed that this group could help provide more centralized information for residents throughout the area who want to know which parks or open areas have recently been treated for herbicides or pesticides.

Chair Mongeau suggested that Commission and steering committee members look at some of the prior research on pesticides and herbicides, including the issue brief and snapshot on pesticide use on public land, and revisit the issue in November.

8. Public Comment Opportunity

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

Greta Gramig, Weed Biology/Ecology Specialist at NDSU, noted that there are a number of issues closely related but not the same when it comes to discussing weed and pest management strategies. She stated that she would like to see at least one person at the city or county level work on raising awareness of the issue and perhaps work on pesticide use reduction efforts.

9. Commission and Steering Committee Roundtable

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

Ms. Lipetzky informed the Commission that GleanND is potentially holding a glean on September 20 at Heart and Soil Farm near Grandin, ND.

Ms. McConnon noted that there is currently a lot of attention on the issue of vector control after thousands of monarchs died after aerial mosquito spraying in late-August. She stated that community members have a lot of questions on what was sprayed and how much was sprayed. Ms. Harden responded that Cass County Vector Control would be addressing the Moorhead City Council on September 14. Ms. Watson Curry noted that the issue was addressed at the Fargo City Commission on September 8.

10. Commission Action Steps

Chair Mongeau stated that the next Commission meeting would be held on November 4. She also mentioned that the next First Fridays event would be held online on October 1 at 8:00 AM.

Chair Mongeau adjourned the meeting at 11:44 AM.