

**56th Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
January 14, 2026
Metro COG Conference Room**

Members Present:

Heather Nesemeier, Moorhead City Council, Chair
Jim Kapitan, Cass 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
Carin Engler, At-Large Member
Jeff York, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

Paul Krabbenhoft, Clay County Commission
Joan Kopperud, At-Large Member
Jeffrey Miller, At-Large Member

Others Present:

Cheryl Stetz, Fargo Cass Public Health
Rory Beil, Clay County Public Health
Rita Ussatis, NDSU Extension
Noelle Harden, U of M Extension
Jill Ambuehl, Great Plains Food Bank
Mel Ell, Great Plains Food Bank
Erika Franck, Clay County Planning and Zoning
Eric Hegg, Global Refuge
Candance Anderson, Cass Clay Food Partners
Anna Monico, CAPLP
Haley Lind, AGL/West Fargo Citizen
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 Mr. Strand and seconded by Ms. Engler. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from September 10, 2025

A motion to approve the minutes for September 2025 was made by Mr. Hankel and seconded by Mr. York. 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. She noted that Cass County Commissioner Jim Kapitan had been reappointed to serve on the Commission.

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. Summary and Recommendation from Network Planning Conversations

Ms. Harden and Mr. Altenburg shared information regarding Food Partners network meetings in late 2025 and recommendations for the Food Commission in 2026.

Mr. Altenburg provided recaps of network meetings held on October 27, November 12, November 24, and December 15. He explained that early discussions centered on whether to sunset or pause the Cass Clay Food Commission due to concerns about limited capacity among members of the steering committee. He also noted that the steering committee had been unsuccessful in securing grant funding for 2026, with four unsuccessful applications. This included an application for the North Dakota Department of Health Block Grant, which had previously been a non-competitive grant awarded to Fargo Cass Public Health to support Commission activities.

Mr. Altenburg further stated that Commission and steering committee members discussed potential opportunities to merge with existing networks, including the Hunger Coalition and the West Central Minnesota Food Policy Council, but ultimately found that doing so might be infeasible. Additional discussions included opportunities to solicit project proposals using funds from an environmental settlement between the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and the former Budweiser plant in Moorhead. He noted that the group also spoke with RDO to learn more about its philanthropic initiatives and to explore whether the Food Partners might be eligible to apply for funding.

Ms. Harden shared several recommendations that emerged from the network planning conversations aimed at continuing the Food Commission's work. She explained that, for 2026, she recommended adopting a shared leadership model in which elected and at-large commissioners take a more active role in setting meeting agendas and helping center discussions on community-based needs and ideas. She also shared a meeting planning guide intended to assist with developing agendas and identifying and reaching out to potential speakers. In addition, she and Mr. Altenburg recommended forming a financial health committee to focus on securing funding to support future Commission activities.

5. Commission Action

Chair Nesemeier explained that the Commission would be asked to vote on two recommendations: adopting a shared leadership model for 2026 and forming a financial health committee.

A motion to approve the recommendation to adopt a shared leadership model was made by Mr. York and seconded by Mr. Kapitan. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

A motion to approve the formation of a financial health committee was made by Mr. Strand and seconded by Mr. Hankel. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

Chair Nesemeier asked Commission and steering committee members if they would be interested in leading upcoming Commission meetings in March and May. Members representing Clay County indicated they would lead the March meeting, while members representing Horace and West Fargo volunteered to lead the May meeting.

6. Public Comment Opportunity

Chair Nesemeier informed the Commission that time would be allotted for public comments. She also noted that community members may submit comments through a link included when Commission meeting packets are distributed via email.

Haley Lind, a landscape architect and West Fargo resident, expressed interest in seeing community gardens established in West Fargo. She also shared her hope that the City of West Fargo would consider adopting a boulevard garden ordinance similar to the one adopted by the City of Fargo.

7. Future Meetings and Commission Action Steps

Chair Nesemeier stated that the next Commission meeting would be held on March 11. She noted that the next steering committee meeting would be January 26 at Metro COG and that Commissioners and others were welcome to attend.

Chair Nesemeier adjourned the meeting at 11:59 AM.