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CASS CLAY FOOD PARTNERS

60th Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission

November 4, 2026 10:30 am – 12:00 pm
Location: Metro COG Conference Room

Click here to join the meeting online
Meeting ID: 836 4408 5761
Passcode: 340677

10:30 am	1. Welcome a. Approve Order & Contents of the Overall Agenda b. Review & Action on Minutes from September 9, 2026 **(Attachment 1)**
10:35 am	2. Commission Introductions – Chair Nesemeier
10:40 am	3. Gladys Ray Shelter Garden – Candace Kraft
10:55 am	4. Growing Together Community Gardens – Eric Hegg
11:10 am	5. Maps to Meals – Mel Ell
11:25 am	6. 2027 Jurisdictional Support Update – Chair Nesemeier
11:35 am	7. 2027 Meeting Schedule and Planning – Noelle Harden **(Attachment 2)**
11:45 am	8. Public Comment Opportunity – Chair Nesemeier
11:50 am	9. Commission & Steering Committee Roundtable: Community Updates & Meeting Reflections – Chair Nesemeier
11:55 am	10. Future Meetings & Commission Action Steps a. Next Steering Committee Meeting – **November 16, 2026, 3:00 pm** Metro COG – 1 2nd Street N Suite 232, Fargo b. Next Commission Meeting – January 13, 2027, 10:30 am
12:00 pm	11. Adjournment

Cass Clay Food Commission meetings are taped and rebroadcast on cable channel TV Fargo 56 each Friday at 11:00 am. People with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and need special accommodations should contact Angela Brumbaugh at Metro COG at 701.532.5100. Please contact us at least 48 hours before the meeting to give our staff adequate time to make arrangements. Meeting minutes are available on the Cass Clay Food Partners website at **www.cassclayfoodpartners.org** and Metro COG's website at **www.fmmetrocog.org**.

Attachment 1

59th Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
September 9, 2026
Metro COG Conference Room

Members Present:
Heather Nesemeier, Moorhead City Council, Chair
Jim Kapitan, Cass County Commission
Paul Krabbenhoft, Clay County Commission
Paul Hankel, Horace City Council (proxy)
John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Joan Kopperud, At-Large Member
Casey Steele, At-Large Member
Carin Engler, At-Large Member
Jeff York, At-Large Member

Members Absent:
Patti Stedman, West Fargo City Commission
Amber Borah, Dilworth City Council
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
Erika Franck, Clay County Planning and Zoning
Eric Hegg, Global Refuge
Trent Wise, City of Moorhead
Ethan Johnk, City of Moorhead
Paul Fiechtner, City of Moorhead
Alyssa Athman, CAPLP
Candace Kraft, Unitarian Universalist Church of Fargo-Moorhead
Claire Hamblin, Unitarian Universalist Church of Fargo-Moorhead
Madison Engler, NDSU
Adam Altenburg, 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 Mr. Krabbenhoft. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from May 13, 2026
A motion to approve the minutes for May 2026 was made by Ms. Engler 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. MB Johnson Food Forest
Trent Wise, Moorhead City Forester, provided an overview of the MB Johnson Food Forest and discussed the project's development, implementation, maintenance, and progress since its establishment.

Mr. Wise explained that the project originated through the Ecosystems Work Group of the Resilient Moorhead Task Force as an opportunity to enhance the community's ecosystem and create a more resilient Moorhead. MB Johnson Park was selected because of its accessibility, existing amenities, available space, and relatively low risk of flooding.

The food forest was planted as an Arbor Day project in 2021 with approximately 75 volunteers. The project included 100 fruit trees and 40 shrubs, including several varieties of apples, pears, plums, serviceberries, honeyberries, and aronia berries. The food forest is intended to provide publicly accessible food while supporting pollinators, community engagement, outdoor recreation, and educational opportunities.

Mr. Wise discussed ongoing maintenance, including mowing, watering, pruning, and protection from wildlife. He noted that several varieties are now producing fruit. Interpretive signage has also been installed, and the site has hosted educational activities, including a fruit-tree pruning workshop.

Mr. Wise also highlighted other fruit-bearing plantings in Moorhead, including apple trees at Woodlawn Park, a smaller food forest associated with the Romkey Park and pool project, and orchards located at several Moorhead elementary schools.

Commission members discussed maintenance and pruning, public awareness and harvesting, educational use of school orchards, wildlife impacts, and restrictions on planting trees near the levee system.

4. City of Moorhead Presentation
Ethan Johnk, Moorhead Assistant City Planner, provided an overview of City of Moorhead policies and initiatives related to local food, backyard chickens, community gardens, natural plantings, and pollinator habitat.

Mr. Johnk discussed local food goals included in the City's 2022 Onward Moorhead! Comprehensive Plan and Moorhead's participation in the Minnesota GreenStep Cities program. Moorhead has achieved Step 5 status and tracks several sustainability metrics, including local food availability.

Mr. Johnk reviewed Moorhead's backyard chicken ordinance, which was adopted in 2023 and subsequently revised based on resident feedback and staff experience. Discussion included permit requirements, dimensional standards for coops and runs, screening requirements, and flexibility added to address commercially manufactured chicken coops that may not precisely meet dimensional requirements.

Mr. Johnk also discussed community gardens and the City's efforts to convert areas of maintained turf grass to natural and pollinator plantings. Approximately 10 acres along the Red River corridor were converted to pollinator habitat through a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Climate Action Grant. The conversion reduces mowing and associated fuel use while providing ecological and pollinator benefits.

Commission members discussed backyard chicken permit requirements and implementation, maintenance considerations for natural plantings, public perception, and the importance of signage to communicate that prairie and pollinator areas are intentional landscapes.

5. Discussion Questions
Commission members reflected on the Moorhead presentations and discussed ideas that could be applied in other jurisdictions.

Discussion included opportunities for jurisdictions to learn from one another when updating backyard chicken regulations, particularly where standard commercially available coops do not align with local dimensional requirements. Members also discussed community gardens, food forests, natural landscaping, and opportunities for the Food Commission to share examples and resources among jurisdictions.

Members noted that public education and signage can help build understanding and acceptance of natural and pollinator plantings. The Commission also discussed the value of sharing presentation materials so members could bring examples from Moorhead back to their respective communities and organizations.

6. Public Comment Opportunity
Candace Kraft provided an update on the Gladys Ray Shelter garden, which was established through a partnership involving the City of Fargo and Indigenous Association. She reported that the garden had a successful growing season, including a strong cucumber harvest, despite being planted relatively late in the season.

Ms. Kraft also discussed food-access challenges affecting the shelter, including limitations associated with the lack of a functioning kitchen and staffing challenges affecting meal service. She also provided an update on the Peace Lutheran Church food pantry and efforts to maintain volunteer administrative support.

7. Commission and Steering Committee Roundtable
Mr. Krabbenhoft provided an update on Clay County's planned source-separated organics composting program. Clay County received approximately $2 million in state grant funding toward development of the program, with a total project investment of approximately $2.5 million. The County plans to develop a windrow composting site at the closed landfill near Hawley and initially collect source-separated organics, primarily food scraps, from larger generators such as schools. The program may later expand to additional institutions, businesses, and potentially public drop-off locations. The program is intended to divert organic material from the landfill, extend landfill capacity, and reduce methane emissions.

Commission members also reflected positively on the day's presentations and discussed the value of continuing to highlight food-system initiatives occurring within each member jurisdiction.

Chair Nesemeier provided an update on efforts to identify financial support for the Food Commission. Clay County Public Health had identified $1,000 in potential funding, contingent upon participation from other jurisdictions. Requests for contributions were being distributed to member jurisdictions to support continued Commission activities.

8. Future Meetings and Commission Action Steps
Chair Nesemeier noted that the next Steering Committee meeting would be held Monday, September 28, 2026, at 1:00 PM at Metro COG. Commission members were invited to participate.

The next Cass Clay Food Commission meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, November 4, 2026, at 10:30 AM The meeting was expected to include presentations highlighting food-system activities in Fargo and Cass County.

Chair Nesemeier adjourned the meeting at 11:54 AM.

Attachment 2

Agenda Item 7

2027 Meeting Schedule and Planning

Noelle Harden

Shared Leadership Model

A New Approach in 2026

- **Goal:** Continue to evolve as a network to meet community and jurisdictional needs.
- **Approach:** Focus on 1-2 jurisdictions per meeting; form ad hoc planning teams to develop agendas and invite speakers.
- **Feedback:** How did it go this year? What could we do better next year?



2026 Meeting Highlights

March 11th Clay County	• Land Development Ordinance Update • Municipal Composting Blueprint Update • Organics Composting Advocacy in Clay County
May 13th City of West Fargo	• West Fargo Community Orchards • Boulevard Garden Blueprint Update • Community Garden List Update
Sept 9th City of Moorhead	• Comprehensive Plan and GreenStep Cities • Backyard Chickens • Community Gardens and Orchards • Natural Plantings and Pollinators
Nov 4th City of Fargo	• Gladys Ray Shelter Garden • Growing Together Community Gardens • Maps to Meals Project

2027 Meeting Schedule and Planning

January 13th	The Role of Water in Our Regional Food System?
March 10th	Jurisdiction TBD
May 12th	Jurisdiction TBD
September 8th	Jurisdiction TBD
November 10th	Jurisdiction TBD

Discussion: What topics or speakers should we consider for January? Which jurisdictions should be highlighted at the remaining 2027 meetings?