

Attachment 1

**32nd Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
January 13th, 2021
Virtual Meeting**

Members Present:

Jenny Mongeau, Clay County Commission, Chair
Deb White, City of Moorhead
Duane Breitling, Cass County Commission
Mandy George, West Fargo City Commission
Beth McConnon, At-Large Member
Jeffrey Miller, At-Large Member
Janice Tweet, At-Large Member
Jeremiah Utecht, At-Large Member
Jeff York, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council
Arlette Preston, Fargo City Commission
Chelsey Johnson, Horace City Council

Others Present:

Jenna Kahly, Clay County Commission
Kim Lipetzky, Fargo Cass Public Health
Madeline Qualley, Fargo Cass Public Health
Rory Beil, Clay County Public Health
Rita Ussatis, NDSU Extension
Hannah Latzer, NDSU Extension
Noelle Harden, U of M Extension
Mary Larson, NDSU – Community Health Sciences Specialization
Deb Haugen, Cass Clay Food Partners
Taylor Syvertson, Great Plains Food Bank
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. George and seconded by Ms. White. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from November 4, 2020

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

Ms. Haugen arrived at 10:33 AM.

1c. Welcome to New Food Commission Members: Duane Breifling, Cass County and Deb White, City of Moorhead

Chair Mongeau noted that Cass County Commissioner Duane Breitling and Moorhead City Councilmember Deb White had been appointed to serve on the Food Commission.

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.

Chair Mongeau informed the Commission that Clay County has begun its comprehensive plan update in collaboration with the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments and stated that food access needs would be looked at as part of the plan. She also discussed the county's partnership with Clay County Public Health and its current vaccination efforts against Covid-19.

3. Approve Appointments of At-Large Members

Chair Mongeau explained that the steering committee had sought applicants for one new at-large member to replace the opening left by Ms. Pridmore. She stated that the steering committee reviewed and recommended the appointment of Jeff York as a new at-large member. She further noted that current at-large member Jeremiah Utecht had agreed to serve an additional two-year term.

A motion to approve the appointment of Jeff York and reappointment of Jeremiah Utecht to the Commission was made by Mr. Breitling and seconded by Ms. White. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

4. Jurisdiction Spotlight: City of Fargo

Ms. Lipetzky provided the Commission an update on several food-related programs and sustainability efforts in the City of Fargo.

Ms. Lipetzky explained that in November 2020, the Fargo City Commission asked city staff to develop a comprehensive short-term program to provide targeted relief to the city's restaurants and bars. She stated that these relief efforts would include the suspension of utility charges for the first half of 2021 as well as a rebate on food and alcohol licensing fees. She noted that the proposed business assistance program will provide immediate cost relief without creating an administrative burden to participating businesses. She further noted that this program would complement other federal and state economic programs while highlighting the city's support for licensed establishments. She stated that approximately 440 bars and restaurants would be eligible for assistance.

Ms. Lipetzky next updated the Commission on the city's boulevard gardening program. She explained that a report on the temporary program, initiated in mid-2020, was presented to the Fargo City Commission in December and that the City Commissioners voted unanimously to make the program permanent. She noted that she and others involved in the program would take another look at program stipulations based on lessons learned and some of the barriers that people may have encountered. She explained that the next steps in developing a permanent ordinance would include a public input meeting with interested residents as well as meetings with city departments and the city attorney to clarify the ordinance language.

Ms. Lipetzky also informed the Commission that the City of Fargo is in the process of forming a sustainability and resiliency committee. She noted that a similar committee called the Renewable Energy and Conservation Committee had been formed in the mid-2000s but was

currently inactive. She explained that the role of this new committee would be to make recommendations to the City Commission on actions or policies related to climate resiliency, renewable energy, emissions reduction, energy efficiency, and environmental stewardship. She noted that these potential actions and policies may overlap and include resilient food systems and that the committee is currently looking for three at-large members to serve.

Mr. Breitling asked how many people had participated in the boulevard garden pilot program. Ms. Lipetzky responded that 11 residents had inquired about the program, with three residents working through the entire permitting and insurance process and six residents making it part-way through the process. She stated that some of the reasons residents had for not completing the process were the relatively late starting date in the growing season, issues in obtaining insurance, and people reluctant to allocate resources in what may have been a temporary program. She also noted that two residents did not meet the stipulations of the pilot program.

Ms. White asked what documents, resources, or databases were available so that people could see what is allowable in each of the area jurisdictions. Chair Mongeau responded that over a dozen blueprints have been developed that address different food systems issues. She explained that each blueprint includes a table on what is currently permissible in area jurisdictions as well as regional and national examples of regulations and ordinances. Ms. Harden iterated that the Cass Clay Food Partners has been working to share its resources more widely. She noted that a number of resources were updated or revised over the summer as part of the Cass Clay Food Partners Covid-19 response.

Ms. Larson asked if there was any information on what blueprints had specifically been utilized or adopted by area jurisdictions. Ms. Lipetzky highlighted the FAQ guide developed over the summer that better explains what types of food systems activities are permitted in each jurisdiction

5. Hunger Update

Taylor Syvertson, Impact Manager for the Great Plains Food Bank, provided information on the state of hunger in Cass and Clay counties.

Ms. Syvertson explained that the Great Plains Food Bank has been operational for the past 38 years and is committed to recovering food that may otherwise be wasted. She estimated that 30,000 area residents are food insecure on any given day and that the Great Plains Food Bank strives to fill that gap through its 61 area partners and direct service programs.

Ms. Syvertson noted that a number of factors affect food insecurity including: individual characteristics and demographics, social and community factors, environmental issues, and policy needs. She explained that the Great Plains Food Bank has been working hard to address each of the different factors to better combat hunger sustainably in the community.

Ms. Syvertson explained that, as part of its Covid-19 response, the Great Plains Food Bank developed a disaster response plan and safety protocols in March 2020. She stated that this helped the organization and its partners to continue providing core services without disruption. She noted that the need for food assistance has been at an all-time high, with a 45 percent increase statewide in North Dakota. She also detailed shifts in distribution that the Great Plains Food Bank had to pursue, including have to purchase 90 percent of its food needs that are typically donated. She also highlighted efforts by the USDA and its Food Box Program, with over 17,000 boxes distributed in Cass and Clay counties. She concluded by explaining that the Great Plains Food Bank had served an additional 250,000 meals in 2020 than in 2019 and that increased food assistance needs will continue into 2021.

Ms. George asked if the Great Plains Food Bank had a sufficient number of volunteers. Ms. Syvertson responded that finding volunteers is a constant, ongoing need. She noted that the Great Plains Food Bank has strict protocols for sanitation and hygiene and that all volunteers are required to wear masks. She said that anyone interested in volunteering may check out their website.

Ms. Kahly asked what the coverage area for the Great Plains Food Bank is and if there was an increase in SNAP benefits nationwide. Ms. Syvertson replied that the Great Plains Food Bank services every county in North Dakota as well as Clay County, Minnesota. She also answered that it was her understanding that there was both a regional and national increase in SNAP benefits.

Chair Mongeau asked what people can do specifically to help the mission of the Great Plains Food Bank. Ms. Syvertson answered that the three best ways people can help are donating leftover produce during the gardening season, sharing funds with any of its 61 area partners, and volunteering time with partner agencies.

Ms. Harden asked if the Great Plains Food Bank had pursued any strategies with the restaurant industry to address some of the food assistance gaps it experienced. Ms. Syvertson responded that the USDA had provided national examples of how food banks had leveraged restaurant food and restaurant staff to connect food directly to people who needed it.

Mr. Utecht left at 11:29 AM.

6. Cass Clay Food Partners Strategic Planning Exercise: Recap

Ms. Harden provided an action planning summary on the planning exercise conducted in January in which the Commission, steering committee, and community members broke out into small groups to discuss the strategic planning needs of the Cass Clay Food Partners. She focused on group responses to two separate questions: what are the most important issues that the Cass Clay Food Partners should be working on over the next two years and what work were people most proud of.

7. Public Comment Opportunity

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

No comments were made.

8. Commission and Steering Committee Roundtable

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

Ms. Ussatis left at 11:55 AM.

9. Commission Action Steps

Chair Mongeau stated that the next Commission meeting would be held on March 10. She also mentioned that the next First Fridays event would be held online on February 5 at 8:00 AM.

Chair Mongeau adjourned the meeting at 11:58 AM.