

**39th Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
May 11, 2022
Virtual Meeting**

Members Present:

Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council, Chair
Deb White, City of Moorhead
Mandy George, West Fargo City Commission
Jenna Kahly, Clay County Commission
Jeremiah Utecht, At-Large Member
Anna Johnson, At-Large Member
Joan Kopperud, At-Large Member
Jeffrey Miller, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

Arlette Preston, Fargo City Commission
Chelsey Johnson, Horace City Council
Duane Breitling, Cass County Commission
Jeff York, At-Large Member

Others Present:

Michelle Draxten, Fargo Cass Public Health
Anna Seefeldt, Fargo Cass Public Health
Rory Beil, Clay County Public Health
Rita Ussatis, NDSU Extension
Noelle Harden, U of M Extension
Janice Tweet, Great Plains Food Bank
Erika Franck, Clay County Planning and Zoning
Deb Haugen, Cass Clay Food Partners
Don Kinzler, NDSU Extension, Cass County
Crystal Rayamajhi, City of Moorhead
Forrest Steinhoff, City of Moorhead Planning and Zoning
Bjorn Solberg, Red River Harvest Cooperative
Verna Kragnes, Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society
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 Mr. Utecht and seconded by Ms. White. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from March 9, 2022

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

2. Commission Introductions

Chair Aasness lead Commission and steering committee members in a brief round of introductions.

3. Spotlight on Community Issue: Current Challenges Facing Local Charitable Feeding Network

Ms. Tweet spoke briefly about the cost issues and other challenges that the Great Plains Food Bank and partner agencies are facing.

Ms. Tweet began by explaining that partner agencies with the Great Plains Food Bank sign yearly partnership agreements, which allow partners to access the food bank's inventory and also assist with delivery logistics for an annual \$50 fee. She noted that food sources for the Great Plains Food Bank come from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) administered through the USDA, purchased products through different vendors, donations, and retail rescue from area supermarkets.

Ms. Tweet provided several examples of increasing costs in 2022 including a 31 percent cost increase in freight and third-party trucking, a 36 percent cost increase in cases of chunk chicken, a 43 percent cost increase in cases of beef stew, and a 65 percent cost increase in purchasing a truckload of food. She also noted other challenges including an end of Covid-19 funding which allowed for additional food for partner agencies at no cost, difficulty in sourcing nutritious foods, and a decrease in product availability such as meat and baby formula. She concluded by explaining ways in which people can help such as donating food, money, and time, or connecting with local food pantries to gauge their individual needs.

4. Recap from GardenPalooza

Don Kinzler from Cass County Extension provided a recap of the GardenPalooza, an all-day gardening event that occurred at Shanley High School on April 23. The event was limited to 200 registered attendees and featured 40 master gardener volunteers, 20 breakout session presenters, and 12 vendors. Mr. Kinzler mentioned that the keynote speaker was Mike Heger, author of *Growing Perennials in Cold Climates* and a horticulturist with over 40 years of experience. He also stated that a date for GardenPalooza has been set for next year on April 15, 2023.

Ms. Harden asked if the attendee cap of 200 might be raised in 2023. Mr. Kinzler stated that the current cap will likely be kept in place for the next couple of years as that is a manageable number for the current event space.

Crystal Rayamajhi asked what the cost of the event was. Mr. Kinzler answered that the cost for the all-day event was \$40 per attendee, which included lunch.

5. Moorhead Sustainability Coordinator Update

Crystal Rayamajhi, Sustainability Coordinator for the City of Moorhead, provided an update on some of the projects she has assisted with throughout the city. Projects that Ms. Rayamajhi highlighted included the Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan, the Food Forest at M.B. Johnson Park, new pollinator garden beds and rain gardens at Moorhead Public Works, and replanting a number of rescued rose plantings from the Moorhead Dog Park. She stated that future projects include coordinating with city sanitation services on future endeavors, working to achieve Step 5 status under the Minnesota GreenStep Cities program, and continuing different landscaping projects. She also expressed interest in getting a better handle on city data and metrics to understand the most cost-effective means of reducing energy consumption, reducing waste production, increasing recycling, improving natural habitats, and conserving water resources.

6. Moorhead Comprehensive Plan Update

Ms. White and Forrest Steinhoff, Assistant City Planner for the City of Moorhead, provided the Commission with an update on the city's new comprehensive plan. Ms. White noted that one of the Five Big Ideas that the city adopted as priorities is to, "Embrace resilient environmental and equitable solutions, planning for infrastructure, building development, energy, and climate adaptation while building a greener community." Mr. Steinhoff provided references from different areas of the comprehensive plan that focused on food systems or sustainability and resilience initiatives including a goal to, "Develop policies that support individual and community projects such as native landscapes, rain gardens, local food production, and pollinators."

7. Letter of Support Request Process

Ms. Harden spoke about discussions the steering committee had had regarding letters of support on behalf of the Cass Clay Food Commission. She stated that, similar to the request received by the Prairie Rose Agricultural Institute for Research, Innovation, and Education (PRAIRIE) in January 2022, the steering committee will work to ensure that projects or programs seeking formal support from the Commission align with the Food Partner's value statements, and work with the Commission Chair in drafting and endorsing a final letter of support.

8. Kudos and Community Recognition

Ms. Draxten highlighted a number of people and organizations for their work in the community including:

- New Roots Farm Incubator which received the Clay County Farm Family of the Year award through U of M Extension.
- Verna Kragnes won the 2022 Environmental Initiative Award for Critical Collaborator for her leadership of New Roots Farm Incubator and other efforts to support local farmers and sustainable agriculture.
- James Beard restaurant semi-finalists:
 - Austin Covert, Rosewild, Fargo, ND (Outstanding Chef)
 - Ryan Nitschke, Luna Fargo, Fargo, ND (Best Chef: Midwest)
- Food-related books published by local authors:
 - *Midwest Mediterranean* by Noreen Thomas, Megan Myrdal, David Clardy, Fadel Nammour, William Schultz, and Peter Schultz
 - *2021 Growing Together Cookbook* by Growing Together Gardens and NDSU Extension
 - *Cabin Chef* by Sara Watson

Verna Kragnes, who was in the audience, spoke briefly about her award and the work and initiatives she is currently working on.

9. 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.

Bjorn Solberg from the Red River Harvest Cooperative provided comments on the meeting and noted that the cooperative, which champions local producers in the region, had recently received funding through several non-profit organizations in Minnesota.

Ms. Draxten informed the Commission that Leola Daul with the Heart-n-Soul Community Café now has a mobile food café which allows it to better host events throughout the community. She said that there were several upcoming meals planned for the summer and noted that Heart-n-Soul Community Café is always looking for community chefs to help prepare meals.

10. Commission and Steering Committee Roundtable: Community Updates and Meeting Reflections

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

11. Commission Action Steps

Chair Aasness stated that the next Commission meeting would be held on September 14, 2022. He also mentioned that the next First Fridays event would be held at 701 Eateries in Fargo on June 3 at 8:00 AM. He noted that this was a correction from the date in the agenda, which stated that the next Frist Fridays would be on September 14.

Chair Aasness adjourned the meeting at 11:51 AM.