

**40th Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
September 14, 2022
Virtual Meeting**

Members Present:

Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council, Chair
Arlette Preston, Fargo City Commission
Deb White, City of Moorhead
Duane Breitling, Cass County Commission
Mandy George, West Fargo City Commission
Jeremiah Utecht, At-Large Member
Jeff York, At-Large Member
Anna Johnson, At-Large Member
Joan Kopperud, At-Large Member
Jeffrey Miller, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

Jenna Kahly, Clay County Commission

Others Present:

Michelle Draxten, 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
Anita Hofsommer, Growing Together Community Gardens
Don Kinzler, NDSU Extension, Cass County
Jill Sokness, NDSU Extension, Cass County
Susie West, U of M Extension, Clay County
Mindy Grant, U of M Extension, Clay County
Hali Durand, Kesselring Vineyards
Don B., Public Citizen
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 Ms. George and seconded by Mr. Breitling. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from May 11, 2022

A motion to approve the minutes for May was made by Ms. George and seconded by Mr. Utecht. 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. At-Large Commissioner Spotlight

Ms. Johnson spoke about her work with Lakes and Prairies Community Action Partnership (CAPLP) as nutrition manager for the Head Start Program. She explained her role in preparing children for school and kindergarten by providing health, nutrition, and education services, as well as parent engagement. She stated that she manages food service operations for approximately 160 children at their on-site facility and tracks growth assessments and BMIs of children over two years of age.

4. Hunger Action Month Update

Ms. Tweet informed the Commission that September is Hunger Action Month in North Dakota. She explained that throughout the month, people are encouraged to wear orange to help raise hunger awareness. She also talked about a daily calendar that is published each year which has different ideas on how people in the community can help alleviate hunger. She also noted that the Great Plains Food Bank would be holding a virtual food drive in collaboration with Corwin Automotive and Valley News Live. She concluded with ways people could help with Hunger Action Month including hosting virtual food drives, signing up to volunteer at food bank locations in Fargo or Bismarck, making financial contributions, or signing up to become a Hunger Advocate.

5a. Panel at the Health and Hunger Summit

Ms. Harden explained that the Food Partners had submitted a proposal to have a panel discussion at the Health and Hunger Summit on October 20. She stated that it would be a 45-minute session and that she was hoping to have three former or current Commissioners to be featured. She noted that Ms. Preston had already agreed to serve on the panel. Ms. White stated that she would potentially have interest in being part of the panel discussion.

5b. 2023 Commission Schedule

Ms. Harden brought forward several potential ideas about amending the Commission schedule, including whether to meet quarterly or to keep the number of Commission meetings at five. She also brought forward ideas about potentially adding one or two community listening sessions per year or adding “office hours” in which members of the public could reach out to Steering Committee members to discuss issues or ideas.

Several Commissioners provided general remarks, including positive comments on including community listening sessions and the desire for meetings to be in-person rather than virtual if they were to be quarterly. Ms. Harden stated that the Steering Committee would discuss these proposals further at their next committee meeting.

6. Cass Clay Food Partners Video Project Update

Ms. Draxten informed the Commission about several promotional videos being developed in collaboration with Fargo Cass Public Health and the City of Fargo. She noted that the videos would include an informational video about food systems and the Cass Clay Food Partners, the importance of local foods, pollinators, backyard chickens, and gleaning. She stated that three of the videos had already been filmed, with a fourth video scheduled for later in September.

7. Food Tank Opportunity

Ms. Kopperud provided the Commission information on Food Tank, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that highlights environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable ways of alleviating hunger, obesity, and poverty. She noted that Concordia College is represented in one of the academic working groups associated with the organization. She highlighted several articles, podcasts, and summits from the organization's website, including an article about food insecurity on college campuses. She also showcased an article on urban gardens and the soft skill training they can provide as well as a food summit that was held at the University of Minnesota in May 2022. She noted that Food Tank also had a free newsletter that people could subscribe to.

8. Growing Together Community Gardens Update

Anita Hofsommer from Growing Together Community Gardens provided an update on its activities over the past several years. She noted that the Covid-19 pandemic likely had an impact on the number of volunteers at each of the garden sites, especially New American volunteers. But she stated that Growing Together was on track to produce over 40,000 pounds of fresh produce in 2022, an increase of over 60 percent from the year prior.

9. Veggies for the Pantry Update

Don Kinzler from NDSU Extension in Cass County provided the Commission information on the Veggies for the Pantry program. He stated that the program allows citizens to donate any garden surplus that they may have at several different drop-off locations, which is then brought to one of the food banks in the area. He noted that master gardener volunteers have donated over 9,000 pounds of produce in 2022 so far, which translates into approximately 36,000 servings for those in need.

10. MN Department of Agriculture Public Input Opportunity

Mr. Altenburg noted that the Minnesota Department of Agriculture was gathering ideas for the state's next biennial budget and had put out a call for input from farmers, food businesses, and others affected by food and agriculture systems. He stated that ideas could be related to food policies, funding, and program suggestions that would benefit individuals and communities throughout the state.

Mr. Altenburg explained that two virtual public input sessions occurred on September 7 and September 8 but that there was still time to submit comments directly to the Department of Agriculture on ideas on how the Minnesota Legislature might appropriate funds for agricultural activities. He provided web links where people could submit comments as well as a link to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture agency website.

11. Kudos and Community Recognition

Ms. Harden highlighted several people and organizations for their work in the community including:

- Area youth that was involved in showing livestock at the Cass and Clay county fairs
- New Minnesota agricultural license plate which supports the Future Farmers of America program and 4-H

12. Public Comment Opportunity

Chair Aasness informed the Commission that time would be allotted for public comments. He noted that members of the community can submit comments via a comment link when Commission packets are emailed out.

Hali Durand with Kesselring Vineyards stated their vineyards have had a bumper crop in 2022 and that they were looking for volunteers to help harvest native wild grapes in the Sheyenne River Valley. She stated that Kesselring Vineyards would provide breakfast bites and lunch at the winery and that volunteers would be compensated based on the pounds of grapes that they picked.

13. 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.

14. Commission Action Steps

Chair Aasness stated that the next Commission meeting would be held on November 9, 2022. He also mentioned that the next First Fridays event would be held at 701 Eateries in Fargo on October 7 at 8:00 AM.

Chair Aasness adjourned the meeting at 11:44 AM.