

**57th Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
March 11, 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)
John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Joan Kopperud, At-Large Member
Jeffrey Miller, At-Large Member
Casey Steele, At-Large Member
Carin Engler, At-Large Member
Jeff York, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

Paul Krabbenhoft, Clay County Commission
Amber Borah, Dilworth City Council

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
Erika Franck, Clay County Planning and Zoning
Eric Hegg, Global Refuge
Candance Anderson, Heart-n-Soul Community Café
Candi Holcomb, More than Manna
Amy Nash, More than Manna
Bryce Haugen, Clay County Climate Action Group
Fred Sternhagan, Clay County Climate Action Group
Abby Persons, NDSU
Kaitlin Schmitz, 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. Kapitan. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from January 14, 2026

A motion to approve the minutes for January 2026 was made by Mr. Strand and seconded by Mr. Kapitan. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1c. Approve Appointments of At-Large Members

Chair Nesemeier explained that the steering committee had solicited applications for one at-large member to fill the vacancy left by Anna Johnson. She noted that the committee reviewed

the applicants and recommended appointing Casey Steele to the position. She also reported that current at-large members Joan Kopperud and Jeffrey Miller had agreed to serve additional two-year terms.

A motion to approve the appointment of Casey Steele and the reappointments of Joan Kopperud and Jeffrey Miller to the Commission was made by Mr. Kapitan 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.

3. Leadership Updates

Mr. Altenburg and Mr. Hegg provided a brief update from the Financial Health Committee. Mr. Beil outlined the topics planned for discussion at the March Commission meeting.

4. More Than Manna Presentation

Candi Holcomb provided the Commission information on More Than Manna, a non-profit organization which she founded.

Ms. Holcomb explained that More Than Manna is a Fargo-based nonprofit organization focused on addressing food insecurity by providing nutritious meals and fostering community connections. She stated that the organization operates primarily through volunteer-driven efforts, preparing and distributing meals to individuals and families in need. She explained that, in addition to serving food, More Than Manna emphasizes dignity, compassion, and relationship-building, working to create a welcoming environment for those they serve. She indicated that through partnerships with local organizations and community support, More Than Manna plays an active role in helping meet immediate nutritional needs in the Fargo-Moorhead area while encouraging broader community engagement.

5. Clay County Land Development Ordinance Update

Ms. Franck provided an informational item on the Clay County Land Development Code update.

Ms. Franck explained that the Clay County Board of Commissioners adopted a comprehensive update to the county's Land Development Ordinance in June 2025 following a multi-year review process led by the Planning Commission and county staff. She noted that the revised ordinance updates zoning and subdivision regulations, reorganizes and clarifies development standards, and was designed to align local regulations with the county's long-range comprehensive plan and modern development practices.

Ms. Franck stated that several updates to the Land Development Ordinance directly support community health, local food access, and agricultural vitality, consistent with the comprehensive plan's goals. Key updates include expanded allowances for seasonal farm produce sales across zoning districts, revised standards for keeping animals on residential lots, and an updated agricultural use definition that now includes apiculture. She stated that the ordinance also strengthens agricultural protection measures through conservation-focused subdivision design, pollinator-friendly ground cover requirements for solar farms, and updated feedlot setback standards. Additionally, agricultural tourism is now formally recognized as an allowable use. She noted that, collectively, these changes promote rural character, protect prime farmland and natural resources, and support a resilient local food system.

6. Municipal and Commercial Composting Blueprint

Ms. Franck provided an update on the municipal and commercial composting blueprint. She noted growing community interest in organic composting and explained that the blueprint—originally developed in 2017—has been updated to better reflect current policies, resources, and programs across regional jurisdictions.

Ms. Franck reviewed materials accepted by local composting programs, landfills, and sanitation providers serving Cass and Clay counties, and outlined a framework for evaluating municipal composting initiatives. She also highlighted composting programs and sample ordinance language from Minneapolis and the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District in Duluth, as well as new or expanding programs in Mankato, Rochester, Sioux Falls, and Lincoln, NE.

A motion to approve the updated municipal and composting blueprint was made by Ms. Kopperud and seconded by Ms. Engler. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

7. Education Sharing on Creating an Organics Composting Program

Fred Sternhagan and Bryce Haugen, representing the Clay County Climate Action Group, provided the Commission with information about their organization and their current efforts to help establish a source-separated organic (SSO) composting site in Clay County. They described the action group as an ad hoc, community-based effort focused on advancing strategies related to climate change mitigation and sustainability.

Mr. Sternhagan and Mr. Haugen explained that their primary goal is to collaborate with the County to develop a windrow-style food scrap composting site at the Clay County Landfill in Hawley. They noted that they were working with county staff on a proposal to collect food scraps from Moorhead and other cities within the county, initially targeting large generators of source-separated organics, such as educational institutions and area school districts. They referenced other organics composting programs in Minnesota, including those in Pope-Douglas counties, Kittson-Norman counties, and Stearns County, as examples of comparable efforts. They stated that the proposal would be funded, in part, through a potential grant from the Minnesota Climate Smart Food Systems (MCSFS) Statewide Organics Management Infrastructure Grant program. They also emphasized their interest in fostering community connections, increasing public awareness, and building broad community support for the initiative.

Ms. Ambuehl asked how organizations such as Cass Clay Food Partners could assist with the effort. Mr. Sternhagan responded that public awareness efforts and outreach through member organizations would be helpful, and that efforts to adjust incentive structures to encourage participation would also support the program.

A motion to approve an expression of support for the Clay County Climate Action Group's MCSFS Statewide Organics Management Infrastructure Grant was made by Mr. York and seconded by Mr. Kapitan. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

8. Public Comment Opportunity

Chair Nesemeier informed the Commission that time would be allotted for public comments. She noted that members of the community may also submit comments via a comment link when Commission packets are emailed out.

No additional comments were made.

9. 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.

Ms. Ambuehl shared that the Great Plains Food Bank is developing a data project titled the Community and Agriculture Resilience Audit Tool (CARAT) and is seeking survey feedback from individuals working across various sectors of the food system, including natural resource management, soil health, and leadership roles within food councils and cooperative networks. Chair Nesemeier requested that a link to the survey be shared to the Commission following the meeting.

10. Future Meetings and Commission Action Steps

Chair Nesemeier stated that the next Commission meeting would be held on May 13. She noted that the next steering committee meeting would be March 23 at Metro COG and that Commissioners and others were welcome to attend.

Chair Nesemeier adjourned the meeting at 11:58 AM.