

**24th Meeting of the
Cass Clay Food Commission
March 13th, 2019
Fargo Commission Chambers**

Members Present:

Mike Thorstad, West Fargo City Commission, Chair
Jim Aasness, Dilworth City Council
Sara Watson Curry, Moorhead City Council
Chelsey Johnson, Horace City Council
Vern Bennett, Cass County Commission
Bukola Bakare, At-Large Member
Nancy Carriveau, At-Large Member
Jeremiah Utecht, At-Large Member

Members Absent:

Jenny Mongeau, Clay County Commission
John Strand, Fargo City Commission
Mindy Grant, At-Large Member
Kayla Pridmore, At-Large Member

Others Present:

Kim Lipetzky, Fargo Cass Public Health
Rory Beil, Clay County Public Health
Noelle Harden, U of M Extension
Abby Gold, NDSU Department of Public Health
Tim Hiller, Concordia College
Deb Haugen, Cass Clay Food Partners
Margie Bailly, Cass Clay Food Partners
Adam Altenburg, Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments
Luke Champa, Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments

Chair Thorstad called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM.

1a. Approve Order and Contents of the Overall Agenda

Chair Thorstad noted that the agenda had been revised and that the previous Item 6 on the Pollinator and Solar Garden in Clay County had been replaced with a recap on a panel discussion hosted by Concordia College entitled “Farming for the Future: Cultivating Resilience in a Changing Climate.”

A motion to approve the order and contents of the overall agenda was made by Mr. Bennett and seconded by Ms. Watson Curry. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

1b. Review and Action on Minutes from January 9, 2019

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. Carriveau and seconded by Mr. Aasness. The motion was voted on and unanimously approved.

2. Commission Check-In

Chair Thorstad stated that Commission members and the steering committee had an opportunity to provide updates on news or events happening in the community.

Ms. Johnson indicated that she is currently working to promote additional public events in Horace and that if anyone had any interest in holding future events to reach out to her.

Ms. Carriaveau stated that the Cass Clay Hunger Coalition meets the first Tuesday of every month at Fargo Cass Public Health. She indicated that they are always looking for new members to become involved.

Ms. Watson Curry stated that the Red River Market would be hosting its spring farmers market on March 30 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the Moorhead Center Mall.

Ms. Harden informed the Commission that the next Heart-n-Soul Community Café would be held on March 24 from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM at Square One Kitchen in Fargo. She stated that the meal would focus on the theme of minimal food waste and ways to reduce waste in the kitchen.

Mr. Hiller explained that, in 2017, Concordia College signed the Integrated Climate Commitment, joining 600 American college and university campuses in the Climate Leadership Network. He stated that by signing this agreement, Concordia College has pledged to reduce carbon emissions as well as work with local partners to increase the community's ability to adapt and flourish in the face of climate change. He explained that he, along with Ken Foster, chair of the president's Sustainability Council, established a task-force to work with other metro-area entities in building a community that is resilient in the face of a changing climate. He stated that one of the areas the task-force will focus on is ways to address and prepare for potential food instability issues that may arise as a result of climate change.

3. Hunger Snapshot

Ms. Lipetzky explained that, in response to the presentation by the Great Plains Food Bank regarding at the January Commission meeting as well as the 2018 Hunger in North Dakota Survey (including Clay County), the Cass Clay Food Partners developed a community snapshot regarding programs, services, and interventions available to residents in the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area who experience hunger and food insecurity

Annemarie Kettler, Nutrition Intern for Fargo Cass Public Health, stated that one in nine residents in Cass and Clay Counties need food assistance and that according to the 2018 Hunger Survey, 37 percent are children and seven percent are seniors. She provided further statistics that showed that 62 percent of adults and 17 percent of children skip meals regularly, 29 percent of respondents did not eat for an entire day in the last month, and that 70 percent of respondents had a chronic disease.

Ms. Kettler stated that some of the root causes of hunger in Cass and Clay Counties include: affordable housing, poverty, available housing, lack of transportation, chronic disease or other health conditions, language barriers, and limited access to healthy and affordable foods.

Ms. Kettler provided information on federal programs aimed at combating hunger including SNAP, WIC, and the National School Lunch Program. She stated that there were 18,290 SNAP participants in Cass and Clay Counties in 2018, as well as 7,232 WIC participants in both counties. She also highlighted statistics showing that between 28 and 40 percent of metro-area school district students were utilizing free or reduced-cost lunches.

Ms. Kettler emphasized several programs with the Great Plains Food Bank including: Backpack Program, School Pantry Program, Youth Summer Meals Program, and the Farm to Food Shelf Program. She also provided information on listings of local feeding networks as well as donation and food recovery efforts including GleaND, Veggies for the Pantry, and local pantries accepting fresh produce.

Ms. Kettler informed the Commission of a number of local programs to assist in combating hunger and food insecurity including: farmers markets, Double Up Food Bucks, Heart-n-Soul Community Café, community gardens, the Little Free Garden project, and several orchard projects. She also highlighted the work of the Cass Clay Food Partners, the Cass Clay Hunger Coalition, and the Prairie Roots Community Fund.

Ms. Kettler explained that several healthcare programs focused on hunger including food insecurity screening and Essentia and the Food Baskets for Mom program at Sanford.

Ms. Kettler concluded by stating that the Cass Clay Hunger Coalition would be holding a meeting on April 2 at 8:00 at Fargo Cass Public Health and that a planning meeting would be held on May 7 for those interested in becoming more involved.

Mr. Bennett asked what the definition was of a chronic disease and what effect chronic diseases had on the percentages of food insecurity. Ms. Carriveau answered that some of the chronic diseases that the 2018 Hunger in North Dakota Survey inquired about included obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and other medical challenges. She indicated that some of these diseases were in fact underreported in the survey. She stated that food insecurity plays a big role in these diseases because people have limited access to foods that support a healthy diet.

Ms. Watson Curry asked whether the steering committee for the Cass Clay Food Partners intended to share the information included in the snapshot with other groups or organizations in the area. Ms. Lipetzky answered that the snapshot was developed more as a recap of the Great Plains Food Bank's presentation in January and to highlight additional information on programs and services but stated she would be happy to do so for anyone interested. Ms. Carriveau stated that the Great Plains Food Bank would share their information with additional organizations as well.

Ms. Bakare asked what networking efforts were being made to involve smaller groups or individuals in hunger and food insecurity programs in the area. Ms. Lipetzky stated that they are in the process of starting up and reorganizing the Cass Clay Hunger Coalition and that the group is taking a look at visioning strategies and a plan for the community. She stated that all are welcome to become involved and iterated that the Hunger Coalition would be holding a meeting on April 2, followed by a larger planning meeting on May 7.

Ms. Watson Curry stated that one of the most interesting pieces of information from the presentation from the Great Plains Food Bank in January was about income disparities and how that impacts hunger and food insecurity. Ms. Carriveau informed the Commission that the information could be found online at greatplainsfoodbank.org or by searching Ending Hunger 2.0.

4. A Sustainable Food System from Soil Health to Human Health

Dr. Dipayan Sarkar, Research Associate at the Department of Plant Sciences, NDSU, presented the Commission information on soil health and the foundation of sustainable food systems.

Dr. Sarkar stated that the planet can sufficiently provide for 12 billion people. However, he explained that emerging global challenges include: inadequate food distribution in which one billion people are still hungry, excess caloric intake by 1.5 billion people which impacts health and leads to chronic diseases, climate adjustment and resilience, and wastage of 1.3 billion tons of food. He indicated that solutions include: addressing food security and food quality, preventing non-communicable chronic diseases, improving plant stress tolerance, and advancements in food preservation and safety.

Dr. Sarkar explained that soil health has a huge impact on plant systems, which in turn has an effect on human health. He stated that diversity and resilience is the most critical component of ecological biodiversity, including microbial diversity, food crop diversity, and food and nutrition diversity.

Dr. Sarkar presented the Commission information regarding innovation for sustainable pre-harvest solutions including: techniques for improving soil health, improving seed vigor, enhancing biotic and abiotic stress resilience, micro-propagation, improving nutrient utilization, and elicitation with mild abiotic stress induction.

Dr. Sarkar explained that post-harvest solutions include: anti-browning and wound healing of produce, fermentation techniques, encouraging indigenous food systems, functional food design, and food processing and cooking optimization.

Dr. Sarkar concluded by comparing state agriculture with local food systems and information on the Global Institute of Food Security and International Agriculture (GIFSIA). He stated that the fifth annual NDSU Annual Food for Health Conference would be held July 7 through July 10 at the Radisson Hotel in Fargo.

Mr. Bennett asked what instructions or instruments are available to help test soil health, especially for community gardens or small scale operations. Dr. Sarkar replied that the issue with traditional soil testing is that they don't provide information on microorganisms or micronutrients, which are more important than nitrogen and phosphorus potassium. He stated that traditional agricultural practices such as applying compost to community gardens is the most effective way of ensuring soil health in smaller operations.

Ms. Gold left at 11:16 AM.

5. Minnesota GreenStep Cities Program in Moorhead

Hayley Hilfer, Sustainability Manager for the City of Moorhead, and Scott Schwandt, GreenCorps Member with Clay County Public Health, provided the Commission information on the Minnesota GreenStep Cities program and the efforts being undertaken in the City of Moorhead.

Ms. Hilfer explained that GreenStep Cities is a voluntary, action-oriented program focusing on sustainable development best practices. She stated that the three primary focuses of the program are cost savings, innovation, and energy use reduction. She explained that there are currently 125 cities in Minnesota currently taking part in the program.

Mr. Schwandt informed the Commission that the five steps to becoming a GreenStep city include: building community interest, being recognized for implementing eight best practices as outlined in the program, implementing an additional eight high-impact best practices, measuring and reporting on 15 city performance metrics, and showing improvement in city performance metrics. He explained that there are currently 168 best practices which fall under

five broad categories including: buildings and lighting, land use, transportation, environmental management, and community and economic development.

Ms. Hilfer concluded by highlighting best practices by the City of Moorhead. She indicated that Moorhead is currently on Step Two of the GreenStep Cities program but working to achieve Step Three.

Ms. Watson Curry indicated that it may be beneficial to include the Metro Food Plan to help boost some of the best practices already being documented as part of the GreenStep Cities program in Moorhead.

Mr. Bennett stated that the best practices being undertaken by the City of Moorhead all seemed practical and beneficial both to the city and at addressing sustainability issues at a state level.

Ms. Johnson asked if there was a comparable program in North Dakota. Ms. Hilfer answered that she is currently only aware of the Minnesota program. Ms. Johnson stated that it may be beneficial to reach out to state representatives to promote a similar program in the state.

6. Recap: Farming for the Future: Cultivating Resilience in a Changing Climate

Ms. Harden provided a brief recap on the panel discussion hosted by Concordia College on January 24 entitled “Farming for the Future: Cultivating Resilience in a Changing Climate.”

7. Public Comment Opportunity

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

Barb Villella, Prairie Roots Community Fund, highlighted community gardening work being done in the Golden Ridge neighborhood in Fargo. She also mentioned the double bucks program that people can utilize at Prairie Roots Co-op.

8. Commission and Steering Committee Roundtable

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

Ms. Haugen informed the Commission that Growing Together would be hosting a potluck and informational session on the upcoming growing season at Olivet Lutheran Church on March 21.

9. Commission Action Steps

Chair Thorstad stated that the next Commission meeting would be held on May 8. He also mentioned that the next First Fridays event would be held on April 5 at Theatre B in Moorhead.

Chair Thorstad adjourned the meeting at 11:51 AM.