

# SAN FRANCISCO FIRE COMMISSION

## FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 12, 2020

City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 416, San Francisco, California, 94102

The Video can be viewed by clicking this link:

[https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=180&clip\\_id=35161](https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=180&clip_id=35161)

President Nakajo called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

|                           |                               |          |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|
| Commission President      | Francee Covington             | Present  |
| Commission Vice President | Katherine Feinstein           | Present  |
| Commissioner              | Stephen Nakajo                | Present  |
| Commissioner              | Ken Cleaveland                | Present  |
| Commissioner              | Tony Rodriguez                | Present  |
| Chief of Department       | Jeanine Nicholson             | Present. |
| Victor Wyrsh              | Deputy Chief -- Operations    |          |
| Jose Velo                 | Deputy Chief --Administration |          |
| Sandy Tong                | EMS                           |          |
| Michael Cochrane          | Homeland Security             |          |
| Khai Ali                  | Airport Division              |          |
| Dawn DeWitt               | Support Services              |          |
| Joel Sato                 | Training Division             |          |
| Assistant Chiefs          |                               |          |
| Lorrie Kalos              | Division 2                    |          |
| William Storti            | Division 3                    |          |
| Staff                     |                               |          |
| Mark Corso                | Deputy Director of Finance    |          |
| Olivia Scanlon            | Communications and Outreach   |          |

### 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

### 3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES *[Discussion and possible action]*

Discussion and possible action to approve meeting minutes.

- Minutes from Regular Meeting on January 22, 2020

Commissioner Cleaveland Moved to approve the above meeting Minutes. Vice President Feinstein Seconded. Motion to approve the above Minutes was unanimous.

There was no public comment.

#### **4. PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE ACKNOWLEDGING MICHAEL HARDEMAN AND JOSEPH ALIOTO VERONESE FOR THEIR DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE SAN FRANCISCO FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Fire Commission and Chief of Department to Present Certificates of Appreciation to Michael Hardeman and Joseph Alioto Veronese for their Dedicated Service to the SFFD.

This item was taken out of order.

President Covington acknowledged the presence of former Commissioner Alioto Veronese and the absence of former Commissioner Hardeman who advised the Commission Secretary he would not be able to attend today's meeting.

Mr. Alioto Veronese thanked many folks including Mayor Lee, Mayor Farrell, Mayor Breed and all of the commissioners as well as Chief Nicholson, all the members of the Department and Commission Secretary. He described many of the things he learned about the department while serving as a commissioner, his projects he passionately worked on to make the department a better place than it was when he first served as a fire commissioner including cancer prevention, the drone program, morale at Station 49 and for holding other Department's accountable for the work that is going on in the city and stated he hopes the current fire commission will continue toward making the SFFD a better place than when they first joined.

Each of the commissioners as well as Chief Nicholson thanked former commissioner Alioto Veronese for his dedicated and passionate service and advocacy to the Department over the last three years and wished him well. They confirmed that his Foundation sponsored Stair Climb is set for September 12, 2020. President Covington presented the certificate to him and the commissioners took a photo with him.

There was no public comment.

#### **5. FIRE DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATIVE BULLETINS 2019***[Discussion and possible action]*

Discussion and possible action regarding Fire Department Administrative Bulletins 2019.

The draft bulletins were posted on the Department's website <http://sf-fire.org/proposed-fire-department-administrative-bulletins-2019> for over 30 days in accordance with San Francisco Fire Code requirements, and the Department scheduled a public hearing on **January 28, 2020** to allow the public to provide input on the proposed bulletins. The bulletins under consideration at this meeting have been posted on the Department's website since **December 13, 2019**.

Assistant Fire Marshal Rich Brown presented this item. He detailed the executive summary (attached hereto: <https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/Executive%20Summary%20changes%20to%20Abs.pdf>) and added that during this code cycle, all 53 administrative bulletins were changed throughout to reflect the 2019 year in their respective titles and five new additional administrative bulletins were added which are as follows:

- 2.17 Submittal Guidelines for Cannabis and Plan cultivation Facilities
- 2.18 Submittal Guidelines for Cannabis and Plant Extraction Facilities

- 3.08 Sleeping Area Fire Alarm Requirements
- 5.14 Removal of fire Smoke Dampers from HVAC Penetrations of Fire resistance Rated corridors
- 5.15 Uses of Passive Methods for Required Smoke Control systems

He gave an explanation of each of the new bulletins.

A/Fire Marshal Brown stated that all material contained in the administrative bulletins is published for the benefit of the public to help promote expeditious plan review and applicable code compliance and they are not applicable if they are determined to be less restrictive than the California State Building or Fire Code provisions or are in conflict with other regulatory requirements that take precedence.

He stated that during public comment at the January 28, 2020 hearing, a concerned designer shared his concerns about the issuance of admin bulletin 5.15, use of passive method for required smoke control system, which is very technical and deals with smoke control in high-rise buildings, so they pulled that bulletin from consideration today and will keep it under revision to get it right and move forward from there.

Commissioner Rodriguez confirmed that the administrative bulletins are a local jurisdiction. He also received clarification on changes to bulletins 4.09 and 4.27

Commissioner Cleaveland confirmed the fire service elevators were required that they service all floors of new buildings but was chanced by the International Building Code Council and the rationale for that was that according to the code commentary was that firefighters wouldn't use elevators to fight a below-grade fire, they would use the stairs to attack the fire. A/Fire Marshal Brown stated his concern is on the consistency of buildings that were built in the city over the last 12 years, members have been doing it one way and all of a sudden they change it, and he wonders how that will bode well with the training for fire suppression folks.

Commissioner Nakajo confirmed that the commission will be asked to adopt the Admin Bulletins as submitted and repeated some of the changes A/Fire Marshal Brown described. With regard to cannabis plant facilities, A/Fire Marshal Brown estimated there are approximately a dozen, and most are located in the Bay View District in old industrial warehouses as those buildings are considered F occupancy and cultivated and extraction fall in the same occupancy class.

Commissioner Cleaveland Moved to adopt the Administrative Bulletins as presented. Commissioner Rodriguez seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

There was no public comment.

**6. DRAFT OPERATING BUDGET – FISCAL YEARS 2020-2021/ 2021-2022 [Discussion and possible action]**

Discussion and possible action to adopt the Fire Department's Operating Budget for Fiscal Years 2020-2021/2021-2022.

Director Mark Corso gave a review and presented a slide show of the Draft Operating Budget which is attached: <https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/Commission%20Presentation%20-%20Budget%20Review%2020%2002%2012%20Full%20Slides.pdf>

The supporting document is also attached: <https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/SFFD%20Budget%20Book%20FY21%20FY22%20FC%20Meeting%20Feb%202020.pdf>

He confirmed that the Mayor's office is requesting a three-and-a-half reduction in general fund support for all city departments which is in response to a projected 420-million-dollar deficit over the next two years for the City. The hit to the department would be 2.7 million dollars for each of the two fiscal years, totaling five-and-a-half million dollars. The Mayor's office also instructed that budgets should not include any additional enhancements. He specified the remaining budget process timelines, including 2/21/20 as the date for all departments to submit their budgets to the Mayor's office where the Fire Department will begin negotiations and really expand on the priorities and needs of the department over the next few months in advance of the June 1<sup>st</sup> deadline when the balanced budget is due to the Board of Supervisors. He explained in detail the slides attached to the above presentation. He added that the bottom line is that they want to ensure that their sufficient resources are supported and that they can perform the work that they are obligated to the public to do. He added that the department has very limited flexibility with regards to the budget, as much of the budget is focused on salary and benefits of frontline staffing and without reducing that, there are very limited reductions elsewhere in the Department that can be made. He mentioned that in addition to maintaining the current level of service, they have identified additional funding needs that they have been discussing with the Mayor's office and will continue to, such as additional vehicles, facility repairs, IT projects, administrative support, additional staffing for fire investigation, ambulance staff, and restoration of the incident Support Specialists. He stated that they will also be asking for additional training.

Vice President FEINSTEIN thanked Mr. Corso for his presentation and his supporting documents. She asked for clarification on the EMS revenue projections. Mr. Corso explained that the first two lines on the document are the contractual adjustments and the ambulance billings and the net result of that is the EMS revenue and the adjustments are related to a variety of reasons, such as write-offs, or contractual adjustments with Medicare, Medi-Cal, et cetera.

Commissioner Cleaveland confirmed that our Ambulance Services bills out about 150 million dollars and write off about 121 million dollars, so the revenue collected adds up to approximately 30 million dollars and over 50 percent of the patients the SFFD transport are either Medi-Care or Medi-Cal patients. He also confirmed that the average percentage increase in salaries is about three percent. Commissioner Cleaveland also confirmed that the Department is looking at replacing the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBAs). He also suggested that a commissioner or two should be invited to the capital planning meetings as he thinks the urgency of the upgrades to Department facilities can no longer be ignored.

Commissioner Nakajo confirmed that the Airport's request for additional H-2 positions come out of the airport budget, but the airport budget is technically in the overall budget, it is just

funded by the airport. He also confirmed that the establishment of a Fire Prevention Community Development fund to capture funds related to outreach as a result and changes to fire codes is new funding and the structure for charging fees for the administrative hearing process is relatively new and there is a significant amount of work on the staff's part to make sure and prepare for those hearings. On page 10 of the supporting budget document above, Commissioner Nakajo confirmed that the Department is asking for Commission support to approve the proposal that currently recommends not meeting target reductions, which is the position they took the last few previous years. Mr. Corso added that just given the light of the increased demand for services and the current needs for the Department, it hasn't been feasible to propose reductions to the budget.

President Covington asked Dr. Yeh to add to the conversation. Dr. Yeh stated he would generally support some of the expressed needs already included in the budget in terms of growing call volume and the ongoing need for patient care resources. He added that the system is a continuously very busy strapped system, and some of the things that they anticipate and don't anticipate in terms of either momentary surges, emergency needs, or just the changing circumstances, sometimes can't be figured into an ongoing budget if it's already strapped. He would say that his biggest emphasis is that they need to be able to achieve the fundamentals.

Commissioner Cleaveland Moved to approve the budget as submitted. Vice President Feinstein Seconded. The motion was unanimous.

There was no public comment.

**7. CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT'S REPORT [Discussion]**  
**REPORT FROM CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT, JEANINE NICHOLSON**

Report on current issues, activities and events within the Department since the Fire Commission meeting on January 22, 2020, including budget, academies, special events, communications and outreach to other government agencies and the public.

Chief Nicholson's report covered events and activities since the last meeting. She stated that she met with the new MTA Director, Jeffrey Tumlin, and the quarterly meeting with the SFPD and DEM where they talked about future combined training, leadership, active shooter and disaster training. She also spoke at the SF Travel Public Policy Council meeting and spoke about some of the challenges that the Department is facing. She mentioned that they conducted interviews for the physician's position, and she thanked Commissioner Cleaveland for participating in those interviews. Chief Nicholson mentioned that she has been working with Human Rights Commissioner, Cheryl Davis on Opportunities for All, as well as on EMS Core. She has met with the employee groups; the Asian Firefighters, United Fire Service Women, SF EMS Officers, and SF Fire Chief's Association and that good dialogue have come out of those meetings. She has been working with DPH and DEM to make sure they keep the members safe if and when they respond to someone with the Coronavirus. She added that she and the command staff continue to do station visits. She thanked Commissioner Cleaveland, Olivia Scanlon, and Mark Corso in terms of moving the department forward with the Guardians of the City on solutions to housing the antique rigs. She announced that it is Black History Month and she went to an event at City Hall and that she will be meeting with the Cancer Prevention Foundation to move forward in terms of putting together specifications for the next PPE request for proposal.

President Covington asked if any new safety measures or protocols are being employed now that we are facing the Coronavirus. Chief Nicholson said that the next week will be important in terms of whether they see a rise in cases in the country or not. She added there are 12 confirmed cases in the country, and they are acting with an abundance of caution along with DEM and DPH. She added that DEM call takers have specific questions they screen for, and Chief Tong has put out some literature for folks on how to respond and how to decontaminate if they think they have been in contact with the Coronavirus. She went on to reassure the public that they are doing absolutely everything they can to reduce the spread of the virus. President Covington confirmed that the Department has an adequate supply of masks. Dr. Yeh added that the Coronavirus is obviously something of international concern and locally they are keeping a very close eye on it and he wanted to reiterate to the public that currently, this is seen as a very low risk to residents here and that there is not a recommendation for the public to be using masks at all.

There was no public comment.

#### REPORT FROM OPERATIONS, DEPUTY CHIEF VICTOR WYRSCH

Report on overall field operations, including greater alarm fires, Emergency Medical Services, Bureau of Fire Prevention & Investigation, Homeland Security, and Airport Division.

Chief Wyrsh's report covered events for the month of January. He stated that there was one greater alarm fire, a 2<sup>nd</sup> alarm on 1/26/20 at 1270 La Playa, which is currently under investigation and the incident commander was Acting Assistant Chief Ken Yee. He added that six adults and two pets were displaced, and one civilian suffered minor smoke inhalation. He stated that the crews performed admirably. Other notable events that took place during the reporting period were six water rescues; four cliff rescues and a BART drill. He touched on EMS-6, Bureau of Fire Prevention and Investigation, Community Outreach, Plan Check and Operational Permits; Transportation Advisory Safety Committee, the Jurisdiction over BART inspections, which the SFFD will now oversee; the Airport Division and Homeland Security and he confirmed that there are 15 members currently in school learning to fly drones.

Vice President Feinstein asked if the cost of an ambulance transport depends upon what a patient needs en route from point A to an emergency room. Director Corso responded that they have two rates for EMS response, a transport rate and a non-transport rate. He added that they have rolled up all the costs of providing EMS services in total and applied that based on the anticipated number of runs to get a per transport cost rather than itemize each item. She also acknowledged how fierce the La Playa fire was and confirmed that the amount of smoke that was coming from the building is normal in those types of fires.

Commissioner Cleaveland asked Chief Wyrsh if he could please inform the commission of the cause of the La Playa fire when the investigation is completed. They discussed the positioning of ambulances throughout the city and that they are strategically placed where call volume is higher. There was a discussion on the high medical call volume for Station 1.

Commissioner Nakajo commented that he likes the cover on the Operations report. He also stated that each of the commissioners has the prerogative to respond to any fire out in the field. He also liked the detailed explanation and pictures of the La Playa fire as it makes it clearer to

understand. He acknowledged the work being done by the Fire Marshals and Assistant Deputy Chiefs in the Department. He confirmed that DEM is at a good staffing level of dispatchers currently.

Commissioner Rodriguez thanked Chief Wyrsh for his report and confirmed that if there are any life safety issues at San Francisco BART stations, the SFFD will handle.

President Covington stated she loves the graphics and layout of the Operations report. She confirmed that the Department had 8 Incident Support Specialist that attended at the ham radio class. She also confirmed that NERT also offers ham radio classes. She acknowledged Fire Marshal DeCossio for going to Sacramento and straightening out the BART Jurisdiction issue with the State Fire Marshal.

There was no public comment.

**6. COMMISSION REPORT [Discussion]**

Report on Commission activities since last meeting on January 22, 2020.

President Nakajo acknowledged that he attended the Black History Month celebration at City Hall and the Chinese New Year's Parade. He had Chief Cochrane explain the work that went into preparing for that Parade. He thanked Chief Tong and Captain Zano for their coordinated efforts as well.

President Covington stated she also attended the Black History Celebration which was organized by the African American Historical and Cultural Society and that it was a very nice event, with a lot of participation from young people showing their talents and an excellent speech by Mayor Breed. She added that black history is not only American history, but it is also fire science history, that the very first breathing apparatus was invented by Garrett Morgan. She announced that she also attended the Lunar New Year's parade.

There was no Public Comment.

**8. AGENDA FOR NEXT AND FUTURE FIRE COMMISSION MEETINGS [Discussion]**

Discussion regarding agenda for the next and future regular meetings.

- Lt. Baxter/Public Information presentation
- SF FISE (SF Fire in Safety Education) presentation
- Chief Nicholson to come up with a plan to get info to commissioners in an organized fashion.

**9. ADJOURNMENT** President Covington adjourned the meeting at 11:27 a.m.