

**FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES**

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**Wednesday, July 8, 2020 – 9:00 a.m**  
**This meeting was held remotely on Webex**

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The Video can be viewed by clicking this link:

[https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=180&clip\\_id=36108](https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=180&clip_id=36108)

President Covington called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

Commission President	Francee Covington	Present
Commission Vice President	Katherine Feinstein	Present
Commissioner	Stephen Nakajo	Present
Commissioner	Ken Cleaveland	Present
Commissioner	Tony Rodriguez	Present

Victor Wyrsh	Deputy Chief -- Operations
Jose Velo	Deputy Chief --Administration

Joel Soto	EMS
Sandy Tong	Airport Division
Mark Johnson	Bureau of Fire Prevention
Dan DeCossio	Health and Wellness
Natasha Park	Homeland Security
Michael Cochrane	

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 July 8, 2020.

Commissioner Cleaveland moved to approve and Vice President Feinstein Seconded. The motion was unanimous. There was no public comment.

**4. UPDATE AND STATUS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF REAL ESTATE  
PERTAINING TO STATION 13 [Discussion]**

Andrico Penick, Director of Real Estate for the City and County of San Francisco to provide an update and status on Station 13.

Mr. Penick thanked the commission for the opportunity to present. He stated that the latest updates for the 530 Sansome Street project, involves the development of a new Fire Station 13 in partnership with Related Companies. He provided the legislative history for the project which started in June of 2107 when the Board passed a resolution authorizing the use of air rights at 530 Sansome for the development of an affordable housing project in District 3. He added that from there, in May of 2018 the resolution authorizing the solicitation for proposals for the development of market rate housing and a new fire station at 530 Sansome with the revenues to be dedicated to affordable housing at 772 Pacific Avenue, which is the current location of the new Asia Restaurant. In May of 2019, a resolution that conditionally approved the Conditional Property Exchange Agreement (CPEA), to facilitate a new high-rise development and new fire station at no cost to the city. He stated that since it was first proposed, it has been redesigned to better meet the needs of the Fire Department and to anticipate the new demands of the marketplace the changes were substantial enough to warrant going back to the Board of Supervisors to get new conditional approvals, which was done and those changes are:

- The fire station has been increased inside from 19,266 square feet to 20,300 square feet
- An additional apparatus bay for the fire station.
- The developer has opted to swap out 35 for-sale condos for 40,000 square feet of office space.
- They added a voluntary fee of 1.6 million dollars to be paid by the developer.

Mr. Penick stated that these changes increase the delivery cost by 31.2 million dollars from another approximately 24 million dollars which will be borne by the developer. He announced that the developer is increasing its financial participation at a time when they property value of the city has declined and that Related has been a valuable partner in this project. He added that if CEQA approval is obtained, they expect permitting in years 2021-2022 after the Board and Mayoral ratification of the final agreement and ancillary documents and construction should begin in early 2020 with a project completion by the end of 2023 is expected. He described the layout and design of the project which will include Station 13, a gym, restaurants, offices, and a hotel with a lobby on the top floor. He added that the Fire Department command staff has been involved closely in every step of the way and are very pleased with the changes.

There was no public comment.

Vice President Feinstein commented that Related is assuming that we're going to have a smashing condo market and tremendous desire for office space within two years when we have horrendous vacancy rates and she asked what happens to all of this if the economic assumptions underlying it don't come to pass, does the city still get a new Station 13 without a hotel and Equinox gym. Mr. Penick responded that the city's exchange which is needed for this project, is conditional and they will not be handing over the deed for the city property until they there is a new fire station that they are satisfied with. He added that the City's risk is virtually minimal in the sense that this project is being built with no city funds.

Commissioner Rodriguez confirmed that the project will have 16 floors on the tower and four floors for the fire station.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Mr. Penick for his presentation and asked where the members of Station 13 will relocate to during demolition. Chief Nicholson responded that internal discussions are currently taking place but that they are not making any decisions today because the city is changing day by day.

**4. 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 June 24, 2020, including budget, academies, special events, communications and outreach to other government agencies and the public.

(This matter was taken out of Order as Chief Nicholson was attending a Department Head meeting with the Mayor)

Chief Nicholson reported on activities since the last meeting on July 8, 2020. She wished Teresa Rechsteiner a happy birthday and acknowledged the presence of ADC Johnson from the airport. She mentioned how proud she is of the members of the Department for the way they stepped up and handled so much at the same time, as there were multiple fires going on at the same time, and the tragic shooting of Jace Young. She touched on Healthy Streets Operations Center dealing with issues around homelessness and how EMS-6 has been instrumental in getting some 500 people off the streets into housing over the last several weeks. She announced that she has been meeting with her command staff weekly and they talk about everything COVID, the budget, general standard operations and administration. She added that things are changing on a daily basis, so when they want to slow streets, open sidewalk seating for restaurants and eliminate parking, they have to speak up about the perspective of public safety and fire and EMS access. She also stated that they have been in regular dialogue with Local 798. She confirmed that one member of the Department has tested positive for COVID and they are waiting on results for another.

Chief Nicholson confirmed that the Emergency Operations Center model which might be up and running at the Moscone Center for potentially two years, has moved into a unified command with DPH, Human Services, and DEM at the head of it. The SFFD will still be involved and it is now called the COVID Command Center. She also acknowledged the retirement of Father Green and that they have set up a committee and are expanding their search and looking for a multitude of different denominations and backgrounds to take over that position. She confirmed that the Firescope Conference she was supposed to attend in Orange County has been changed to a remote meeting scheduled for tomorrow.

President Covington confirmed that the reference that Mr. Penick made regarding a first class next generation fire station is getting the latest and most updated techniques and construction techniques for fire stations and they were able to negotiate parking for the members of Station 13.

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 Operation report for the month of June 2020 which included one second alarm brush fire that was burning on steep terrain of the hillside on Yerba Buena Island on June 20<sup>th</sup> at Treasure Island Road and Macalla Road. He reported there were no injuries and Chief Juratovac was the incident commander. He added that they were able to implement the

fireboat, which stopped the fire from spreading from below where they had a hard time getting to it.

He talked about the importance of the fireboats and the role they played at Pier 45, as they do at a lot of the fires and water rescues, they are called out to. He mentioned that the Department has three fireboats, the St. Francis, and the Phoenix, which were utilized along with the Moose boat to the Pier 45 fire, and the third boat is the Guardian. He stated that there are many benefits to having fireboats especially since the City is on a body of water in the bay, and they can supply an endless supply of water as well as act as a pumping station to the supplies on land and augment the systems. They can take hose lines directly from them and do an above ground hydrant system and they can use the many monitors that they have on them to hit from the water to the land. With regard to the Pier 45 fire, he stated the St. Francis was unbelievably imperative in saving the Jeremiah O'Brien and referred the audience to watch the video "Saving History, The SS Jeremiah O'Brien" as it explain in greater detail what they did that morning which was incredibly impressive. He acknowledged Engine 35 officer Gary Altenberg, as well as Jack Taylor, Jay Weber and Jonathan Trupa who were on the St. Francis Fireboat at the Pier 45 fire and he added that because of them, the Jeramiah O'Brien was saved.

Chief Wyrsh stated that in the month of June they had 25 first alarm fires, nine grass fires and 14 more encampment fires as well as nine high-angle cliff rescues where they saved nine people and one dog. He added that there were three bay rescues and 10 surf rescues. He touched on the EMS Division where he acknowledged the COVID Response Team which included Rescue Captain Zachary Tibbits, Clinton Bailey, Ben Sosin, Michael Pendergast, Jeffrey Covitz, Christina Couch, Joshua Smith and Christopher Bonn, where they responded to over 1,727 encounters and exposures resulting in 825 runs. He also recognized the four rescue captains that were imperative on helping this all go smoothly, RC John Cavanaugh, Tony Molly, Andy Zanoft and Zach Tibbits. He mentioned that in June they had 146 Narcan administrations, which was down from May which was 212. He touched on the Bureau of Fire Prevention where revenue is down, but they are busy with safe sleeping sites, shared spaces, slow streets, and transit only lanes. He welcomed ADC Mark Johnson from the Airport Division and acknowledged the tremendous amount of training and working on getting the Fire Department at SFO to be coordinated and on mission. He touched on the preparations they made for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, where they were expecting the worst, planned for the worst and thinks they probably got the worst. They put a lot of additional resources in the field which was good because they had 528 runs in a 24-hour period. He acknowledged Pat Darcy who is back in the field after his two-and-a-half years of dedicated service as radio dispatch at DEM. He has been replaced by acting Battalion Chief Matt Cannon. He touched on Homeland Security under ADC Michael Cochrane, who is working hard to support the safe demonstrations and working with the testing site evaluations and the quarantine site management. He announced the retirement of Father Green and described the emotional day June 29<sup>th</sup> was when he turned in his pager and radio. He added that Father Green has been the foundation of the Fire Department for 37 years and he will never be forgotten.

There was no public comment.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Chief Wyrsh for his comprehensive report and stated that he appreciates the dedication in terms of the photos and remarks about Father Green and his service and he also wished Father Green well. He welcomed Chief Johnson from the Airport to the command staff and meeting and congratulated him on his promotion. Chief Johnson responded that he was grateful for his new role and he looks forward to working with the Commission. Commissioner Nakajo confirmed that the Incident Support Specialist position used to be referred to as an Operator and is used as the eyes and ears of the Battalion Chiefs. They also discussed the guidelines that need to be followed to get permits for shared space.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked him for his comprehensive report and confirmed that there was one fatality on July 4th. He commended the entire department for the challenging day and night they endured on July 4th, especially the EMS Division. He confirmed through Chief Cochrane that the Drone Program got put on hold because of the COVID 19 pandemic but is slowly moving forward and that he is assisting the 9 pilots they have now. He added that they just got a jurisdictional COA that was approved by the FAA that give them the right to fly in the City and County of San Francisco airspace. Commissioner Cleaveland suggested getting the program up and running as reasonable and quickly as possible because every day is a day lost.

Commissioner Rodriguez thanked Chief Wyrsh for his report.

Vice President Feinstein stated that in regard to July 4th, she has never experienced the feeling as if they were being bombed with the illegal fire work activity which she thought was bizarre and she thanked all the members that worked the holiday.

President Covington thanked Chief Wyrsh for his report and asked him what is being put in place so that the Department can reduce the number of cliff rescue incidents. Chief Wyrsh responded that they have been working on signage and public outreach, which are probably two of the only pre-incident deterrents that they have. On busier days, they have been sending companies out to talk to people before they go out there. President Covington asked Chief Wyrsh that the next time he reports, if he can give a more robust description of what's been going on and the discussions that have been taking place and with whom. She confirmed that an increase or decrease in the frequency of Narcan use is usually the strain of the drug, if it's a strong strain and they use too much it increases the Narcan use and if it's a lighter strain, there is a decrease in Narcan. She also confirmed that the COVID RC-5 was put in place to get the ambulances and engines back in service so the RC-5 would go to every COVID call and they would handle the reporting, as well as transferring the PPE's. President Covington also acknowledged how unrelenting the fireworks were this year.

## **6. PRESENTATION ON THE SFFD'S COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION EFFORTS [Discussion]**

Public Information Officer Lt. Jonathan Baxter to present an overview of the Department's community outreach and education efforts.

Lt. Baxter introduced himself and acknowledged members who over the almost five years in his position have always been there to assist in moving his position forward which included Lt. Hashim Anderson, Inspector Tomie Kato, Inspector Darrell Stone, Paramedic Daniel McAtee

and Deputy Chief of Operation Vic Wyrsh and ADC Cochrane. He thanked them all for supporting the efforts of the position and helping progressively move it forward. He provided some personal background which included history enriched in public safety starting at the age of 14, going through numerous venues and the fire, paramedicine, and law enforcement fields, which all contribute to his ability to provide adequate information safely and efficiently to the public they serve and a department that he holds his position within. He touched on his certifications, his ability to provide the right information to the right people at the right time, the social media policy he worked on with Tom Fogle from the Union, the Department's website reconfiguration, and how social media plays an important role in his position. He added they currently have almost 24,000 members on their Twitter feed, over 100,000 members on the Facebook page, 250,000 viewers on the Citizens app and almost 15,000 viewers on Instagram. His presentation is attached: <https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/SF%20Fire%20Commission%20PIO%20presentation%20Final%20.pdf>

Public Comment:

Acting Lt. Mariano Elias, a 20-year veteran of the Department and assigned to Engine and Truck 19 and President of Los Bomberos, praised the work of Lt. Baxter and stated that they have worked closely many a time to get the media involved with what the message needs to get put out and Lt. Baxter has assisted him in translating whatever the SFFD wants the Spanish speaking community to hear. He added that Jonathan is an asset to the Department, and he thinks his position needs to stay and he is doing a great job at it.

Jim Wickham, a public safety specialist for Pacific Gas and Electric indicated his responsibility as the agency rep between SFPD and SFFD and that he has 40 years in law enforcement. He was the PIO for his agency and also a police chief and he has worked with Lt. Baxter on a variety of things and he reemphasized the transparency needed by all of the public agencies and the PIO position is very critical to that transparent component. He added that Lt. Baxter has done an excellent job.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Lt. Baxter for his presentation and confirmed that he has been in the position since 2015. He added that the PIO has never been more consistent and more professional in the last five years since he joined the position and he mentioned that he appreciated his presentation and what a great job he has done. He added that information is crucial and essential, because basically, good information for him, calms the nerves, and anticipated anxiety and more importantly, it provides for the public the ongoing occurrences that have occurred.

Commissioner Cleaveland commended Lt. Baxter for putting together a first class public relations and education program and he thinks the image of the Department has been enhanced by the educational outreach programs that he has put together and by his consistent and professional delivery of information about fires and other incidents that involve the Fire Department and sharing that information in a professional way with the public.

Commissioner Rodriguez echoed the comments of Commissioners' Nakajo and Cleaveland and commended Lt. Baxter for his report and the work he does.

President Covington thanked Lt. Baxter for his comprehensive presentation. She added that when Lt. Baxter is out there and the Chief of the Department is handling an event, a major fire like the Pier 45 fire, he stands between all of the people who have questions of the Chief and who want to speak with her immediately, they can be assured that their questions will be answered in due course, rather than the Chief of the Department having to say I can't talk to you right now, I'm a little busy, because some people don't seem to understand that, so his position is more than public relations. She added that there is a safety component to having an informed PIO on the scene with everything that has happened.

**7. COMMISSION REPORT *[Discussion]***

Report on Commission activities since last meeting on June 24, 2020.

Commissioner Nakajo announced that there was going to be an EMT graduation on Friday at Treasure Island and he wanted to thank Vice President Feinstein for volunteering to attend and speak at that ceremony. He also thanked Commissioner Rodriguez for attending.

Nothing to report and there was no public comment.

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

Discussion regarding agenda for next and future Fire Commission meetings.

- Employee Group updates: Commissioner Cleaveland thought it would be a good idea to wait until after the budget is submitted.
- GOTC update
- Airport overview

There was no public comment.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

President Covington adjourned the meeting at 11:21 a.m.