

**FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES**

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**Wednesday, January 12, 2022 – 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.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=40264](https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=180&clip_id=40264)

President Feinstein called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

Commission President	Katherine Feinstein	Present
Vice President	Stephen Nakajo	Present
Commissioner	Francee Covington	Present
Commissioner	Ken Cleaveland	Present
Commissioner	Armie Morgan	Present
Chief of Department	Jeanine Nicholson	Present.
Robert Postel	Deputy Chief -- Operations	
Thomas O'Connor	Deputy Chief --Administration	
Sandy Tong	EMS	
David Brown	Airport Division	
Ken Cofflin	Bureau of Fire Prevention	
Ramon Serrano	Support Services	
Erica Arteseros	Homeland Security	
Natasha Parks	Health and Wellness	
Brice Peoples	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion	
Simon Pang	Community Paramedicine	
Staff		
Mark Corso	Deputy Director of Finance	

President Feinstein read the Ramaytush Ohlone Land Acknowledgement.

**2. RESOLUTION 2022-01 [Discussion and possible action]**

Resolution making findings to allow teleconferenced meetings under California Government Code Section 54953(e)

Commissioner Covington Moved to adopt the Resolution. Commissioner Cleaveland Seconded. The motion was unanimous.

There was no public comment.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 5**

Public comment on all matters pertaining to Item 5 below, including public comment on whether to hold Items 5(b),5(c), and 5(d) in closed session.

There was no public comment.

**5. POSSIBLE CLOSED SESSIONS REGARDING LABOR NEGOTIATION AND PERSONNEL MATTER**

**a. VOTE ON WHETHER TO CONDUCT ITEMS 5(b), (c) & (d) IN CLOSED SESSION [Action]**

The Commission may hear Item 5(b) in closed session pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.6 and Administrative Code Section 67.10(e) and Items 5(c) and 5(d) in closed session pursuant to Government Code Section 54957(b) and Administrative Code Section 67.10(b).

*Commissioner Covington Moved to hold the hearing in closed session. Commissioner Cleveland. Seconded. The motion was unanimous.*

*The commission went into closed session at 9:08 a.m.*

**b. CONFERENCE WITH NEGOTIATOR – LABOR NEGOTIATIONS [Discussion and possible action]**

City's Negotiators:

Carol Isen, Human Resources Director

Ardis Graham, Employee Relations Director

Employee Organization: Local 798

Anticipated Issue Under Negotiation: status of meet and confer concerning Commission's procedural rule regarding hearings for vaccination-related separation cases

*Also present for item 5(b) were Deputy City Attorney Brad Russi and Commission Secretary Maureen Conefrey. Ms. Isen left the meeting at 9:30. There was a break from 10:42 a.m. to 10:54 a.m.*

**c. PERSONNEL EXCEPTION. [Action Item]**

Status and calendaring of pending disciplinary and separation cases

**d. CASE NO. 2021-03: COMMISSION DELIBERATIONS AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON EMPLOYEE SUSPENSION APPEAL [Action item]**

The appeal is from a ten-calendar day suspension for violation of the Rules and Regulations as follows:

General Order 21 A-70; COVID-19 Vaccination Policy

Section 3905 – Familiarity with the Rules

Section 3925 -- Insubordination

**e. IF CLOSED SESSION IS HELD, RECONVENE IN OPEN SESSION**

1. Report on any action taken in Closed Session as specified in California Government Code Section 54957.1(a)(5) and San Francisco Administrative Code section 67.12(b)(4).

2.

*The commission reconvened in open session at 11:30 a.m.*

*On items 5(b) and (c), there was nothing to report.*

*On item 5(d) the Commission by a unanimous vote, upheld the three charge rule violations and the 10-day suspension.*

2. Vote to elect whether to disclose any or all discussions held in Closed Session, as specified in San Francisco Administrative Code Section 67.12(a). **[Action Item]**

*Commissioner Cleaveland Moved to not disclose discussions held in closed session.  
Commissioner Covington Seconded. The motion was unanimous.*

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

Discussion and possible action to approve meeting minutes.

- Minutes from Regular Meeting on December 8, 2021.

Commissioner Cleaveland Moved to approve the minutes and Commissioner Mogan Seconded. The motion was unanimous.

There was no public comment.

- Minutes from Special Meeting on December 15, 2021

Commissioner Cleaveland Moved to approve the minutes and Commissioner Mogan 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 December 8, 2021, including budget, academies, special events, communications and outreach to other government agencies and the public.

Chief Nicholson reported that she attended the mayor's department head meeting this morning where there was lots of talk of COVID and Omicron and getting the city up and running. She welcomed Chief Postel and Chief Thomas O'Connor to the command staff. She mentioned that the Department has 100 members out with COVID, and they are using mandatory overtime to fill the gaps. She added that there was a press conference this past weekend about staffing and alerting the public of the additional stress on the 9-1-1 system and the increase in call volume. She announced that the H-2 academy graduated on the 23rd of December, and they had a new H-2 academy start on Tuesday as well as an H-3 Level 1 academy who are set to graduate at the end of next week. She discussed future classes in the works. She announced that they have moved the Training Division to fall under Operations and Homeland Security to fall under Administration to better align with what they are doing out in the field.

Commissioner Covington confirmed that high call volume has increased in the last couple of days. She also confirmed that EMTs that have been hired with a paramedic certificate will have an opportunity to take the bump-up class to work as paramedics in the system and the class size is dependent on staffing and it's a three-week program.

Commissioner Cleaveland confirmed that the uptick on the 9-1-1 system is most likely from people stressed out about Omicron and whether they have it or not, in addition, the hospitals have seen an uptick in people coming in complaining about COVID symptoms.

Vice President Nakajo confirmed that EMS is under Operations.

President Feinstein expressed her concerns on the lack of guidance to people as to what they are to do if they are ill and the need to cut down non-emergency 9-1-1 calls and she doesn't think facilities are stepping up to the plate to make it easy for people to avoid calling 9-1-1. She welcomed Chief Postel to his first official Commission meeting in his new role.

There was no public comment.

#### REPORT FROM OPERATIONS, DEPUTY CHIEF ROBERT POSTEL

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

Chief Postel stated that he is looking forward to working with the Commission and the command staff to continue all the good work that they do in the Fire Department every day and he hopes to contribute enough to make things better. He thanked Chief Nicholson for having the faith in him and giving him this opportunity. He added that it is very humbling and it's a big job and he hopes he can live up to the expectations. He gave the following history of his life: "I'm a fourth-generation San Francisco firefighter. This is my family. I have grown up in this organization from the day I was born. It's all I've ever known. Next to my wife and children, this is something I love more than anything else in the world and I intend to leave it better than I found it. I have over 30 years of service, almost 31 in March. My entire career has been in the busiest most challenging companies we have. I've been a lieutenant and captain at Rescue 1. I worked in Engine 36. I was battalion chief at Battalion 2. And for the last 10 plus years, I've been a division chief at Division 2. My goal in this job is to bring continuity to operations. Continuity not just between the divisions, but between the airport, fire prevention. Everybody who works for me, I want to have continuity there and I think it's fair to the people who are working for us to have an expectation to know -- to know what everybody is going to expect from them. The Chief spoke about the Division of Training moving under Operations and Homeland Security moving back to Administration. He stated that training is the foundation of everything they do and to effect positive change and facilitate this operational continuity, it makes perfect sense to have Training operating directly underneath Operations. He added that he is looking forward to the opportunity to work with ADC Kaialoa to accomplish this and many more things.

Chief Postel reported that there were two greater alarm fires during the previous two-month period. The first one was on December 11th at 335 Barneveld. This was a warehouse that was fully involved. It was called in by one of the medic units. The second greater alarm was on December 13th at 3520 17th Street, a four-story Type 5 building with construction ongoing throughout the building. He touched on the PIO, John Baxter who has played a big part in the messaging with COVID issues and who continues to remain engaged and active in his role; the EMS Division, where call volume has been getting above normal, up into the 400 call range; Fire Prevention which continues to work with the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development to promote affordable housing solutions and help expedite the process to get more affordable housing units into the system; the Airport Division and Homeland Security.

Commissioner Cleaveland congratulated Chief Postel and stated he looks forward to working with him. He confirmed that the EMS section of Chief Postel's report is the most stressed piece of the city government in the city at any one time, during the day or night and he is in awe of how they are always working 24/7 to keep us healthy, safe and from dying. He went through the pages of the report and confirmed many issues including that the didactic portion of the H-3 academy is the classroom portion where they do the written tests and skills exams. He also confirmed that there are 6 Street Crisis Response Teams, and they have coverage 24/7 with one team designated during the evening hours because of the lack of resources. Chief Pang answered several

questions about the lack of resources during the night hours as well as addressed many other concerns surrounding EMS.

President Feinstein asked how the relationship with the courts is when it comes to conservatorships. Chief Pang responded that it is a very arduous process, and they spend months compiling cases and data and reaching out to various psychiatrists, physicians, and the conservator's office before they can get lucky and get someone conserved.

Vice President Nakajo thanked Chief Postel for his comprehensive report and congratulated him for stepping up. He also thanked Chief O'Connor. He mentioned that he appreciated Commissioner Cleaveland's questions and all the information reported out. He stated that the more information they have the better. He added that he is going to be interested because accountability, information, and their experience are going to be able to let the commissioners know what is going on and he is particularly not fond of situations when they get in crisis mode and in a situation where there is finger-pointing going on and as a commission, they need to be unified and collective in terms of their understanding and efforts.

Commissioner Covington gave a shout-out to the two new deputies and thinks they're wonderful choices and she congratulated the Chief of the Department on her selecting them.

Fire Marshal Cofflin shared his attached PowerPoint Presentation about the Shared Spaces Program and Slow Streets Program, which both were developed because of COVID and what it's done to business and the community. <https://sf-fire.org/files/2022-01/SS%20%20SS%20PowerPoint%202022%20PDF.pdf>

President Feinstein expressed some of her concerns with the Shared Spaces Program, including whether they are in conformance with what the rules are. She also stated that she didn't think it was fair that some businesses could have a much broader storefront and can conduct most of their business outside whereas others only have a one-store front restaurant and are limited to what they can build. Fire Marshal Cofflin responded to her concerns. President Feinstein confirmed that permits are not required to install lights in the Shared Spaces and that businesses that use the liquified propane gas heaters need a permit and members of the Fire Prevention team go to those sites and show them safety guidelines on how to use them and where they can be used and that they are not allowed underneath the roof.

Commissioner Covington congratulated Fire Marshal Cofflin on his new position. She asked if the closed streets had an impact on response times. Fire Marshal Cofflin responded that they have noticed an increase in response times, but they are not sure if it's attributed solely to Slow Streets, and they are working with SFMTA to gather additional information. Commissioner Covington added that because Page Street is closed, Oak Street has been adversely impacted by increased traffic and she has noticed that emergency vehicles are having difficulty getting down the streets. She stated that she was talking to a member of the Department, and they were bemoaning the Slow Streets and had seen some plans from MTA and said, "Wait a minute, these plans are very detailed, how long have you guys been working on this?" And the answer was "we've been working on this for seven years; we've been planning this for seven years" which means it would be nine years since we've been in lockdown for two years. She suggested that they keep a sharp eye on this because when we are no longer captive to COVID and other variants when people get back into their cars, she thinks it's going to be a hot mess. After all, not everyone is driving now, and she stated we need to plan for when things are back to normal. Fire Marshal Cofflin responded that they are doing a joint study where they are working with SFMTA who will be reviewing the Department's data, GPS data, response data along with additional data from SFMTA regarding projects, Slow Streets, street changes and things like that to look for a cause

and effect of differential changes in response times and they hope to have that completed by April.

Vice President Nakajo thanked Fire Marshal Cofflin for his comprehensive report and shared the concerns of his fellow commissioners with regards to Shared Spaces and Slow Streets and he wants to make sure that the dialogue with MTA and the hierarchy of that is free and clear and that their concerns are taken into consideration with enforcement.

**8. OVERVIEW OF THE CITY’S BUDGET INSTRUCTIONS AND PROCESS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 [Discussion]**

Discussion and overview of the City’s budget and Fire Department instructions and process for FY 2022-2023 and 2023-2024.

**9. FIRE COMMISSION ELECTION OF OFFICERS [Discussion and possible action]**

a. Nomination and election of Commission President.

Commissioner Cleaveland nominated Vice President Feinstein for Commission President. Commissioner Morgan seconded and the nomination for Commission President was unanimously approved and accepted by President Feinstein.

b. Nomination and election of Commission Vice-President.

Commissioner Morgan nominated Commissioner Nakajo for Commission Vice President. Commissioner Cleaveland seconded and the nomination for Commission Vice President was unanimously approved and accepted by Vice President Nakajo.

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

Discussion regarding agenda for next and future Fire Commission meetings.

- Budget update
- Grant Committee update
- Guardians of the City update
- NERT Advisory Board
- Performance Evaluations Chief and Physician

**11. ADJOURNMENT** President Feinstein adjourned the meeting at 1:58 p.m.