

SAN FRANCISCO FIRE COMMISSION

**FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES**

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**Wednesday, April 26, 2017 - 5:00 p.m.  
City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 400, San Francisco, California, 94102**

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The Video can be viewed by clicking this link:

[http://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=180&clip\\_id=27705](http://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=180&clip_id=27705)

Vice President Nakajo called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

**1. ROLL CALL**

Commission President	Ken Cleaveland	Excused
Commission Vice President	Stephen Nakajo	Present
Commissioner	Michael Hardeman	Present
Commissioner	Francee Covington	Present
Commissioner	Joe Alioto Veronese	Present
Chief of Department	Joanne Hayes-White	Present
Mark Gonzales	Deputy Chief – Operations	
Raemona Williams	Deputy Chief – Administration	
Dan DeCossio	Bureau of Fire Prevention	
Tony Rivera	Support Services	
Rudy Castellanos	Airport Division	
Andy Zanolff	EMS Division	
Shane Francisco	Homeland Security	
Jeff Columbini	Division of Training	
Assistant Chiefs		
Ken Yee	Division 2	
Dave Franklin	Division 3	
Staff		
Mark Corso	Deputy Director of Finance	
Olivia Scanlon	Communication and Outreach Coordinator	
Jesusa Bushong	Human Resources Director	

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Eric Shingo Tanaka spoke on behalf of the Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival and thanked the Commission for supporting the festival and celebrating a golden journey of 50 years of Japanese Culture. He also thanked Battalion Chief Juratovac and City College of San Francisco Fire Science Mentorship Program students, along with Commander Buckley of the Fire Reserves for supporting the festival with an amazing group of hard-working volunteers. He presented Commission Secretary with a letter and pin symbolizing the 50th year of the festival to present to President Cleaveland.

Firefighter Stephen Martinpinto, who is also a NERT Instructor, 14-year veteran of the Marine Corps reserve, with deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq, a fifth-generation San Franciscan, president of the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association and a Communications Director for the San Francisco Firefighter's Veteran Association, thanked the Chief for her support of their association and for all the service members she has hired and is considering hiring. He went on to praise all the veteran firefighters in the department and asked them all to stand to be recognized.

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

Discussion and possible action to approve meeting minutes.

- Minutes from Regular Meeting on April 12, 2017.

Commissioner Hardeman Moved to approve the February 8, 2017 regular meeting Minutes. Commissioner Covington Seconded. Motion to approve above Minutes was unanimous.

There was no public comment.

**4. PRESENTATION FROM THE SURF RESCUE COMMITTEE *[Discussion]***

Overview and update from Assistant Deputy Chief Rudy Castellanos and Captain Robert Styles pertaining to the Surf Rescue Committee and Program.

Assistant Deputy Chief Rudy Castellanos of the Airport Division and also committee chairman of the Surf Rescue Committee introduced Captain Robert Styles and Firefighter Katherine Alba-Swanson, who are members of the Surf Rescue Committee and presented the following PowerPoint presentation:

[http://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/SFFD%20Surf%20Rescue%20Powerpoint%20\\_2.pptx](http://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/SFFD%20Surf%20Rescue%20Powerpoint%20_2.pptx)

Katherine Alba-Swanson stated that she is a proud member of the San Francisco Fire Department for the past 17 years and has been part of the Surf Rescue Program for 16 years. She stated that she grew up near Lands' End and Ocean Beach and she knows the area fairly well and understands the dangers and challenges of those areas. She stated that the video in the presentation is mostly filmed at China Beach. She mentioned that San Francisco is surrounded by water on three sides, with 21 miles of coastline and that since 1937 there have been over 1,500 people that have jumped to their death off of the Golden Gate Bridge, which is one of their big response inside the Bay. She added that in 1998, Ocean Beach was noted as the most dangerous beach in the nation, and it continues to be one of the most dangerous beaches in the ocean. She pointed out that their future goal is to have a dedicated marine unit to be effective on the water, and they feel that with San Francisco being the only ALS responder on the water in the City and County of San Francisco, it is vital that they have a quick, fast response from the water, and not necessarily from a firehouse that does double duty in suppression and water service. She acknowledged Captain Bob Fennell, deceased, that started the program back in 1986.

Commissioner Alioto-Veronese asked if the Surf Rescue Unit was different from the fireboat unit. Chief Castellanos stated that they are separate units and that the surf rescue members work at all the different firehouses out in Battalion 7 and Battalion, 8 which include the Sunset

and Richmond Districts. He added that many of the swimmers are also members of the fireboat and they have to be bay rescue qualified. There was discussion pertaining to Coast Guard v. SFFD response and how the 9-1-1 calls comes in and that the Coast Guard is not equipped with rescue swimmers or ALS support on their boats. Commissioner Alioto-Veronese asked how many calls they get for surf rescue. Chief Castellanos stated the average is 117 a year, including cliff rescue incidences, which sometimes turn into a water rescue.

Commissioner Hardeman asked how many jet skis are assigned to the surf rescue unit. Chief Castellanos answered they have six jet skis, two that are in the water prepared to go at any given time and the four that are used as backups and for training. Commissioner Hardeman asked if the majority of these rescues happen during daylight hours. Chief Castellanos answered they can actually happen at any given time. He described incidents where people get stuck on the rocks as the tide comes in and they can't get back to land and the extreme danger the men and women in the department face when they have to go out and pull people off the rocks. He added that they take those jet skis, get in the water, and swim up against the surf, getting thrown up against the rocks but it's amazing the work they do and the risks they take to rescue the individuals. Commissioner Hardeman asked that if there was a dedicated marine unit, what the hours would be to staff the unit. Chief Castellanos stated they see it as a unit that's staffed 24 hours, with a pilot, an officer, and four firefighters.

Commissioner Covington stated she appreciated the presentation and was glad she asked for this item to be on agenda. She also thanked Captain Robert Styles and Katherine Alba-Swanson. Chief Castellanos stated that they are seeing an increase in water/cliff rescues and they respond to Ocean Beach 12 months out of the year, and for whatever reason, there's an attraction to that area that brings people from all over to go Ocean Beach despite the fact that there are warning signs about the dangerous rip currents and they find themselves consistently out there because people are being swept out to sea and it keeps the crews very busy. Commissioner Covington asked if at a future presentation if they could have a comparison and contrast between what they are doing now and what is gained by having a dedicated marine unit along with how many other dedicated marine units there are along the coast of California and the rest of the country. She stated that it would also be helpful to know what other sources of funding are available. Commissioner Covington suggested having another presentation in late August or September and mentioned that this issue highlights the need for a grant writer within the Department to find out where the funds are and how to access those funds nationally.

Commissioner Hardeman asked Mr. Corso if there was anything in the works for getting funding for a marine unit. Mr. Corso answered that nothing has been specifically identified as a supplemental source of funding but they have been looking at additional staffing in the Department that could be incorporated into the general fund staffing model, but that doesn't mean they are not exploring other alternatives. Commissioner Hardeman also acknowledged Firefighter Swanson and Captain Styles for their dedication to the surf rescue program and for the presentation.

Vice President Nakajo thanked Chief Castellanos, Captain Styles, and Firefighter Alba-Swanson for their comprehensive report and stated that he looks forward to having a summary presentation in the near future. There was a discussion on the parameters of where the units currently respond to.

There was no public comment.

**6. CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT'S REPORT [Discussion]**  
**REPORT FROM CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT**

Report on current issues, activities and events within the Department since the Fire Commission meeting of April 12, 2017, 2017, including budget, academies, special events, communications and outreach to other government agencies and the public.

Chief Hayes-White's report covered events since the last meeting on April 12, 2017. She reported that the budget for this fiscal year remains on track for both revenues and expenditures and that they will be reconvening the Budget and Finance Committee in May, prior to the Mayor's June 1st submittal of the budget. She added that the goal is to maintain the current funding that the Department has been allocated and not have to take a reduction as requested by the Mayor's Office. She announced the hiring of a CFO Ms. Elaine Walters, who will start on May 15, 2017, to replace Mr. Corso's prior position, as he has been wearing two hats since promoting to Deputy Director. She mentioned that the 121st academy class graduated April 14, 2017, and thanked the members of the Commission that attended the event and the great work done by the Division of Training. She stated that 42 recruits started the 122nd academy on Monday and will be joined by 12 members from Station 49 in two weeks. Chief Hayes-White passed around a very early version of the work done related to the strategic plan and mentioned that Mr. Chris Gruwell, who is a member of the public, has agreed to work with someone from the private sector to help publish and produce it. She anticipates linking it to the website and to make sure the Department is environmentally responsible, they will produce between 150 and 200 copies for distribution to all the stations and the goal being no later than the end of the year for producing the final version.

Chief Hayes-White touched on recent activities she attended over the reporting period which included dispatcher Week at the Department of Emergency Management, a homeless workgroup meeting with the Mayor's Office, the Easter sunrise service at Mount Davidson, the Cherry Blossom Festival and Parade, a policy group workshop and a labor management meeting with Local 798. She also attended the San Francisco Council of District Merchants at the Olympic Club, where Fire Marshal De Cossio was honored for the enhanced community outreach that is being done and she congratulated him on his award. She touched on the farewell event for long-serving and dedicated employee Ginny Franklin who retired and Chief Hayes-White wished her well. She touched on the April 21, 2017, power outage that affected 88,000 businesses and residences and mentioned that the crews did a phenomenal job at the Larkin Street substation. She also acknowledged the great work and dedication of the crews that worked that day through all the challenges and she appreciated all the members and everyone who stepped up and did a very good job. She mentioned the NERT Drill conducted by acting Captain Arteseros and the swearing in at City Hall of new fire commissioner Joe Alioto Veronese and reappointment swearing in of President Cleaveland. She asked Vice President Nakajo to consider adjourning the meeting in the memory of retired member Mr. Ray McGrath.

Commissioner Veronese thanked the Chief for her report and asked if there was a remedy for municipalities to make claims following the PG & E outage. Chief Hayes-White answered that call volume went up, but staffing did not, so people may have had to wait a little longer than typical and she's not sure there were additional costs, but she said she can certainly look into it. Commissioner Veronese asked about the incident involving a homeless individual at the

Gubbio Project and the delay in a 9-1-1 call being answered. Chief Hayes-White responded that she would be happy to follow-up with the Department of Emergency Management, the agency responsible for answering 9-1-1 calls. She added that once the call was dispatched, the SFFD was on scene within three minutes and Engine 3 as well as the medics did a phenomenal job. Commissioner Veronese asked if an analysis has been done to see what the challenges are in response times and what the Department can do to tackle some of those challenges. Chief Hayes-White explained that there are basically three thresholds that they look at for having a unit on scene within four-and-a-half-minutes from the time of dispatch. She described them in detail. She added that the SFFD is at their best levels in the history of the Fire Department, even given the increase in call volume and that is due to a lot of hard work from the Commission, administration, Local 798 and the executive and legislative branches of government by making investments in more modern equipment, personnel, and technology. Commissioner Veronese asked if the Department tracks homelessness. Chief Hayes-White responded that they capture data and can query someone on their address and if there is no address in the box, one can assume but it's open to interpretation. She went on to describe the EMS-6 program.

Commissioner Covington mentioned that she thought Commissioner Veronese will be pleased once he learns more about the EMS-6 and HOT Team program. Chief Hayes-White and Commissioner Covington suggested maybe he take a ride-a-long with the teams.

Vice President Nakajo confirmed that the budget presentation is scheduled for April 27, 2017, at 1:00 p.m. in City Hall's main chambers. He also responded to many of the questions that Commissioner Veronese brought up and stated that the Fire Commission has been trying to make sure that there is coordination between the Fire Department and other departments in the City to help resolve problems that have been identified, such as response times and, homelessness.

There was no public comment.

#### REPORT FROM ADMINISTRATION, DEPUTY CHIEF RAEMONA WILLIAMS

Report on the Administrative Divisions, Fleet and Facility status, including any updates on Station 49 and the search for a new training facility, Finance, Support Services, Homeland Security and Training within the Department.

Chief Williams' report covered the period from March 23rd to April 26, 2017. She mentioned that the Assignment Office staff has completed the first assignments for the 121st academy graduates and they are reviewing the open vacation relief firefighter positions available for reassignment of the 119th probationary firefighters who will be completing their probation as well as the 120th probationary firefighters to their second assignment of their probation. Under Homeland Security, she stated that Chief Francisco participated in various meetings and training exercises and continues to update the command staff on all suspicious and potential terrorist activities as well as participated in the city-wide Department of Communications drill. He is also in the early stages of preparing the Department's tsunami plan and once completed, he will provide a presentation to the Commission. She touched on the Investigation Services Bureau, Support Services, the Division of Training, EMS and NERT.

Vice President Nakajo confirmed with Chief Williams that Station 16 will be completed in January of 2018.

Commissioner Hardeman remarked that the delays in Pump Station 1 are no fault of the Fire Department and that he was happy to hear that Station 49 has been redesigned.

Commissioner Veronese recounted his recent visit with Firefighter Greg Collaco who invited him to do the stair climb at the Bank of America building over the weekend and he thanked Greg for giving him that experience. He also mentioned that anything the Commission or Department can do to assist the members in residency within San Francisco is an important endeavor he would like to take part in along with the Commission and Administration.

Commissioner Covington thanked Commissioner Veronese for joining in continuing the work that they have begun and stated she was very happy that he's on the Commission and that he has the energy and heart for the work that they do. She suggested that the Commission attend a retreat and brainstorm as a group.

There was no public comment.

**6. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED SINCE LAST MEETING OF APRIL 12, 2017**  
*[Discussion]*

- Email from J. Corrigan dated 4/18/17

There was no public comment.

**7. AGENDA FOR NEXT FIRE COMMISSION MEETING** *[Discussion]*

Discussion regarding agenda for the May 10, 2017 regular meeting.

- Guardians of the City
- Presentation of the 9-1-1 call center

Commissioner Covington stated it was her opinion and in terms of transparency that significant items be listed separately so that everyone know that we are going to discuss certain items at our commission meetings.

There was no public comment.

**8. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 10**

Public comment on all matters pertaining to Item 10 below, including public comment on whether to hold Item 10 in closed session.

**9. VOTE ON CLOSED SESSION** *[Action]*

- a. Vote on whether to invoke the attorney client privilege and hold Item 10(a) in closed session (Admin. Code § 67.10).

*Commissioner Covington made a motion to hold items 10 (a) in Closed Session. Commissioner Veronese seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved. (4-0; Nakajo, Hardeman, Covington. Veronese,)*

*The Commission held deliberations in Closed Session at 6:50- p.m.*

**10. CLOSED SESSION**

- a. **CLOSED SESSION: CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – EXISTING PRE-LITIGATION.** Conference with legal counsel to discuss existing pre-litigation pursuant to California Government Code Section 54956.9(a), (c), (d), and San Francisco Administrative Code Section 67.10(d)(1) and possible recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for settlement approval or to take other action. *[Action item]*

Existing Pre-Litigation:

*Jessica Kennedy v. City and County of San Francisco*

DFEH Matter No.: 779537-233737

- 11. REPORT ON ANY ACTION TAKEN IN CLOSED SESSION** *[Discussion]* as specified in California Government Code Section 54957.1(a) and San Francisco Administrative Code section 67.12(b).

*Commission reconvened in Open Session at 7:23 p.m.*

*Action Taken:*

*Item 10(a): By unanimous vote of 4-0, the Commission voted unanimously to accept the terms of the settlement and makes a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for settlement approval.*

*There was no public comment.*

- 12. 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]*

*Commissioner Covington made a motion to not disclose discussions held in Closed Session. Commissioner Veronese seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved. (4-0; Nakajo, Hardeman, Covington, Veronese)*

*There was no public comment*

- 13. ADJOURNMENT**

Vice President Nakajo adjourned the meeting in the memory of retired firefighter Ray McGrath at 7:25 p.m.