

**FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES**

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**Wednesday, April 28, 2021 – 5:00 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=38430](https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=180&clip_id=38430)

Vice President Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

Commission President	Katherine Feinstein	Present
Commission Vice President	Tony Rodriguez	Present
Commissioner	Stephen Nakajo	Present
Commissioner	Francee Covington	Present
Commissioner	Ken Cleaveland	Present
Chief of Department	Jeanine Nicholson	Present.
Bryan Rubenstein	Deputy Chief -- Operations	
Jose Velo	Deputy Chief --Administration	
Shayne Kaialoa	Division of Training	
Sandy Tong	EMS	
Mark Johnson	Airport Division	
Dan DeCossio	Bureau of Fire Prevention	
Dawn DeWitt	Support Services	
Erica Arteseros	Homeland Security	
Natasha Parks	Health and Wellness	
Tom O'Connor	AWSS	
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.

Commissioner Covington asked that the comment about forming a committee about Slow Streets and to capitalize the "S:" in slow streets.

- Minutes from Regular Meeting on April 14, 2021.

Commissioner Covington Moved to approve the minutes as amended and Commissioner Cleaveland Seconded. The motion was unanimous.

There was no public comment.

**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 April 14, 2021, including budget, academies, special events, communications, and outreach to other government agencies and the public.

Chief Nicholson reported on activities since the last meeting on April 14, 2021. She stated that the vaccine rate is at approximately 75 percent and slowly climbing and that they are still putting the message out for members that doses are still available for them. She announced that they are continuing to have fruitful conversations regarding the upcoming budget especially around the vision the Department has for community paramedicine and Community Paramedic Division. She added that CBS did a segment on the street crisis affecting the City, featuring Captain Simon Pang. She touched on her visit with Supervisor Connie Chan where they visited several Fire Stations and where they had an opportunity to discuss some of the needs of the Department. Chief Nicholson attended, along with Commissioner Nakajo and Supervisor Chan, a demonstration of the hose tenders that Chief Tom O'Connor organized so they could understand exactly what a hose tender is and why they are needed. She mentioned that NBC also did a segment that was aired last week on the health and safety of the members and cancer and toxic exposures, specifically from wildland-urban interface fires, and that she is going to do everything in her power to collaborate with those that are working on this issue to take better care of the members. She touched on NERT, where they had a virtual drill and she thanked Chief Arteseros and all the NERT instructors and volunteers for how they have stepped up during the pandemic.

Commissioner Nakajo is happy with the great press releases they have received from media outlets about the great work of EMS-6 and the crisis teams, and he appreciates Chief Nicholson appearing on national news and that it is good in the sense of having representation of the Department and the fact that she is a woman fire chief in San Francisco, he thought spoke volumes in terms of the national exposure. He thanked Chief O'Connor and Chief Rubenstein for the hose tender drill he observed over the weekend. He also expressed his appreciation of the presentations by various components of the Department.

There was no public comment.

**REPORT FROM ADMINISTRATION, DEPUTY CHIEF JOSE VELO**

Report on the Administrative Divisions, Fleet and Facility status and updates, including update from Chief Thomas O'Connor on the Auxiliary Water Supply System, Finance, Support Services, and Training within the Department.

Chief Velo presented his March 2021 report. He stated that Chief Kaialoa has hit the ground running and has many projects going on in combination with Chief Arteseros including hosting a class of incident management training, mini pumper driver training, where the Department has almost 30 members trained to drive those vehicles when they go into wildland fires. He added that this year appears to be another busy season due to the extreme drought. They also hosted a series of safety officer classes as it is very important for officers and captains to understand the concepts of safety in the fire ground. He touched on other trainings offered during the reporting month, including drone training. He mentioned that there are 23 out of the 25 recruits still in the 127<sup>th</sup> academy which is scheduled to graduate on June 25, 2021. He also

mentioned the great work and how important the NERT volunteers have been. He stated that Chief Parks has been working on the therapy dog policy and she continues to push classes for the members in mental health and First Aid and she is very involved in the Women's Firefighter Cancer Cohort Study. He touched on the assignment office, the Physician's Office, and Support Services. He provided an update on Station 35, Station 49, and the fleet where they have 12 engines on contract, five to be delivered this week which they will rigorously test, and that the bid for the hose tenders has closed. Chief Velo stated that they continue to support the vaccination site at Treasure Island, and they participated in the 105<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1906 earthquake at Lotus Fountain. He thanked Commissioner Nakajo for joining the hose tender drill and expressed the importance of letting the supervisors and elected offices see how their systems work so when they are asking them for items in the budget, they know what they are talking about.

Commissioner Cleavland thanked Chief Velo for his comprehensive report. He confirmed that the 15 sewage backups and Fire Department facilities since January 1, 2021, are due to extensive use and the fact that the infrastructure is aging. He also confirmed that the hose tower at Station 15 on Ocean Avenue was replaced as opposed to being torn down because it had a mural on it and represented the history of the city.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Chief Velo for his report and asked Chief Johnson to give a brief update on Airport activities. Chief Johnson responded that they are starting to see an uptick in passenger travel, and they expect a good bump by the middle of July, so they are starting to bring back employees as well as the opening of restaurants and stores. He added that the airport has been impacted since the pandemic and the two new firehouses they were supposed to get have been pushed back.

Chief Kaialoa stated that it has been quite an adjustment for him in his new position that in his 24 years in the fire service his time has been spent in the firehouse and on the apparatus but he's excited to be Assistant Deputy Chief of the Training Division.

Vice President Rodriguez asked Chief Dewitt that with all the sewer backups if the Department can take advantage of the bond that was passed years ago for upgrades for sewer lines. Chief Dewitt said she will look into the bond issue and that they will take advantage of anything they are entitled to if they can get some assistance, but right now, they are using DPW to replace those sewer lines. He also confirmed that the ALA quarterly meeting with the State Fire Training regarding FFI certification, FFII rollout means is the Accredited Local Academy for Firefighter 1 and Firefighter 2 and are it is the curriculums that they are teaching so there are in line with the state curriculum, and it is accredited by the state fire marshal's office.

Commissioner Covington thanked Chief Velo for his report and confirmed that the grant for the mini pumpers was for \$700,000 and there was a grant from the State for one hose tender and two hose tenders came from the department budget and because of COVID, two hose tenders were slashed from the budget. She acknowledged the folks at the Airport for getting a perfect test result on their annual inspection. She asked Chief Johnson to explain a bit more about the two additional stations at the airport. Chief Johnson explained that Station 1 and 2 are set to be torn down and they were supposed to be rebuilt in a new location where they are not near the

runway and folks won't be driving on to the airfield in private cars in the next two years, but because of COVID, the project has been pushed back 5 to 10 years. Commissioner Covington encouraged any of the commissioners who have not been to the Department's Airport Division should go visit.

President Feinstein expressed her concerns with the delays of Station 35 and asked what the problem is with getting it done. Chief Velo confirmed that it is close to being done but the main delay is the point of connection where the grid connects to the fire station to give sufficient power to the Station. This issue was not detected until later in the process and has caused a six-month delay, which is costing the Department money. President Feinstein confirmed that the Fire Department is bearing the cost of a negligent design where they did not foresee that the station was going to need the power it was going to need and therefore it can't be hooked up as was initially designed. She also confirmed that the Department of Public Works is the project manager which they are obligated to use according to the city charter, and they do not pay for liquated damages when there is a delay. She expressed her concerns about paying money to DPW in management fees and that it is eating into the bond money that should be dedicated to other Department projects and to the extent they are eating through it because of negligent delay, she feels is not a service to the taxpayers and it rattles her a bit.

Commissioner Rodriguez confirmed that the prevailing wage in the Bay Area is very high and he is wondering why DPW is making so much money and thinks it's atrocious that they would almost double the wages for workers for a department that is in the city.

Commissioner Covington agreed with President Feinstein and Vice President Rodriguez and shares in their frustration. She confirmed that whenever a building of any facility by DPW is running late and the construction company is given a fine for being late, those monies are paid to and kept by DPW.

Commissioner Cleaveland thought it was ironic that the Department of Public Works was put in charge of managing all of the construction projects and all the maintenance projects for the city so there wouldn't be any "corruption" and their management of the Department's processes is costing such a huge markup and if those same dollars were given directly to the Fire Department to manage the Departments maintenance and construction projects, he thinks they would get a lot more value out of every dollar from those bonds as well as from the general fund every year. He added that he would like as a commission to investigate what it would take to make those changes.

Assistant Deputy Chief Thomas O'Connor gave a presentation on the newest command staff position and the roles and responsibilities of the PUC Liaison. He started by saying the 1906 earthquake put to rest the debate over the construction of the Emergency Firefighting Water System. Originally pleaded for by Chief Dennis Sullivan, who ironically enough, was to die during the earthquake and never see his system be built, but he had advocated for a dedicated emergency firefighter water system for years. He added that with a loss of over 28,000 buildings and 3,000 San Franciscans, Chief Dennis Sullivan's vision for fire safety finally became realized, and in 1908, the citizens of San Francisco approved a 5.2-million-dollar bond to construct the AWSS or Auxiliary Water Supply System. That commitment to fire safety

infrastructure continues to this day with the most recent passage of ESER 2020, or the Earthquake Safety and Emergency Repair bond. He added that the AWSS consists of the following components. the Twin Peaks Reservoir holding 10.5 million gallons; the Ashbury Heights tank holding a half-million gallons; the Jones Street tank, with 750,000 gallons; Pump Station 1 at Headquarters, which can pump 10,000 gallons per minute of seawater; Pump Station 2 at the foot of Van Ness, which can also pump 10,000 gallons per minute as well as 135 miles of pipe, 1,600 high-pressure hydrants, 229 cisterns, 52 pipeline connections along the Northeastern waterfront, and five manifolds for our fireboat. He added that in 2010, the AWSS was transferred to the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission or PUC and they conducted an initial assessment and found that only 47 percent of San Francisco had a reliable enough water supply to fight fires that would be generated after a 7.8 earthquake or an earthquake of the same magnitude as in 1906. He mentioned that Dr. Charles Scawthorn noted that planning for both fire and water emergencies together have been haphazard and incomplete and in 2011 he published an article “Water Supply” regarding fire following earthquake, he called for a greater liaison between fire departments and water departments and felt that the communication and coordination between the two agencies would lead to the greatest success post-disaster. He explained that the duties and responsibilities of the PUC liaison are to oversee and facilitate all efforts related to the PUC's management of the Auxiliary Water Supply System, to coordinate all efforts with the PUC in regards to the ESER 2020 projects and expansion of the AWSS system, to manage the portable water supply system assets, the hose tenders, lead strategic planning efforts with all related committees and workgroups, as well as represent the Department at meetings and community events. He added that the shared goal of the PUC and the Fire Department is to improve and expand the water supply system. His presentation is attached: <https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/Fire%20Commission%20AWSS%20Presentation%20%281%29.pptx>

He added that the Civil Grand Jury found that despite the improvements of 2010, 2014, there were still very large swaths of San Francisco that were left without adequate water supply in the event of a disaster or earthquake and they recommended the City aggressively develop a high-pressure water system throughout all parts of the City as an interim measure and called for purchasing 20 hose tenders or portable water supply system vehicles and they wanted the city to research the saltwater pump station on the west side of San Francisco. He described the slides of his presentation in detail.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked Chief O'Connor for his great, long overdue report and he confirmed that the comprehensive city-wide plan will be done by December 31, 2021, and then they can go to City Hall and say we need a special ESER bond just for this auxiliary water system upgrade.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Chief O'Connor for his comprehensive report and asked for a description of clean water versus saltwater and how it plays between the trucks' engines, and pumping system. Chief O'Connor answered that the current system is cleared to use both fresh and saltwater. The saltwater is used as a last-ditch attempt to augment the system. Commissioner Nakajo confirmed that they are putting together a variety of options for the Board of Supervisors on what bonds would look like in 2030 and 2040 between the bond

measures being put out now and then once the final design is conceptualized, it will be costed out and they can give a buffet of options to the Board of Supervisors and say, “here is the Cadillac, here is the Buick, and here is the Mitsubishi model, which one do you think the voters will go for?”

Commissioner Covington thanked Chief O’Connor for his presentation and mentioned that when they found out that the Civil Grand Jury was going to be looking into what they considered deficiencies, she did not know what that meant, and when the report came out, it was tremendously informative and helped bolster the Department's assertions that certain things need to be done, and money has to be put behind those things.

President Feinstein thanked Chief O’Connor for his informative presentation.

There was no public comment.

**6. COMMISSION REPORT [Discussion]**

Report on Commission activities since last meeting on April 14, 2021.

Commissioner Nakajo attended the hose tender drill and was happy to be able to attend in a physical capacity.

Commissioner Cleaveland had the pleasure of meeting with the leaders of The Guardians of the City, and he thinks the Commission should invite them to a meeting to make a presentation, as they have been working on a strategic plan and he also thinks representation from the Fire Department should be on the GOTC board. He added that the GOTC requested that the monies from the Wilman Fund that is under the direction of the Commission, be transferred to the GOTC.

There was nothing to report.

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

Discussion regarding agenda for next and future Fire Commission meetings.

There was no public comment.

- GOTC Presentation

There was no public comment.

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

President Feinstein adjourned the meeting at 6:53 p.m.