

**FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES**

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**Wednesday, February 24, 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=37891](https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=180&clip_id=37891)

President Feinstein called the meeting to order at 5:05 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	
Joel Sato	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.

- Minutes from Regular Meeting on February 10, 2021.

Commissioner Cleaveland Moved to approve the minutes and Commissioner Rodriguez 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 February 10, 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 February 10, 2021. She stated that the Fire Department continues to step up in whatever way they can and whatever way they are asked, and they have filled different positions at COVID command and staffed shelter in place hotels as well as vaccinated folks. Concerning the budget, she mentioned that they continue to meet with the mayor's budget office and added that they have been asked to cut seven-and-a-half percent with an additional contingent two-and-a-half percent and they are bringing their story forward and letting them know they can't afford any more cuts, although they want to be a good city partner, they must realize that the Fire Department has important services that they need to continue to provide.

Chief Nicholson touched on the Street Crisis Response Team, which continues to work with the Department of Public Health and nonprofits on responding to the behavioral health crisis in the city and taking calls over from the police which is going well. She added that the media is going to be running a story on the Team and she is hopeful that there will be national coverage and they will continue to get funding from Proposition C. She mentioned that they have met with SFMTA, following the terrible incident when a member was injured when a muni bus ran over a hose line and they are working with them on training, so MUNI will know exactly what to do and not to do when there is a fire scene on the street, and they are trying to get through. She announced that Dr. Yeh is resigning his position and Dr. Jeremy Lacocque will be replacing him and she will invite them to a future commission meeting.

Commissioner Covington thanked Chief Nicholson for her condensed report and stated she is concerned about the budget and confirmed that the recent announcement that there is a 125 million dollar surplus available in the city coffers cannot be touched at this time as there is uncertainty on reimbursements from FEMA and the Mayor's office has not decided how it is going to be appropriated and distributed. Commissioner Covington stated she is hopeful that some of those monies will come the Department's way. She also confirmed that Dr. Yeh has been with the Department for 9 years and had a good long tenure, and she appreciates everything that he had done to help the Department, particularly with the homeless population, and that Chief Nicholson will be sending Dr. Lacocque's CV to the commissioners.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Chief Nicholson for her report and acknowledged the contributions that Dr. Yeh has made, including the formalization of EMS-6, and wants to make sure that he gets a proper sendoff and wished Dr. Yeh, his wife, and family well in future endeavors.

There was no public comment.

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

Report on the Administrative Divisions, Fleet and Facility status and updates, Finance, Support Services, and Training within the Department.

Chief Velo presented his January 2021 report. He mentioned that February is firefighter cancer awareness month, and that cancer is one of the leading causes of death in firefighters during the job and after when they retire, and it is a reminder of the perils that firefighters suffer

throughout the nation. He touched on the Division of Training stating that Chief Sato has been very busy, as they have the 127<sup>th</sup> academy class that just started week three and they also started the first module of the Captain's Academy, which Chief Nicholson has been a proponent of professional development and it consists of three modules, one of which is leadership and team building, and they have been very progressive in trying to make sure that they have the tools needed to do the job better. He touched on the EMT refresher, EMS, and airport training, NERT, which has been extremely busy, and Chief Parks, who continues to meet with the Peer Support Group. He stated that they met with the International Public Safety Data Institute which has a program called the National Fire Operations Reporting System and they have been invited to participate in the study which consists of tracking data and letting members log in their incidents so they can obtain a record of their incidents and exposures to different chemicals at fires and other situations they respond to. He added that Carrie Beshears from Health Services System is trying to bring mental health First Aid to the Department with special classes for the Critical Incident Response Team and the Peer Support Team.

Chief Velo announced that 1,154 members have been vaccinated and that Captain Jose Zalba of ISB has been extremely busy doing random alcohol and drug testing where 44 members were tested during this reporting month, and all results came back negative. He touched on Support Services, including facility repair requests, equipment repairs, and generator replacements, as well as an update on Station 35 which is expected to be completed by the end of March, and a possible move-in date of May 1<sup>st</sup>. He mentioned that the hose tender bids have been finalized and they are awaiting the result of the selection of the bidder and they are looking forward to working with them to make sure that they get those hose tenders as soon as possible and the project will take about a year to build from starting point to actual delivery.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked Chief Velo for his report and asked to get a copy of Anthony Boone's report. He confirmed that the Department is in discussions with Public Works on trying out a pilot program where they will assign one person to the Fire Department to do repairs. He confirmed that the cost to replace generators tends to cost between 2 and 600 thousand dollars, depending on where they are located and that the Ambulance Deployment Facility ribbing cutting will hopefully be in May.

Commissioner Rodriguez thanked them for their reports and confirmed that the position for Assistant Deputy Chief of Division of Training was announced in a General Order where it lists the qualifications that are required to apply for that position and many of the certificates that are mentioned are governed by the State Fire Marshal's Office. He also confirmed that the Department is doing a pilot program on masks that are reusable and can be washed and will fit small faces. He asked how the random drug testing works and Chief Velo explained that they contract with a company that has the schedule of all personnel working daily, and every day they do an unbiased lottery drawing and notify the captain in charge of the Investigative Services Bureau and he goes to the station where the members are working and tests them for drugs and alcohol.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Chief Velo for his report and confirmed that Chief Sato will be returning to the field and that they are in the process of going through applications to determine who will be getting an interview on March 8<sup>th</sup>. He asked Chief Johnson to describe what a virtual red cap drill is, and Chief Johnson responded that the red cap drill is their monthly readiness drill where they try to involve different agencies through the airport.

Commissioner Covington thanked Chief Velo for his report and the robust glossary of terms. She confirmed that the Captain's Academy consists of three eight-hour days focusing on leadership and team building on the first day, how to conduct drills properly on the second day and the third day, it's all about operations and administration and has 60 members enrolled off the captain's promotional list. Commissioner Covington stated she thinks it is a wonderful idea that the Chief of the Department and Chief Velo have seen fit to have this kind of comprehensive training and that it makes a big difference when you have a cadre of people who are going through the same training so that they can reinforce each other. She was happy to hear that NERT has been deployed to work at the large injection sites and thanked all the NERT Volunteers for all they do. She mentioned that after the wrinkles have been ironed out at the new Station 35, she looks forward to a wonderful celebration. She confirmed that the hose tenders are an apparatus that carries a large diameter hose, that carries large amounts of water to set up a portable hydrant system above ground. Chef Velo added that they were originally granted 5 hose tenders on the last budget, but two have been cut out, so they currently have three that are out to bid, one came from state funding and two are coming from city funds. Commissioner Covington also confirmed that about 200 members have been trained to give the COVID vaccination and that the drone evaluation exercise is being run by member Tom Fogle, who has worked diligently on getting himself qualified and certified as a trainer for additional volunteer members and that the department currently has about nine members in the cadre that will be certified to get called up for operational support and planned events with drones and will be piloting the unmanned aerial system to support the Department. The goal is to get enough pilots trained so at least one will be on duty each day.

President Feinstein confirmed that the mental health First Aid classes are meant to serve the members of the Fire Department and it is a class that has been taught to the Peer Support Team and Critical Incident Response Teams to help identify some of the issues that the members may be going through and teaches them how to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health issues. She also confirmed that many of the plumbing repair requests they get are because the firehouses have old pipes, and the infrastructure is very old and most of the facilities were built in the 1950s and 60's and things just break and get clogged up over time. President Feinstein also confirmed that there is a nationwide issue with counterfeit masks and that they were purchased by the COVID command and not the Fire Department. She also commended everybody that is stepping right up to the plate in every way they can, and she is proud of them for all the efforts they must do in their regular duties and jobs.

There was no public comment.

**5. COMMISSION REPORT [Discussion]**

Report on Commission activities since last meeting on February 10, 2021.

There was nothing to report.

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

Discussion regarding agenda for next and future Fire Commission meetings.

There was no public comment.

- Update from Chief Parks and Tony Boone
- Statement of Purpose
- Updates from Chief DeWitt, Chief DeCossio, and Chief Johnson
- Fireboat update
- Introduction of Dr. Lacocque

There was no public comment.

**7. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 8**

Public comment on all matters pertaining to Item 8(b) below, including public comment on whether to hold Items 8 (b) in closed session.

*There was no public comment.*

**8. POSSIBLE CLOSED SESSION REGARDING EXISTING LITIGATION**

**a. VOTE ON WHETHER TO CONDUCT ITEMS 8(b) IN CLOSED SESSION [Action]**

The Commission may hear Item 8(b) in closed session pursuant to Government Code Section 54957(b) and Administrative Code Section 67.10(b).

*Commissioner Covington Moved to conduct item 8(b) in closed session. Commissioner Cleaveland Seconded. The motion was unanimous.*

*The commission went into closed session at 6:29 p.m.*

*Also present in closed session was Deputy City Attorney, Jennifer Donnellan and Commission Secretary, Maureen Conefrey.*

**b. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – EXISTING LITIGATION.** Conference with legal counsel to discuss existing litigation pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9(a), (c), (d), and 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 Litigation:

*Jennifer Galarza v. City and County of San Francisco  
San Francisco Superior Court Case No. CGC-18-569532*

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

*Reconvened in open session at 6:34 p.m.*

*The commission recommended that the Board of Supervisors approve the settlement.*

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

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

President Feinstein adjourned the meeting at 6:36 p.m.