

**FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES**

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**Wednesday, July 14, 2021**

**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=38955](https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=180&clip_id=38955)

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

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

Chief of Department	Jeanine Nicholson	Present.
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Bryan Rubenstein	Deputy Chief -- Operations
Jose Velo	Deputy Chief --Administration

Shaine Kaialoa	Division of Training
Sandy Tong	EMS
David Brown	Airport Division
Ken Cofflin	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

**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 June 23, 2021.

Commissioner Cleaveland Moved to approve the minutes and Commissioner Nakajo 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 June 23, 2021, including budget, academies, special events, communications, and outreach to other government agencies and the public.

This matter was called out of order and followed General Public Comment as the Chief needed to leave early to participate in a Mayor's Department Head meeting.

Chief Nicholson reported on activities since the last meeting on June 23, 2021. She mentioned that the Department has deployed members to wildfires throughout the State, keeping in mind that they always need to keep an eye on SFFD's staffing levels while also lending a hand to our neighbors and partners in the state. She announced that an H-3 level 1 EMT class started on Monday with 22 members, and she is confident that the mayor's budget will allocate additional ambulance staffing in this year's upcoming budget. She also mentioned that an H-2 class of 40 recruits is scheduled to start in early August. Chief Nicholson talked about her concerns with increased response times and stated that they are having ongoing meetings with the MTA regarding Slow Streets, traffic calming measures, and future shared spaces.

President Feinstein confirmed that the next academy class will have about 40 recruits, which will be manageable for the Division of Training to get folks enough hands-on training. She added that there is a need for more staffing as there were 93 retirements over the last year so the need to continue to hire is a priority and they plan on having another class in January. President Feinstein also confirmed that speed humps and bumps slow down the apparatus responding to emergencies. Chief Dewitt added that they have seen an increase in the number of broken leaf springs (shock absorbers) for the engines but cannot confirm whether or not the speed humps are the cause of that but there seems to be a pattern in the areas where companies respond more frequently on those streets with the speed humps and that's where they are seeing the damage, although there seems to be a correlation, she doesn't know if that's causation. President Feinstein asked that they get more information if there's information to be had that is relevant to that issue.

Commissioner Cleaveland confirmed that the Department has over 230 members that are trained in wildland fires.

Commissioner Covington asked what the process is going forward for owners of the parklets interacting with the Fire Department will be to get approval for safety. Fire Marshal Cofflin responded that the new name for parklets is now Shared Spaces, and they are working on the guidelines right now with the Planning Department and the role of the SFFD is to let the Planning Department know what the expectations are, especially regarding the access to the building behind them, as well as additional inspections and ensuring that the Shared Spaces are maintaining access for our suppression members.

There was no public comment.

#### REPORT FROM OPERATIONS, DEPUTY CHIEF BRYAN RUBENSTEIN

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

Chief Rubenstein reported on Operations activities for the month of June 2021. He announced that June was a busy month for Lt. Baxter, of the public information sector, where he covered the big celebration for Juneteenth, LGBTQ month, and restoring the Pampaninto to its home

after all the debris was clear from the giant pier fire. He announced that the Red Cross is back up and running in person, responding to scenes, and has been very helpful with the two significant fires that caused displacements to tenants. He touched on the unveiling of Jason Cortez' name on the memorial wall, Firefighter Yock's service, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Berkeley Way incident, the United Fire Service Women's youth career academy, and the 127 Academy graduation and he thanked President Feinstein for her great speech at that event. He described the significant vault fire on Van Ness, a major gas leak that required a shelter in place, the continuous problem of encampment fires and the significant 2<sup>nd</sup> alarm fire on Market Street in a 90-unit structure, and major fire on Leavenworth, where 20 plus people were rescued, 15 evaluated and many transported and displaced. He presented and described photos on the screen of other significant incidents, including wildland deployments during the reporting period. Chief Rubenstein thanked everyone who attended the ribbon cutting at the new Station 49 facility. He welcomed Fire Marshal Cofflin and Assistant Deputy Chief David Brown who were both in the same academy class 23 years ago. He touched on the Division of Training, Homeland Security where they are ramping up for Fleet Week. He also talked a bit about the abundance of illegal fireworks that were set off on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and stated that Chief Thompson, who is the most experienced chief out in Battalion 10, said it was the most fireworks that he has ever seen, but fortunately, fewer fires came out of it, most likely because of the colder climate.

Francisco DeCosta commented that the quality of life in San Francisco has degraded and that we have to be very careful when we encourage open spaces and we do not want to be stretched with standards when it comes to fireworks. He suggested that the Fire Department should advise the Planning Department, the Board of Supervisors, and the Mayor of the dangers of so-called open spaces, which are frail structures just like haystacks. He added that the commissioners must be educated on issues, have the empirical data to make the right type of decisions.

President Feinstein read a post from her Nextdoor app entitled "Slow Street Hindering Fire Trucks." "A couple of days ago, I watched as fire trucks responded to a house fire on Page Street. One large truck came from the Masonic and pulled up in front of the burning house. Another truck came down Central but was unable to turn left onto Page because of the Slow Street barrier. The truck had to turn in the opposite direction, and someone jumped off the truck and ran behind in order to guide the large fire truck as it backed up to thread itself between a car parked at the curb and the Slow Street barricade in the middle of the street. That took a couple of minutes. Fortunately, the fire was not a large one. But can you imagine how precious a couple of minutes of response time could mean if the fire was larger? Then another truck came up Central but couldn't make the turn onto Page either." President Feinstein stopped reading there although the post does go on. She stated that she has noticed that people are beginning to erect more permanent barriers at these Slow Streets at the intersections and asked Chief Rubenstein if he could provide further information. Chief Rubenstein responded that he believes the incident mentioned in the post happened on July 10<sup>th</sup> on the 1400 block of Page Street and he has spoken to many of the members who responded, and they are frustrated because they had to choose alternate routes knowing that this was a Slow Street. He added that Lt. Baxter took some pictures which show materials stacked at some of these intersections that are illegal, and they reached out to DPW to clear them out. From the Fire Department's

perspective, any delay is problematic and some of the contributing factors are Slow Streets and traffic calming and they are working with the mayor's office and MTA, and Fire Marshal Cofflin is engaged with that very closely.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked Chief Rubenstein for his comprehensive and excellent report. He confirmed that some of the ambulance crews and street crisis folks have been assaulted in their line of duty, but no injuries have been reported. He also confirmed that per the California Master Mutual Aid Agreement they are allowed to send a team of 21 members at a time to a mutual aid request which can impact the members of the department who may have to work mandatory overtime to cover the staff shortages. Commissioner Cleaveland also confirmed that the City will have six Street Crisis Response Teams when the 6<sup>th</sup> team rolls out on July 26, 2021, and hopefully, by the end of the year, they will roll out the 7<sup>th</sup> team.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Chief Rubenstein for his comprehensive report and acknowledged how it presents a very clear picture for the commissioners who cannot respond to the field, and he appreciates the visuals that go along with Chief Rubenstein's narrative. Commissioner Nakajo went through different pages of the report and confirmed that pages five and six were prepared by the chief at radio and Lt. Baxter. He thanked Chief Tong for her contribution to the report and highlighted some of the pages he found interesting such as the successes and challenges stories and he added that he always enjoys reading her descriptions of the successes of some of their cases as well as challenges and it lets members of the public know what we do in terms of care and support for members of San Francisco. He talked about the concerns of assault on members, particularly on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July which he noticed has turned into mayhem. He welcomed Fire Marshal Cofflin and stated he looks forward when he comes to report on the Shared Spaces, once they become permanent as well as the opportunity for MTA to revisit the Slow Streets discussion. He also welcomed Assistant Deputy Chief Brown of the Airport and confirmed that the numbers are up for people traveling again, with the average being about 40,000. He also confirmed that Fleet Week will be an active event with in-person participation and will take place the first week of October.

Commissioner Covington thanked Chief Rubenstein for his comprehensive report and appreciated the visuals as well. She thanked President Feinstein for reading the post from Nextdoor and felt it is very concerning that anytime someone writes that they have seen with their own eyes how these impediments that have been placed on Slow Streets have to be physically removed so that firefighters can get to the space they need to do the job that they love, which is saving life and property. She mentioned that she has seen furniture and other things also on these Slow Streets and it is becoming the case that Slow Streets means slowing down emergency vehicles and she doesn't think there's enough discussion about the true obstacles at our highest levels of government. She also expressed her concern about the incessant on July 4<sup>th</sup> that went well into July 5<sup>th</sup> and because no cars are going along Slow Streets, you can have a mass gathering on a so-called Slow Street that turns into dangerous streets and public nuisance. She added that it is incredible the way the city is being challenged by these changes and unintended consequences. She suggested gathering accurate data down to the second information on any delays caused by these Slow Streets. She acknowledged and thanked all the members who have signed up and have completed wildland fire training and are ready to go and ready to be deployed. She also talked about the challenges of wildland fires and wildland-urban interface fires.

President Feinstein confirmed that wildland fire deployment in San Francisco is a voluntary service and every day regardless of the request, they take volunteers and build the list and those people are informed that they are on the list, and should they get a request, they respond. She expressed her concerns about the Shared Spaces and how it is unfair if you have a small frontage you are limited to how big the structure can be as well as the dangers of double parkers and delivery trucks because now you have parking spots taken by the Shared Space structure. She also expressed her concerns about wires and string lighting that can impede the raising of an aerial ladder during an emergency. She added that just because the Shared Spaces are popular doesn't mean they are safe, and it concerns her. Fire Marshal Cofflin responded to her concerns and said it is a work in progress and the Fire Department is listed as a core agency in these discussions.

Commissioner Cleaveland confirmed that all fees have been waived through 2022 but those fees for Shared Spaces were not going to the Fire Department anyway. He also confirmed that the Fire Department is a core agency in enforcement but not receiving any money for permits. Commissioner Covington was pleased to hear that the Fire Department is a core agency for these discussions and decisions on Shared Spaces.

There was no public comment.

**6. COMMISSION REPORT [Discussion]**

Report on Commission activities since last meeting on June 23, 2021.

There was nothing to report.

There was no public comment.

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

Discussion regarding agenda for next and future Fire Commission meetings.

- Continuation from MTA on Slow Streets update
- Update of Resolution 2009-03
- Performance Evaluations of Commission Secretary and Department Physician

There was no public comment.

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

President Feinstein adjourned the meeting at 10:50 a.m.