

SAN FRANCISCO FIRE COMMISSION

FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 14, 2019

City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 416, San Francisco, California, 94102

The Video can be viewed by clicking this link:

http://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=180&clip_id=33816

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

1. ROLL CALL

Commission President	Stephen Nakajo	Present
Commission Vice President	Francee Covington	Present
Commissioner	Michael Hardeman	Present
Commissioner	Ken Cleaveland	Present
Commissioner	Joe Alioto Veronese	Present (stepped out briefly)
Chief of Department	Jeanine Nicholson	Present.
Victor Wyrsh	Deputy Chief -- Operations	
Jose Velo	Deputy Chief --Administration	
Sandy Tong	EMS	
Dan DeCossio	Bureau of Fire Prevention	
Khai Ali	Airport Division	
Dawn DeWitt	Support Services	
Joel Sato	Training Division	
Staff		
Mark Corso	Deputy Director of Finance	
Tony Boone	Environmental Health and Safety Officer	

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 July 24, 2019

Commissioner Cleaveland Moved to approve the above meeting Minutes. Commissioner Hardeman Seconded. Motion to approve Minutes was unanimous with member present (4-0). (Commissioner Veronese was absent from the vote but rejoined the meeting at 9:25 a.m.)

There was no public comment.

4. CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT'S REQUEST FOR LEAVE TO ATTEND 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE CALIFORNIA FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION [Discussion and possible action]

Chief of Department Jeanine Nicholson respectfully requests a Leave of Absence with pay for three (3) days, Monday, September 23 through Wednesday, September 25, 2019, to attend the 2019 Annual Conference of the California Fire Chiefs Association in Ontario, California. Deputy Chief Wyrsh will serve as Acting Chief of Department. The cost to the Department for this trip is \$1,120.00.

Commissioner Hardeman Moved to approve the above Leave. Vice President Covington Seconded. Motion to approve leave was unanimous.

There was no public comment.

Item 6 was moved to accommodate Chief de Cossio on a pending meeting he was scheduled to attend.

6. UPDATE FROM ASSISTANT DEPUTY CHIEF/FIRE MARSHAL DANIEL DE COSSIO [Discussion]

Fire Marshal Daniel de Cossio to provide an update and overview of the Bureau of Fire Prevention.

Chief de Cossio gave a breakdown of the scope and duties within his unit as well as recent accomplishments over the past few years and he described programs they have launched and continues to grow, and he touched on current and ongoing initiatives. He described each slide in the attached presentation: https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/SFFD_DFPIupdate081419_V3.pptx

Chief DeCossio mentioned that the division is made up of two bureaus, the Bureau of Fire Investigation and Bureau of Fire Prevention and they are a hundred members strong including an assistant fire marshal, nine captains, 12 lieutenants, 50 plus inspectors, nine investigators and six fire protection engineers as well as seven admin support staff. He added that they completed 26,000 inspections over the past fiscal year which is a 50 percent increase over the last 10 years and processed 13,000 construction permits, which is a 100 percent increase over the last 10 years.

He stated that the Fire Investigation team is headed by Assistant Fire Marshal Tyrone Pruitt and Captain Bowden who is the manager of the unit. He added that they respond to approximately 20 incidents a month, which include fire fatalities, greater alarms, fires associated with places of worship, family planning facilities, government buildings, embassies and any types of explosions or fires that are known to be intentionally set. Regarding Fire Prevention, it is broken down into sections, including plan check, districts, fire permits, high-rise, fire complaints, Port of San Francisco, SFO, schools, residential care facilities, community outreach, training, TASC, and special projects housing. He announced the responsible staff heading each of those components:

- Plan Check/Captain Harold
- Districts/Captain Matthews
- Fire permits/Captain Shea
- Highrise/Captain Shea
- Residential care facilities/Captain Shea
- Fire complaints/Captain Cofflin
- Port/Captain Cofflin

- SFO/Captain Russell
- Schools/Captain Shea
- Community outreach/Captain Balmy
- Special projects/Captain Patt
- TASC/Captain Law
- Fire Protection Engineer, Kamal Andrawes

He invited his team members who were present at the meeting to come and stand and he introduced them individually.

Commissioner Hardeman thanked Chief de Cossio for his report and mentioned that it is always nice to see a big guy that is approachable and nice and has a way about him that doesn't overwhelm people and that he admires the good attitude Chief de Cossio has, and he compared him to Willie McCovey. He thought it was a brilliant idea to go from two to nine captains and he confirmed that Captain Cofflin received an additional inspector and lieutenant to help with the Port duties. He also confirmed that the Chase Center is not part of the Port property lines. Commissioner Hardman stated he was happy to hear about the electronic plan review migration.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked Chief de Cossio for his report and for bringing his talented and experienced team with him. He mentioned that having worked for many years in the commercial real estate industry in San Francisco, he realizes how invaluable Fire Marshal de Cossio's portion of the Fire Department is to the economy of the City. He asked Chief de Cossio to elaborate on the code updates that are due to be voted on soon. Chief de Cossio confirmed that they are cleaning up some language regarding fire escapes, the maintenances of fire escapes and access to fire escapes and adding language about personnel that the Fire Department deems qualified to service sprinkler and fire alarm systems in San Francisco and making sure that those working on the systems are trained properly in that line of work. He also confirmed that the admin bulletins clarify the Fire Department's interpretation of the fire codes. Commissioner Cleaveland expressed his pleasure in the migrating to an electronic plan review process and that it will be starting with ADU permit process. They touched on the directive from the Mayor's office for certain priorities for a hundred percent affordable housing and ADU's and fast-tracking that process. He also mentioned that he thinks it is an excellent idea to cross-train the employees within his bureaus.

Vice President Covington thanked Fire Marshal de Cossio for his report and stated that she can't believe he's been in the position already for four years. She added that she thinks he and his team are doing a fabulous job. She mentioned that she was impressed with the reduction in the number of arson investigations that are pending, as well as the reduction in the time it takes to do the plan checks for the ADU's. She asked for clarification on the meeting he needs to attend regarding rooftop decks. Fire Marshal de Cossio explained that the code for rooftop decks is not very explicit and they are meeting with the Building Department to come up with an information sheet with guidelines on how they are going to address rooftop decks so that they are on the same page for a consistent message and not going back and forth for every application. Vice President Covington commented that she has noticed a lot of apartment buildings have taken out parking spaces and put in dwelling units and the building owners then add an amenity, such as a roof deck and that there doesn't seem to be restrictions on how high the wall should be to separate it from a single-family home or adjacent dwelling and with the strong winds lately, she is concerned about embers traveling and causing problems. Chief de

Cossio explained the types of construction you can have and where the building owners are limited on where you can put a place of assembly. He gave an example that if you have a type-3 combustible construction, you cannot have an assembly space above the fourth floor. Vice President Covington suggested doing outreach to occupants of apartment buildings on fire prevention and safety tips when accessing the building's roof. She confirmed that Chief de Cossio feels his Bureau is staffed well and that the Mayor and Chief totally support them and he feels they have been given the resources they need to get their job done. She added that the Commission supports him as well.

Commissioner Veronese thanked the Fire Marshal for his report. He also stated his concern about the safety of people gathering on rooftops and used the example of when the Blue Angels are in town. He wants to make sure that those roofs are being used safely. Fire Marshal de Cossio agreed and confirmed there are requirements and provisions in the code and added that people just going up to the roof is a different story which they will have to get the word out about. Chief de Cossio explained the definition of open space vs. place of assembly and it's all about occupancy and how there are defining the use. Commissioner Veronese asked that they get a copy of the code as soon as possible so that they can read it and understand it before they vote to approve it. There was a discussion on the permit appeals process and Chief de Cossio has not heard of the Fire Department getting overruled on their code decisions. Commissioner Veronese concluded his comments by saying he appreciates everyone's hard work and that Fire Marshal de Cossio has had an amazing year.

Commissioner Hardman confirmed that the nine investigators enable them to strike a balance with the workload, so they are not overwhelmed.

Commissioner Cleaveland stated that he thinks roof decks are great and that a lot of people who live in the City don't have outdoor areas to go to and he thinks it's important that they support roof decks as long as they're safe.

President Nakajo asked for an electronic copy of his report and stated that Chief de Cossio has accomplished his goal of providing an in-depth report and the feel of his various units. He appreciated getting the organization chart and confirmed that they have approximately a hundred staff on his team and complimented Fire Marshal de Cossio for the good things he had done throughout the four years he has been Fire Marshal. He also stated he appreciated the team members that came to the meeting and to be able to see a name associated with a face. He stated his appreciation for all their hard work and dedication even during this time with new initiatives concerning housing and homelessness.

There was no public comment.

5.. 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 24, 2019, including budget, academies, special events, communications and outreach to other government agencies and the public.

Chief Nicholson provided an update since her last report on July 24, 2019. She stated that the Mayor signed the budget and the additional resources the Department was given were five new EMS-6 positions, paramedic captains to help with the frequent caller volume, a health and

safety wellness battalion chief and two civilian positions, one EMS billing and one to assist with housing tracking and special projects at headquarters, three assistant fire marshals and three inspectors. She added that they also received 5 hose tenders, four from the city and one from the state, and they are a million dollars each, fully equipped, four-wheel drive and come with a three impeller pump as well as a portable pump that they can drop in the bay or wherever needed as well as 6,000 feet of five-inch hose. She announced the retirement of Support Services Assistant Deputy Chief Tony Rivera and the selection of new Assistant Deputy Chief of Support Services, Dawn DeWitt who has hit the ground running. Chief DeWitt was introduced and said it was her pleasure to be at the meeting and gave a brief history of her time in the Department which includes 24 years' experience coming up through the field.

Chief Nicholson stated she met with Supervisor Ronen who sat on the Budget Committee and she really wanted to bring the story to her as she didn't think some of the Budget Committee members understood what she was trying to get across during the budget process, so she is going to continue to bring the story to those that make the decision on the Department's behalf at City Hall. She mentioned that she met with DEM Director Mary Ellen Carroll on the topic of the importance of uniformed members at the Department of Emergency Management. She touched on other meetings she had over the reporting period, including labor management, aids from Senator Kamala Harris' office, San Mateo Fire Authority and Daly City Fire and opened up the lines of communications, and she announced a surprise visit from the Fire Chief of Arequipa, Peru as well as the ambassador to Peru. Chief Nicholson attended the topping off ceremony for the Ambulance Deployment Facility. She announced the recent upgrades to the Fire Department Operations Center which is on the 2nd Floor at SFFD Headquarters and will be used as an emergency center if needed. She also attended National Night Out with the Mayor at the Bay View Opera House and she thanked all the members for the support around Outside Lands and the work that Chief Cochrane and Chief Wyrsh did in preparing for that event as well as Chief Tong in terms of the medical response. She gave an update on the Chase Center drill where they had many challenges responding to the area but are continuing to collaborate with MTA and the Chase Center to work those out, and they will most likely have another drill. She touched on other topics such as the Department is now using renewable diesel and new stations that are permitted after January 1, 2020, will not have natural gas lines, as the city is moving away from that due to the impact that it has on global warming and sea level rises. She announced that on September 11, 2019, they will have the commemoration ceremony at the newly remolded Station 5 at 6:45 a.m.

Commissioner Hardeman confirmed that the new health and wellness battalion chief will be one person on days at headquarters. He welcomed Chief DeWitt to her new position and told her that she has big shoes to fill with the retirement of Chief Rivera and the great memory he had. He thanked Chief Nicholson and Mark Corso for the very good job on the budget.

Commissioner Veronese mentioned that he noticed that the calls on EMS-6 are up to 80 percent of homeless people and suggested that they need to stop calling it EMS-6 and start calling it the homeless emergency plan or something like that so when you go to the next budget meeting he thinks they could actually get more resources if 80 percent of the calls are homeless related that EMS-6 is responding to. Chief Nicholson responded that because it is a pilot program it cannot be called anything to do with homelessness because the frequent callers are what EMS-6 is addressing, but she added that most of the people are homeless and it is important to continue to make the story heard by everyone at City Hall so they know where the funds are going.

Commissioner Veronese stated that he understands that the pilot program is titled one thing, but what it's called, he doesn't think will affect the program and at a certain point, you need to be realistic about what the program actually is, as opposed to what it was set out to be and change the pilot program to what it actually is. Commissioner Veronese also confirmed that discussions are ongoing with DPH on up staffing the hospitals and working out solutions to alleviate time on task. He suggested that the department should be tracking how long ambulances are sitting at hospitals and it would also tell which hospitals are the worst offenders.

There was no public comment.

REPORT FROM OPERATIONS, DEPUTY CHIEF VICTOR WYRSCH

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

Chief Wyrsh acknowledged Chief Nicholson, Chief Velo, and all the Assistant Chiefs and their staff for their incredible hard work and gave the Assistant Chiefs kudos as they kept all of the fires at the first alarm, which means they are being extremely aggressive but safe. He touched on significant events that took place during the reporting period including a cliff rescue, a surf rescue, two bay rescues, an extrication from a BART train and four auto extractions. His report is attached: https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/ops%20report_0_1.pdf

He described the fire at SFO on the roof at the United building involving an HVAC unit, a wildfire at McLaren Park caused by a homeless camp and training with new equipment and updating the training with battalion-based controls. He talked about the PG&E public safety power shut down, where they continue to have meetings all over the region. He described the response times during the Chase Center drill and the hose tender schematic he provided. He also touched on the EMS Division report, the Airport report, and Homeland Security division, where they are still waiting on a response from FEMA about the drone. He attended a meeting with elevator vendors to come up with a triage plan, so they don't experience the recent events in New York where they had 400 elevators stuck and not enough trucks to get stuck people out of elevators.

Vice President Covington asked Chief Wyrsh to go over in more detail the hose tender photos that were included, and one of the reasons she asked for more information on the hose tender is because they spent quite a bit of time talking to the powers that be at City Hall regarding the need for hose tenders and she was hoping for a photo that shows the bed of the truck and all of the apparatus that's in there so that our elected officials will have a good visual of what a hose tender is and what it does. Chief Wyrsh responded that because nothing has ever been built before like what the schematic shows and is being built to SFFD specs and designed specifically for SFFD, by SFFD. Vice President Covington suggested doing something visual so that people understand why it's a million dollars per tender and why it is so very important in a disaster and it will enable us to tell our story. Concerning the breakdown of responses, Vice President Covington asked what determines an altered mental state. Chief Wyrsh explained that it's difficult to define as there are inconsistencies, as it could be drugs, alcohol, confusion, diabetes and they are still trying to figure that out with the EPCR vendor on the best

way to resolve the issue. Vice President Covington commented that things are going well with the Airport bike medics. She asked Chief Wyrsh if he needed any help from the Commission in pressuring FEMA regarding the drone.

Commissioner Hardeman thanked Chief Wyrsh for his very good report. He commented on the 98 percent increase in the use of Narcan and was sorry to see that as it is sad, what we're going through in the country with drug use. He talked about the recent drug bust in the Tenderloin. He thanked Vice President Covington for asking for a picture of the hose tender as he lives in the west side of the city and over the years has been beaten on by people that live there as well complaining that we don't have an adequate water supply in the western part of the city, so he's glad the department is getting new hose tenders. He was also happy to hear of the bike medics at the airport and confirmed morale was high with them.

Commissioner Veronese thanked him for the Narcan information and confirmed that the numbers on the sheet were per incident. He also pointed out, as did Commissioner Hardeman that it has increased by a hundred percent among the homeless population and wants to know what the SFFD is going to do with this information. Chief Wyrsh answered they must keep going, that it is not a Fire Department question. Commissioner Veronese suggested that it become part of the conversation with DPH and say, "by the way, this is what we're seeing on the street". Chief Nicholson added that she can definitely give them the numbers, but they are well aware of what is going on in the streets and have statistics of their own as well, so they are seeing what the SFFD is seeing.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked Chief Wyrsh for his report and asked if he would share the emergency response map with the Commission. Chief Wyrsh explained what the emergency response map was, and would be used in a horrible disaster, where they would breakdown the Fire Department into 10 different departments, so each battalion becomes its own department. Commissioner Cleaveland also expressed his concern in the EMS-6 program where 95 percent of 9-1-1 calls are frequent flyers. He also believes that the Department needs to delve into the altered mental status injury calls.

President Nakajo thanked Chief Wyrsh for his comprehensive report and really appreciates the visual in terms of the hose tender and agrees with Vice President Covington that a more enhanced visual would be helpful within the education process. He congratulated Chief DeWitt on her promotion, and he acknowledged Chief Rivera for his 28 years of service. He also congratulated Chief Nicholson on the accomplishment of her hundred days in the trenches.

There was no public comment.

7. COMMISSION REPORT [Discussion]

Report on Commission activities since last meeting on July 24, 2019.

President Nakajo reminded the commission that he has been working with the commission secretary to organize the retirement ceremony for approximately 210 retirees. He touched on the particulars of what dates and locations might work. Commissioner Hardeman suggested looking at Delancey Street as a possible venue. Commissioner Hardeman also mentioned that he watched the seven-part series on NERT training, and that he learned so much from watching

it. He also mentioned that he attended Chief Rivera's retirement party which was well attended, and he got to sit with former Chief Joanne Hayes-White.

Commissioner Veronese was sorry he missed Chief Rivera's party and wishes him the best, as he did an amazing job for the Department for a very long time. He also mentioned that he met with Chief Nicholson and Chief Velo to discuss amending the Department's animal policy.

Vice President Covington mentioned that Chief Rivera was one of kind and she will miss him but thanked Chief DeWitt for taking on the assignment. She also attended the Earthquake Safety and Emergency Response Bond event which is going to be rolled out in 2020, and it is going to help with the seismic upgrading and needed improvements to neighborhood fire stations. She also went to the signing of the budget for the City and County of San Francisco which was quite exciting and amounted to 12 billion dollars.

President Nakajo stated that he attended the topping of Station 49 and acknowledged the Department of Public Works and he mentioned that he was impressed to see the renditions presented and was able to walk on to the lot and stand in front of the amazing building which will be Station 49.

There was no public comment.

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

Discussion regarding agenda for next and future Fire Commission meetings.

- Retreat update
- Guardians of the City
- Civil Grand Jury Report
- Grants coordinator update (when the position is filled)
- Port update/Captain Cofflin
- State of the Art Peer Support update (Cal Fire funding)
- Department Physician update
- Department Physician evaluation

9. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED SINCE LAST MEETING [Discussion]

- Letter from James Lee, Chair of the Guardians of the City

There was no public comment.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 11

Public comment on all matters pertaining to Item 11(b) below, including public comment on whether to hold Item 11(b) in closed session.

There was no public comment.

11. POSSIBLE CLOSED SESSION REGARDING PERSONNEL MATTERS

a. VOTE ON WHETHER TO CONDUCT ITEMS 11(b) IN CLOSED SESSION [Action]

The Commission may hear Item 11(b) in closed session pursuant to Government Code Section 54957(b) and Administrative Code Section 67.10(b).

Commissioner Cleaveland made a motion to conduct item 11(b) and (c), in Closed Session. Vice President Covington seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved. (5-0; Nakajo, Hardeman, Cleaveland, Covington, Veronese)

The Commission went into closed session at 11:15 a.m. and cleared the room. Discussions started at 11:49.

b. FIRE COMMISSION SECRETARY PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Pursuant to Admin. Code section 67.10(b); Govt. Code section 54957(b), Govt. Code section 54957.1(a)(5), the Commission may hold a closed session to discuss the performance evaluation of Fire Commission Secretary, Maureen Conefrey. *[Discussion and possible action].*

Commissioner Cleaveland Moved to approve the performance evaluation with added goals. Commissioner Hardeman Seconded. The motion was unanimous.

12. 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).

The Commission reconvened in Open Session at 12:04 p.m. President Nakajo reported that the Commission has reaffirmed and approved the evaluation conducted by Commissioner Cleaveland of our Commission Secretary, Maureen Conefrey and that vote was unanimously approved.

13. 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 Cleaveland Moved to not disclose discussions held in closed session. Vice President Covington Seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

14. ADJOURNMENT President Nakajo adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m.