

FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday, June 24, 2020 – 5:00 p.m
This meeting was held remotely on Webex

The Video can be viewed by clicking this link:
https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=180&clip_id=36019

President Covington called the meeting to order at 5:14 p.m.

Commission President	Francee Covington	Present
Commission Vice President	Katherine Feinstein	Present
Commissioner	Stephen Nakajo	Present (he had trouble joining the meeting, but eventually was able to log on at 5:22 pm)
Commissioner	Ken Cleaveland	Present
Commissioner	Tony Rodriguez	Present
Victor Wyrsh	Deputy Chief -- Operations	
Jose Velo	Deputy Chief --Administration	
Sandy Tong	EMS	
Dawn DeWitt	Support Services	
Dan DeCossio	Bureau of Fire Prevention	
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 June 10, 2020.

Vice President Feinstein Moved to approve and Commissioner Cleaveland Seconded. President Covington and Commissioner Rodriguez also concurred. There was no public comment.

4. CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT’S REQUEST FOR LEAVE TO ATTEND 2020 FIRESCOPE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Chief of Department Jeanine Nicholson respectfully requests a Leave of Absence with pay for 2 days, Wednesday, July 8 through Thursday, July 9, 2020, to attend the FIRESCOPE Board of Directors Meeting in Orange County, California. Deputy Chief Victor Wyrsh will serve as Acting Chief of Department. The cost to the Department for this trip is \$182.00.

Vice President Feinstein Moved to approve and Commissioner Cleaveland Seconded. President Covington and Commissioner Rodriguez also concurred. There was no public comment.

5. UPDATE ON THE CURRENT BUDGET [Discussion]

Mark Corso, Deputy Director of Finance and Planning on the Fire Department's budget for Commission review and discussion.

Mr. Corso provided a brief update on the budget. He said that discussions are ongoing, and they are currently working with the Mayor's office, along with all other city departments to help balance a 250-million-dollar deficit for the fiscal year ending in June of 2020. They are reviewing projects such as capital and equipment deferrals and modifications to change the way they are financed to assist with reducing the deficit. He gave examples such as leasing as opposed to purchasing, although they are working with the Mayor's office to ensure that they are able to purchase the equipment that has already been allocated. He touched on the time lines which were outlined in his last month's report and stated that they are evaluating all areas of the Department for potential savings or efficiencies, but given that the department's budget is predominantly spent for frontline operations, both fire suppression and emergency medical services, and that they meet and serve the city's most vulnerable populations, the department does not have a lot of flexibility in meeting some of the mayor's budget office targets and they have communicated that and they understand the position the department is in.

President Covington confirmed that the internal budget committee has reconvened and discussions regarding limited flexibility and not impacting frontline operations has been a main topic. She also confirmed with Chief Nicholson that communications with Local 798 have been happening frequently and the conversations have been good.

There was no public comment.

6. 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 10, 2020, including budget, academies, special events, communications and outreach to other government agencies and the public and ethnic breakdown of the 126th Academy Class.

Chief Nicholson reported on activities since last meeting on June 10, 2020. She acknowledged that COVID-19 has been the number one topic over the last few months. She confirmed that one member of the Department has tested positive and they are isolating and quarantining at home. She added that they continue cleaning the stations numerous times a day and wear their proper PPE and she ensured that they have enough PPE to go around. She touched on the COVID 19 Emergency Operations Center at Moscone Center and that it's going to be scaled down a bit differently so the SFFD won't have as many people assigned there and it will have a different command structure mostly run by DEM. Regarding the budget, she mentioned that she does not want to see any negative operational impact to the Department. She announced that Station 13 is going to be rebuilt, with luxury housing above, which will help pay for some lower income housing in Chinatown. She added that conversations are continuing with the Department of Real Estate regarding a site for a new training facility, as it is an absolute priority for the Department.

Chief Nicholson acknowledged the EMS-6 program that has been involved in many aspects of the street challengers since COVID 19, and the shelters are only at one-third capacity so people can social distance which makes for more issues on the streets and the EMS-6 members have

been instrumental in cleaning out parts of the Tenderloin, and getting people into housing. She has been communicating with the Mayor's office on how effective and impactful the program is. She added that because the police will not be responding to every single behavioral health call anymore, they are working diligently to ensure that they have the proper processes and protocols in place for the members' safety and they are working with the head of the Department of Emergency Management, Mary Ellen Carroll work on that.

She stated that the demographic breakdown of the last academy class is: 22 white; four African American, eight Hispanic, five Asian, four Filipino, and five multi-racial. She added that the former fire chief had selected over a dozen of the members for that class, so she had a very limited number of people to choose from.

Vice President Feinstein confirmed that Related was the project manager for the rebuild of Station 13, which will also have luxury housing above the Station. Chief Nicholson added that Related is funding the entire project and the cost will not be coming out of the City's budget.

Commissioner Rodriguez confirmed that the Department has had ongoing discussions with the Police Department concerning how and who will be responding to certain calls now that the Police Department will no longer respond to them, and how it will impact the Fire Department as well as other city departments. Chief Nicholson added that in her humble opinion, the work that the Fire Department's community paramedics are currently doing, would be the absolute correct solution to this issue and they are discussing expanding that program.

Commissioner Cleaveland stated he hopes that some of the money can be redirected to the EMS-6 program as it's an area of dire need for growth.

President Covington expressed her concern about the lack of a definite place for the new training facility. Chief Nicholson responded by saying that they have a site located and they are in negotiations regarding that site.

There was no public comment.

REPORT FROM OPERATIONS, DEPUTY CHIEF VICTOR WYRSCH

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 report for the month of May. He covered the department's involvement in COVID 19 response and confirmed that they are going down to a different mode of unified command starting July 6, 2020. He stated that training was shut down during COVID 19, so they focused most of the resources to support COVID 19 response. He stated that they did some training of the Lucas Device which allows for CPR without being close to the patient. He acknowledged the great work of the NERT volunteers at the command of Captain Arteseros. He stated that Chief Parks, Chief of Health, Safety and Wellness has been extremely busy during the pandemic and she continues to work on the update on the injury, illness and prevention program with Tony Boone coordinating the development and launch of the new app, Cordico which helps members with mental health issues and support. He added that Dr. Brokaw feels that this is a major issue that needs to be focused on and they are happy that Chief Parks and the Stress Unit are working together to get this issue resolved. He acknowledged how busy the physician's office has been, as well as preparing health monitors

and newsletters with information to members, mostly covering COVID 19, but also mental health issues and tips to be able to get through this pandemic. Dr. Brokaw also coordinated the study for an antibody as well as conducted probationary and promotional physicals and a plan to administer the flu shot in the fall. He acknowledged the retirement of Lt. Neuneker who will be missed greatly. Regarding Support Services, he mentioned that there have been a lot of facility repairs processed and gave an apparatus update, which included six engines that are projected to be completed in September, a new rescue boat that they are going to put out to bid, and six new command vehicles. He added that a new jet ski was delivered to Station 16 and concrete has been poured for Station 35 and they are still on track for the completion date of March 2021.

Vice President Feinstein asked if all the surf and cliff rescues she gets alerts to is reflective of the normal number of calls in a given year. Chief Wyrsh responded that those numbers of rescues are normal and average to what they see each year.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Chief Velo for his comprehensive report and the photos in his report. He stated that he looks forward to seeing Chief Mark Johnson of the Airport and thanked Chief Ali for her service to the Department. He also acknowledged the great work of the NERT volunteers as well as the great work in the Physician's office and how he appreciates the newsletters and the work of Dr. Brokaw and Nurse Practitioner Stephanie Phelps. Commissioner Nakajo also acknowledged the service of Lt. Neuneker.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked Chief Velo for his report and stated he appreciates the photographs also. He acknowledged and appreciates the leadership efforts of the department and volunteers. He also acknowledged the good job that Dr. Brokaw is doing, and he appreciates the newsletter and the engagement she has immediately got involved with in terms of meeting with and interacting with all the rank and file members of the Department.

Commissioner Rodrigues acknowledged the very good report Chief Velo presented.

President Covington congratulated Chief Ali on her retirement and mentioned that she has been a shining light in the Department for some time, as has Captain Neuneker and she wished them both the best. She thanked Chief Velo for his report. She acknowledged how fires have gone down over the years because so many members of the public have been taught fire safety and prevention, as well as mandatory smoke alarms in homes, but unfortunately, surf and cliff rescues seem to stay steady, and many people are unaware that members of the Department respond to these rescues often. President Covington acknowledged the expansion of NERT, especially during this pandemic including outreach, support, food bank support, and deliveries throughout the city. and confirmed that she and commission secretary, Ms. Conefrey are NERT certified.

There was no public comment.

7. UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF THE NEW AMBULANCE DEPLOYMENT FACILITY AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AND UPDATES AT STATION 49

Assistant Deputy Chief Dawn DeWitt will report on the Progress of the new Ambulance Deployment Facility and Assistant Chief Sandra Tong will report on current developments and updates at Station 49.

Assistant Deputy Chief Dawn Dewitt of Support Services gave an update on the San Francisco Ambulance Deployment Facility. She provided a short background of the project, an overview of the budget and the schedule from beginning to end. She mentioned that the project rose out of the 2016 Public Health and Safety Bond with a budget of \$48,600,000 and the goal is to construct a modern seismically safe EMS building to replace the current Station 49 on Evans Street. She added that ambulances were not originally part of the Fire Department, and so there were no separate facilities for the ambulances or for their members when EMS merged with the SFFD in 1997, the ambulances and their staff were originally moved into the firehouses and they were strategically deployed from the Firehouse. She stated that after years of assessments, the EMS Division realized that that wasn't working particularly well, so they reorganized in 2006 and brought the ambulances back to one central facility where they could deploy them more dynamically and stage ambulances throughout the city where they were needed. When they moved out of the firehouses, there was nowhere to put them, so they moved them into the SFFD warehouse on Evans Street and as the EMS Division has grown, they have outgrown the warehouse. The anticipated completion date for the new facility is October 26, 2020. Her presentation is attached: <https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/ADF%204%20Fire%20Commission%202020-06-241%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

Vice President Feinstein confirmed that the biomedical equipment is primarily the kind of durable stuff, like monitors, thermometers and machines that help people breathe better and that the controlled substances refers to the narcotics.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked Chief DeWitt for her excellent report on the progress of the facility and he was delighted to hear the project is going to come in on time and under budget. He confirmed that the facility will be secure with the decorative 10 foot fence outside that wraps the perimeter of the property and the facility itself will be controlled by card readers to get into the building and security camera at the front gate. He stated that he was very impressed with the gate art.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Chief DeWitt for her smooth organized report as well as her nice narrative voice. He thanked Chief Tong for her comprehensive report and he touched on the history of when the Department inherited the ambulance service and the growing pains that went with that merger and the endeavors to treat those men and women and the members at Station 49 with dignity and pride as he was on the Fire Commission when the Department inherited the ambulance service and their personnel from the Department of Public Health and not a very great budget. He stated his excitement of the new facility and that the members of Station 49 are well deserving of it.

Commissioner Rodriguez was impressed that the project came in on time, under budget and looks nice and it is an obvious result of everybody being happy. He thanked Commissioner Nakajo for sharing his history of the merger.

President Covington stated she thinks the facility looks gorgeous and stated Chief Tong's new office is like an eagle's nest and she will be able to see everything going on of any importance on the property. She added that the members on the medical side are so deserving of the lovely building because they have been cheek by jowl in the current facility. She mentioned that she was heartened tremendously to see the progress being made and suggested any of the commissioners that have not seen the current facility, should take a tour so that they can see what an unbelievable upgrade the new facility is.

Assistant Deputy Chief Sandra Tong of EMS gave an update on current issues and activities at Station 49. She focused on what has been going on in terms of response to the crisis and background of call volume. She mentioned that EMS-6 has had a huge role in addressing a number of issues that have been happening during the last few months as well as how the 49ers have rose to the occasion. She presented the attached report: <https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/EMS%20Division%20Fire%20Commission%20Presentation%202020-06-24%20FINAL.pdf>

Chief Tong mentioned that during COVID, they celebrated EMS Week which was May 17th to the 22nd and they had food donated for all the members every day and at the end of the week there was a barbecue and a ceremony at Station 49 with a visit from Mayor Breed which was quite special. She added that in March, the City of San Francisco celebrated 125 years of continuous municipal emergency ambulance service in the city. She mentioned that in 1932 there was an average of five calls a day that ambulances when on, and in 1978 it was about 150 calls, and today, they are up to about 400 calls a day.

Commissioner Rodriguez congratulated Chief Tong and stated how impressed he is on the job she has done where she had to develop a program to respond to something that nobody knew anything about. Chief Tong thanked him for his comments and added that it was a complete organizational accomplishment and they had support from everybody from the Command Staff, doctor's office, and members.

Vice President Feinstein echoed the comments of Commissioner Rodriguez and she thanked Chief Tong and all the folks that she works with for being out there during the pandemic and that we owe her and her team a lot of thanks.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked Chief Tong on a job well done and added that he knows she has an amazing division and a lot of responsibility and he's impressed how she and Chief DeWitt are leaders and have put together a program that has addressed a critical issue, COVID 19 when no one saw it coming. There was a brief discussion on the use of H-8 Paramedics and that it can be a great fail-safe program if they can get enough people to get trained.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Chief Tong for her report and liked the sequence of Chief DeWitt talking about the new Station 49 and the remarks that Chief Tong made about the men and women who work there because the building facility is the facility, but the content of the facility is the men and women who are EMTs and paramedics in her division and commented on the great achievements of Chief Tong and thanked her for her dedication.

President Covington asked Chief Tong if she reached out to any other departments nationally for best practices in response to the COVID 19 epidemic. Chief Tong responded that it was something new for everyone and they were all just flying by the seat of their pants trying to figure it out. President Covington confirmed that the COVID advice line is staffed by a member from Training during the day and when members call in with concerns such as "I had an interaction with a patient and I was not wearing my mask, what do I do" or "my last call, I think the patient was positive, what should I do? And the training staff manning the advice line would provide an opportunity to share information and to alleviate fears about what they were dealing with. President Covington thinks this will make a tremendous difference in reassuring people they have access to information and feedback immediately.

There was no public comment.

8. COMMISSION REPORT [Discussion]

Report on Commission activities since last meeting on June 10, 2020.

There was no public comment.

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

Discussion regarding agenda for the next and future regular meetings.

- Fire Boat update
- Station 13 update
- Employee Groups update

There was no public comment.

10. ADJOURNMENT President Covington adjourned the meeting at 7:33 p.m.