

**FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

**Tuesday, November 10, 2020 – 9:00 a.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=37035

President Covington called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

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| Commission President | Francee Covington | Present |
| Commission Vice President | Katherine Feinstein | Present |
| Commissioner | Stephen Nakajo | Present |
| Commissioner | Ken Cleaveland | Present |
| Commissioner | Tony Rodriguez | 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 | |
| Staff | | |
| Mark Corso | Deputy Director of Finance | |
| Olivia Scanlon | Communications and Outreach | |

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Joanne Hayes-White stated she was a proud member of the San Francisco Fire Department from 1990 to 2019 and was calling about a presentation that was given by Captain Tillman at the October 28th Commission meeting. She stated that many of the assertions made were factually incorrect and, in her opinion, irresponsible, specifically twice during the presentation, it was asserted that she hired H-2 entry-level classes where there were no Black members and that was unacceptable. She added that what she found unacceptable is the false information that was provided and allowed to go unchecked and unchallenged. She stated that it certainly would be unacceptable to her as well and it should be noted that all H-2 entry-level classes that she hired during her tenure as Chief of Department were comprised of a diverse pool of candidates, including Black candidates and that she and the Fire Commission strived for and worked diligently to ensure fairness, equality, equity, inclusion, and opportunity for all SFFD members and although improvements can always be made, the commission should be

proud of the Department's diversity. She appreciated Commissioner Nakajo referring to the Department's history of recruitment and retention and his request for data. She added that as noted in her letter, in December of 2016, the United States Department of Labor acknowledged and recognized the San Francisco Fire Department as one of the most diverse fire departments in the nation in a report titled "Promising practicing for increasing diversity among first responders." She concluded by stating although she is retired now, and very happy to be retired, she still cares deeply for the Department, its members, and its reputation as one of the most progressive and diverse departments in the nation and there is so much to be proud of.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES *[Discussion and possible action]*

Discussion and possible action to approve meeting minutes.

- Minutes from Regular Meeting on October 28, 2020.

President Covington tabled this item as she had some substantial additions that she revealed during the meeting, and Secretary Conefrey took note and made those changes as requested.

Commissioner Cleaveland moved to approve the minutes as amended 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 October 28, 2020, 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 October 28, 2020. At the request of President Covington, she had Chief Tong provide additional information on the mass casualty transit bus and the relationship with Muni. Chief Tong explained that there is an inability to deploy the buses immediately when necessary because of the restrictions with the Muni drivers, and their availability in an immediate need.

Chief Nicholson stated that the Department has had a significant amount of challenges and tragedies over the month and she has been spending a significant amount of time with families, visiting stations, hospitals and ensuring that everyone is getting what they need. She also attended the memorial service of Lieutenant Gary Altenberg in Santa Rosa and expressed her blessings to him and his family. She mentioned that she has been working with Director Cheryl Davis of the Economic and Workforce Development office, as well as the Department of Human Resources and a couple of non-profits to build the City EMT program that they hope will launch in 2021 where they plan on bringing at-risk youth from the ages of 18 to 24 who will be provided trauma counseling, life coaching, and academic assistance. They will take an EMT class and get assistance with that and most of them pass and obtain their EMT license. They are given a stipend and they are working on figuring out how to provide opportunities for those youth who can join the Department. She welcomed Chief Rubenstein who will be presenting his first report as Deputy Chief of Operations.

Commissioner Rodriguez thanked Chief Nicholson for her report and confirmed that the EMT class she described will start with an all-male class, and the second class will consist of all females. He also confirmed that the National Testing Network has an adverse impact on African Americans and women, and they are looking at other options.

Commissioner Cleaveland confirmed that the mass casualty bus can sometimes take up to two hours to get a diver and he thinks that is unacceptable because if we are having a mass casualty event, that bus needs to be deployed ASAP, not two hours later. Chief Velo explained that the issue is the age of the Muni bus, which is an old model, and few Muni drives are trained to operate it. He added that they are working on getting the newer version of Muni buses and will transfer the equipment on to those buses which have a larger pool of drives available.

Commissioner Cleaveland confirmed that the at-risk youth EMT program is run by a non-profit and they are doing all the recruiting and teaching in the community of District 10. He also confirmed that the new testing they are looking at is the FCTC which is done by CAL-Jac, which is the California Joint Apprentices Committee program which creates a pool of people within the State of California and studies have shown it is less impactful for minorities. Commissioner Cleaveland stated he thinks it is important that there be equal access to the test.

Vice President Feinstein asked if the Commissioners could get a directory of abbreviations used in the Chiefs' reports.

President Covington confirmed that there is one member of the Department who was a former employee of Muni and a bus driver and thought it might be helpful if he still has his license to drive a bus and it might be one of the ways to stay informed about how to shorten the length of time it takes to deploy a mass casualty bus. She also thought it would be helpful to have a book of abbreviations.

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's Operations report for October 2020 He mentioned that it was a busy month with 13 fires but no greater alarms. Concerning mutual aid, he stated they sent companies up and down the state of California and the governor repositioned some apparatus, and they were able to contribute in Orange County. He mentioned that EMS had a busy month with over 7,000 responses to medical calls, and EMS-6 had an average of 30 encounters a day and are constantly in the community night and day at all corners of town. He touched on Fire Prevention and Investigation where they celebrated with the community for Fire Prevention month and where they continue to inspect and do permit and plan checks. He stated that shared spaces and parklets are something that was highly regulated before COVID and in June of 2020, the city initiated a quicker permitting process that was meant for movable furniture only and these permits, which are issued by DPW, were put out and it spread like wildfire and these installations became more permanent. He added that inspections are being conducted by the San Francisco Fire Department and the Fire Marshal's office has been very forward with

looking at how that is going to affect the safety of the public and the department's ability to respond and through their advocacy, they have improved the permitting process. Chief Rubenstein stated that fire inspectors have been very busy inspecting hundreds of sites and many of the violations that have been issued have been resolved without any fees. He mentioned that the mayor declared October 17th official NERT day in recognition of 30 years of NERT. He concluded his report with photographs remembering Firefighter/Paramedic Jason Cortez.

Vice President Feinstein welcomed Chief Rubenstein to his first official Commission meeting and first presentation which she thought was quite comprehensive. She confirmed that EMS responded to calls on time, 90 percent of the time. She also confirmed that a frequent caller client called EMS to remind them it was his birthday and to come and visit him, and to her, that shows a real connection was made and the hope for progress with that individual speaks very well for the EMS-6 program and she commended them for that. Vice President Feinstein confirmed that self-assigned is when they hear a call coming out on the radio, they can dispatch themselves on or if they on view a scene. She also expressed her concern for the rigged up shared spaces/parklets she is seeing with flammable material on roofs, gas heaters, and extension cords. Chief DeCossio confirmed that they have a task captain that deals directly with MTA and DPW on these issues. He added that they have made it a priority to take a look at every single shared space, which is over 800 so far, and of the 800 plus sites they have written between 50 and 60 priority violations and those are now down to 15 and he added that it is an ongoing challenge. Vice President Feinstein confirmed that the fire code allows an order to vacate if needed.

Commissioner Cleaveland welcomed Chief Rubenstein and congratulated Lieutenant Baxter on receiving the national award.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Chief Rubenstein for his comprehensive report and confirmed that there were no greater alarms during the reporting period. He confirmed that Lt. Baxter's report included 17 encampment fires, 12 cliff, and water rescues, and 17 1st alarm fires. He also acknowledged Chief Tong's comprehensive report. He confirmed that conservatorship discussions remain a challenge and that SUD refers to substance use disorder and HUMS refers to high users of multiple systems. He thanked Chief DeCossio for reinforcing where the permits are issued and noted that shared spaces will most likely go beyond June 2021. He confirmed that the Department is tracking all activity that is COVID related but is not being reimbursed and he hopes that at some point, beyond being good partners, that there would be some kind of concept of reimbursement or at least compensation for the work that is being rendered. He confirmed that EAP means an event action plan, the tool used to communicate the plan and roles that everyone has related to an event. He also confirmed that the challenges that members face when they respond to a fire that has solar panels are that those panels cover some of the areas that they would normally be used to ventilate, and they provide a dead load as well as potentially create an opportunity for them to be energized.

Commissioner Rodriguez suggested that with the high number of encampment fires, it should be highlighted in the budget and raise awareness of the situation. He confirmed that the Listos program is a program that they teach to the Spanish speaking community and that has many of

the elements of the NERT program, such as taking care of yourself, and your family during an emergency and how to use a fire extinguisher. He also confirmed that when there is a deficiency in a school inspection, the notices go to the principal of the school

President Covington announced that regarding the issues Vice President Feinstein raised about shared spaces/parklets, that all citizens are welcome to call and report any situation that they think might be hazardous. She also mentioned her concern about the encampment fires and the onset of winter and all the people who don't have homes trying to keep themselves warm as the temperatures plummet and she wondered if the Red Cross gets called when they are displaced. Chief Rubenstein confirmed that in almost every case of an encampment fire, the previous residents are unavailable and have left the scene so there is no one to interface with. President Covington shared a conversation she had with the Chief of Department when she was making the selection for Chief of Operations and she said, "I need someone who really can handle a five-alarm fire and I said, oh, I defiantly understand what you mean" as Chief Rubenstein was mentioned in the month prior report when we had a five-alarm fire and he handled it. She added that he has the Chief's utmost confidence. She also acknowledged Lt. Baxter for his most recent recognition.

There was no public comment.

5. EMS-6: COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE IN THE SFFD PRESENTATION [Discussion]

Chief Simon Pang, Captain April Sloan, Captain Michael Mason, and Dr. Clement Yeh to provide an overview of the EMS-6: Community Paramedicine in the SFFD.

Dr. Yeh announced that come January, EMS-6 will have been in operation for five years and that it is a monumental achievement by the Department in terms of advancing the team and serving the community and it is with the tremendous support of the Commission and the Department that all that has been accomplished is due to the efforts of all of the team members and their day-to-day activities. He mentioned that EMS-6 is a patient-centered design in which they are looking to find the unmet needs of clients in the community. He added that it is something that only succeeds because they can rely on and bring all their partners together for a shared goal.

Section Chief Simon Pang stated that the mission of EMS-6 is to improve the health and well-being of individuals that are dependent on emergency services and they connect them to appropriate support services in place of the emergency service system. They now have seven full-time positions, and they have coverage from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. seven days a week and since about May of this year, they have five personnel that have been activated by the COVID Command Center; more positions at the Sobering Center low threshold shelter in place site, 42, and one position assigned to the Healthy Streets Operations Center, or HSOC and the person at the Healthy Streets Operations Center is Captain Mike Mason. He has been serving as the incident commander at encampment resolutions. He added that members of the team are problem solvers and are motivated to create change and make a difference and that the value of having a paramedic in this role is because seasoned urban 9-1-1 paramedics know what sick is. For those individuals that are most dependent on emergency services, they engage them on the scene of an emergency, then follow them to a hospital and begin to meet them in the community. They try to engage them by outreach between their emergency activations and

provide wrap-around care and they have whatever it takes to help them and to help modify their behavior so that they are not such a burden on the 9-1-1 system. He explained that there are approximately 545 frequent 9-1-1 users in San Francisco and they define a frequent 9-1-1 user as someone who uses San Francisco Fire Department ambulances four or more times in 30 days, or 10 or more times in 12 months. On a monthly average, these frequent utilizers generate on average 870 calls per month or put another way, they have approximately seven percent of the population of 9-1-1 users who have been using 18 percent of the resources. He added the reason that EMS-6 got started five years ago, was to try to understand what is going on and understand this population of people who are dependent on 9-1-1 and see if there is a way that they could be better served.

Captain Sloan talked about the whole person integrated care plan where they have two projects. She gave a brief overview stating whole-person integrated care is a five-year 15-million-dollar project managed by the California Department of Health Care Services. The city was provided funding to test initiatives aimed at providing integrated care to adults, vulnerable adults, experiencing homelessness, with a target population of long-term homelessness and a special focus on high users of multiple systems, which is where they come in. It coincides with the mission. She added they have two projects within it, one being the Whole Person Care/Base MD Managed Client Program and the Shared Priority Project. The Managed Client Program reduced ED utilization by developing a prehospital action plan. Clients are selected based on their utilization history. They usually are dual diagnosis, meaning they have a co-occurring mental health diagnosis and substance use disorder. They are often medically complex. She added that they meet with a multi-disciplinary team one hour a week, and they develop a prehospital action plan and assess the gaps and barriers in their care and identify nonemergent resources that they can direct them to. Once this plan is approved and implemented, it's placed in Epic so other providers can see it, and when a managed client is transported, there is an alert in ESO, which is their electronic charting system that the paramedics use. She added that they have seen a 91 percent decrease in utilization.

Michael Mason, rescue captain with EMS-6 and proud community paramedic gave an overview of the Healthy Streets Operations Center. He mentioned that their role as community paramedics is improving the health of neighborhoods and that the Healthy Streets Operations Center is a long-standing collaboration between dozens of city agencies and departments to address street conditions for housed and unhoused residents of San Francisco. He stated that the City's last tent count was about 600 with 19 large encampments, which are defined as camps with six or more tents. Then COVID struck and the city's unsheltered homeless population increased due to several reasons. The shelter system was forced to depopulate due to social distancing purposes resulting in the loss of approximately 1,800 shelter beds and homelessness was estimated to have increased by approximately 20 percent nationwide due to economic hardship and individuals just were not able to stay with friends or relatives as they used to. He provided information on how the Fire Department is impacted based on experience and an increase in EMS call volume. He mentioned that before COVID, they saw that 30 to 40 percent of all SFFD EMS calls were for individuals reporting no identifiable home address or identifying themselves as homeless. He added that there is an increased potential for tent and encampment fires and the direct impacts to the Fire Department, COVID, and the street conditions directly impact the city that they care for and serve. The original mission to support healthy street conditions for housed and unhoused San Franciscans became more imperative.

As part of the city's coordinated response to COVID 19, HSOC was passed with reducing the number of unsheltered San Franciscans through providing referrals to shelter in place hotels, shelters, and safe sleeping sites. A strategic framework was set in place to begin addressing some of the city's largest encampments and this was being coordinated at the COVID Command Center, formerly known as the Emergency Operations Center. In mid-May, a community paramedic captain was activated as a disaster service worker and assigned to serve as the incident commander for HSOC field operations. This was the role that would serve as the leader for dozens of encampment resolutions to follow. The unhoused population trusts the Fire Department and its EMS personnel. Many unsheltered folks have received compassionate care and transport from EMTs and paramedics. Between June and October of 2020, the Healthy Streets Operations Center has resolved over 60 encampments. All clients are offered shelter during these operations. HSOC provided sheltering alternatives to over 1,100 individuals. He mentioned that out of the folks that they encountered, over 70 percent of individuals accepted services. In early October 2020, HSOC conducted a tent count and found 700 tents and around 28 large tent encampments. As of November 5th, 13 large encampments are remaining in the city, six fewer than before the COVID epidemic. HSOC anticipates having no large encampments by the end of the year and seeks to reduce the total tent count of unsheltered individuals inhabiting those tents to below 400 tents. He touched on the challenges, including lack of placement options, people that are gravely disabled and need to be under a conservatorship, and because of COVID, their court dates got rolled back and managing the expectations of the public. He touched briefly on the Street Crisis Response Team stating the goal is to respond to the non-violent behavioral crisis in public spaces and they intend connecting people to the care they need, reducing law enforcement response and reducing unnecessary ER transports and to focus on Mental Health San Francisco Reform. He added that they are going to model it after the CAHOOTS program from Eugene Oregon.

President Covington thanked everyone who presented and added it was a wealth of information.

Commissioner Rodriguez thanked them for the very informative presentation.

Vice President Feinstein thanked them for their report and acknowledged that it brought a tear to her eyes and that the skill, the courage, the creativity, the compassion that they show to make the city proud. She confirmed that the difficulty of getting someone conserved is still a challenge.

Commissioner Nakajo thought the presentation was very comprehensive and acknowledged how much the program has advanced in five years and that the materials, concepts, plans, and strategies that were provided, have an impact in terms of the City and he thinks that the passionate care in the form of utilization of EMS-6 and how it's evolved to this point is simply amazing. He added that he is also concerned about the lack of resources.

Commissioner Cleaveland was moved by the powerful presentation and he thinks the city is unique in its response to the nationwide problem of unhoused people and the homeless and the mentally ill wandering the street and while we are trying to do something super innovative to address the problem, we need more money to help make it happen. He added that he is saddened to hear that 237 individuals are currently diagnosed with psychosis on the street and he is also concerned about the continuous lack of placement options.

President Covington stated that because there was so much good and detailed information presented, and they didn't have the presentation beforehand, she would like to recall this item for the next meeting and that will give everyone a chance to get the printed material and information and ask in-depth questions at that time.

There was no public comment.

6. RESOLUTION 2020-03 [Discussion and possible action]

Discussion and possible action to approve Resolution 2020-03, recommending that the Board of Supervisors authorize the San Francisco Fire Department to accept and expend a SAFER grant from FEMA in the amount of \$13,760,604 for the hiring of thirty-six new firefighters.

This matter was not called as we ran out of time.

7. FIRE COMMISSION MEETING CALENDAR 2021 [Discussion and possible action]

Discussion and possible action to adopt the 2021 Fire Commission Regular Meeting calendar.

This matter was not called as we ran out of time.

8. COMMISSION REPORT [Discussion]

Report on Commission activities since last meeting on October 28, 2020.

This matter was not called as we ran out of time.

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

Discussion regarding agenda for next and future Fire Commission meetings.

This matter was not called as we ran out of time.

10. ADJOURNMENT

President Covington adjourned the meeting at 12: 14 p.m.