

**FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

**Tuesday, January 13, 2021 – 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=37503

President Covington called the meeting to order at 9:05 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 |

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

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| 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 |

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| 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 December 9, 2020.

Vice President Feinstein Moved to approve the minutes and Commissioner Cleaveland Seconded. The motion was unanimous.

- Minutes from Special Meeting on December 18, 2020

Commissioner Cleaveland moved to approve the minutes and Vice President Feinstein 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 December 9, 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 December 9, 2020. She gave an update on the COVID Vaccination effort by stating that 935 members have received the first round of vaccination, 400 more have signed up to receive it and 255 members declined to receive the vaccine. She mentioned that there are currently 36 members in quarantine and 107 members have tested positive since the start of the virus. She stated that DPH is working on a vaccination plan, and the Department is ready to assist in any way and that so far, 60 members have taken the training to be able to give the vaccine and they are just waiting to be called upon. Regarding the Street Crisis Response Team, she announced they are ramping up as well as preparing a bump class for the H-3 Level 1 EMT's, and a community paramedicine class for the paramedics at Station 49. Chief Nicholson stated that Chief Parks has been doing a great job in leading the communication effort with the members on the importance of mental health. She announced that the Department's Racial Equity Action Plan has been posted on the website and is the first step in moving the department forward in a productive way. She touched on the budget, where the mayor has provided initial budget instructions and all departments have been asked to submit a budget in late February that includes reductions of 7.5 percent plus a 2.5 percent contingency should the City's fiscal condition worsen. She mentioned that they have been having internal meetings about the budget with the focus in mind of presenting the vital needs and how they will advocate for them.

Vice President Feinstein asked about the rollout of the vaccination plan as we are 10 months into the pandemic and it doesn't appear that the city has a plan to roll it out in any logical manner and the fact that what in the normal scope of what it is the Fire Department does, such as the paramedics intubate people and insert IVs, she wonders why they would they need more training to give a vaccination. Chief Nicholson responded that the Department sent a plan to the COVID Command Center late last year and that plan was rejected, and they recently resubmitted it again and as of now, it still has not been accepted. She added that Chief Tong and her folks worked hard on the plan and they could be out there administering vaccines right now, but they were not given that opportunity. She mentioned that the community trusts the Department members, they have the expertise, the people, the vehicles, and facilities to conduct vaccinations but are waiting for direction from DPH and DEM which has been frustrating. She added that many other fire Departments throughout the state play an integral role in vaccinating folks. Vice President Feinstein confirmed that the reason the Department's plan was rejected was that they had to work within their parameters and with their people and they wanted a roster of members every day that they could pick and choose from to come have them work on private ambulance companies that they have hired and there was no way she was going to let her union members work on private ambulances.

Commissioner Rodriguez confirmed that they get reimbursed for their efforts at the COVID Command Center as well as some of the challenges the Department is having with the local EMSA agency in terms of operations and regulations.

Commissioner Cleaveland expressed his frustration with the issue of a lack of a rollout for the vaccination.

Commissioner Nakajo confirmed that that most of the members that have tested positive for COVID have returned to work.

President Covington stated that she is quite dismayed with the roadblocks that have been put up and there has been a problem with the roll out clear across the country and she does not understand why this is happening, why people who are used to giving shots are not being deployed to do so as the members stand ready and prepared to do the work and the fact that they have not been allowed to do it is appalling. She confirmed that the COVID Command Center committee is a combination of DPH and DEM personnel running the operations for the COVID response and they have a subsection dedicated to the vaccination project. She suggested reaching out to the Health Commission and relay the frustration on the part of the Fire Department to get the job done and to keep people safe.

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 covered November and December 2020. He mentioned that Fire Suppression responded to 2,000 building alarms over the reporting period as well as several gas leaks, homeless encampment fires, cliff and surf rescues, and two third alarm fires, one at 4257 23rd Street and a high-rise fire on the 11th floor at 440 Davis Court. He stated that all companies did a tremendous job. He talked about hazards relating to solar panels on roofs which are highly regulated. He added that there are state regulations within the state fire code and electrical code requirements and local permitting regulations to ensure safety. He stated that garbage truck fires are becoming more common as people are disposing batteries from scooters to hoverboards and when they get crushed in the garbage truck it can cause the trash to ignite.

Chief Rubenstein touched on the EMS Division and stated that a rescue captain and ambulance crew helped at a skilled nursing facility for 13 hours and that one of the contingencies in the city is to use first responders to step in when the facility isn't able to provide services to its patients. There was a COVID outbreak at the facility and they did not have healthy employees to work so they called the SFFD for help. Normally they would evacuate the facility but because of the pandemic there was nowhere to take them, so the Department provided the services, and it was a success. He touched on Fire Prevention and Investigations where Fire Marshal DeCossio has been very creative and forward-thinking trying to figure out how to get materials and plans to inspectors in the field. He stated that the Division of Homeland Security Chief Arteseros is doing more jobs.

President Covington was glad to hear that Firefighter Matt Vann has been released from the hospital.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Chief Rubenstein for his comprehensive report and confirmed that the high-rise fire was on the 11th floor and may have been caused by a scooter battery being charged that started as an electrical fire. He confirmed that older high-rise buildings are not sprinklered and the elevators are not safe when there is a fire, so the firefighters had to climb the stairs with hoses, air packs, masks, and turnouts and that the members did a great job, and the incident commander took care of business as well. He expressed his appreciation for the successful response to the skilled nursing facility for 13 hours. He also suggested getting an update soon from Fire Marshal Chief DeCossio and Chief Johnson at SFO.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked Chief Rubenstein for his comprehensive report and confirmed that during the reporting period there were 18 surf/bay rescues, 30 encampment fires, 20 cooking fires, seven cliff rescues, 13 vehicle accidents, and 2 third alarm fires. He also confirmed that a yellow alert is a way they can tell the entire system that there is the potential for a lot of victims to be transported to the hospital. He also agreed that it would be a good idea to have a more in-depth report from Chief DeCossio. He acknowledged the EMS members and that his heart goes out to them for what they must deal with daily and the challenges that they face. He added that he cannot imagine a kinder gentler city than San Francisco when it comes to those that are alcohol and drug-addicted and mentally ill and he doesn't understand why judges in this city don't remand people for treatment and get them off the streets. He also confirmed how ambulances transport to specific hospitals work, including patient preference, location of the call, and type of trauma and that EMSA is working on a distribution process to more evenly transport.

Vice President Feinstein thanked Chief Rubenstein for his report and thanked Chief Tong for the detailed data outlined in her report. She confirmed what some of the data referred to, such as 90 percent of the time, the calls fall within the time frame listed. Chief Tong added that Jesus Mora is the keeper of all the Department's data and is a mastermind. Vice President Feinstein added that she thinks the citizens and city government needs to know how incredibly well they are served by being in San Francisco should they confront an emergency. She also confirmed that some of the shared spaces that have been built for dining outdoors do not look safe and that the Department's role is to make sure that the fire code is met, and they have access. The actual structure is inspected by DPW and DBI.

Commissioner Rodriguez commended Chief Rubenstein on his detailed report and confirmed cooking fires could be a pot of soup burning that creates enough smoke to set off an alarm and a building alarm is when they get notification from either an alarm company or from an occupant that can hear an alarm in their building.

President Covington acknowledged thick and heavy report outs are fine with her and the more details the better. She added that she thinks it is incredible with a building that has no sprinklers and standpipes that everyone was able to do exactly what they needed to do under very trying circumstances and it is why they do so much training and why they have a wonderful Division of Training in two different places. She also mentioned that there were more cooking fires in December because of the holidays and more people were cooking. She also suggested adding the dollar amount of damage caused by fires as well as how many members responded to a particular fire in future reports.

There was no public comment.

5. OVERVIEW OF THE CITY'S BUDGET INSTRUCTIONS AND PROCESS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 [Discussion]

Discussion and overview of the City's budget and Fire Department instructions and process for FY 2021-2022 and 2022-2023.

Mark Corso provided a brief overview of the budget instructions from the Mayor's office as they kick off the budget process for fiscal year 21-22, 22-23 and it is similar to previous years. He touched on the transparency legislation that was passed by the Board of Supervisors in 2019 but went into effect last month. He mentioned that the city is looking at approximately a 653-million-dollar projected budget deficit for the next two years with anticipated deficits to continue over the next five years. He added that to meet the significant 653-million-dollar deficit, departments were requested to submit reduction proposals of 7 and a half percent of general fund support in ongoing reductions in each of the two fiscal years, as well as two and a half percent contingencies in both fiscal years as well. What that means for the Fire Department is a reduction of 8 million dollars. He mentioned that they are looking at creative solutions to address these issues. He stated that the budget submittal is February 22, 2021, and the Department's goal is to maintain frontline services and the different types of services they provide are very crucial to the city's overall response in addition to continuing to support employees and provide sufficient resources for them as well as equity along the mayor's lines and city initiatives, both internally and externally. His presentation is attached: <https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/Commission%20Presentation%20-%202021%2001%2013%20Budget%20Instructions.pdf>

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Director Corso for his report and noted that there are dire and dismal realities in the city and county of San Francisco in terms of COVID and he confirmed that the deficit for the city is 653.2 million dollars. He added that it is a heavy chunk when your personnel and service-related, but he will wait for the work that they are going to do with the Budget Committee in terms of how to deal with and adhere to the stark cold reality of the budget deficit. He confirmed that the transparency legislation is to allow the public to have better input in the process of departments formulating their budgets. Commissioner Nakajo expressed his appreciation for the work Director Corso put into his presentation.

There was no public comment.

6. REPORT ON Fiscal Years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 CAPITAL BUDGET REQUESTS [Discussion and possible action]

Report from the Department's Deputy Director of Finance and Planning on the Department's FY 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 Capital budget requests.

Director Corso announced that this is an action item and provided an overview stating that all city departments are required to submit their capital requests to the Capital Planning Committee by January 22, 2021, and over the next few months, the departments can present their needs. He provided the Departments capital budget breakdown attached here: <https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/Capital%20FY2022%20FY2023%20210107.pdf>

Director Corso's PowerPoint Presentation is attached here: <https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/Commission%20Presentation%20-%202021%2001%2013%20Capital%20Budget.pdf>

Vice President Feinstein thanked Mr. Corso for his presentation and confirmed that the department's overall budget is approximately 420 million dollars and includes operations, admin, airport, and every fund that they have. Mr. Corso added that 90 percent of that amount is for salary and benefits which is pretty much frontline operations. Vice President Feinstein stated that it concerns her to see some of the capital projects deferred. She confirmed that alternative sources of funding they are looking at are grants and partnering with other entities. She also confirmed that the Capital Planning Committee was set up about 20 years ago and they're responsible for approval of all city capital projects and it's headed by the city administrator's office, with one representative from the Board of Supervisor's Office, the Mayor's office and several city departments.

Commissioner Nakajo confirmed that this item was an action item. He also at one time suggested approaching private vendors to improve or help with repairs but was told there were restrictions on who can be used. He also added that the current dilemma of the budget deficit and many of the budget discussions is because of the pandemic and the COVID results. He also mentioned that regarding the Chief's residence he thinks it would be a mortal sin to sell it without trying to pursue the longevity that is in this at some point when COVID has ended.

Commissioner Rodriguez confirmed that all the listed projects would be eligible theoretically under the bond program but given funding limitations, they are unable to include them in the scope at this time and have a larger need than the amount of funding that has been allocated through the ESER program.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked Mr. Corso for his comprehensive report and stated he had a lot of concerns about the capital budget deficit. He added that they have 55 million dollars' worth of needs and 900 thousand dollars to which to address them and he concurs with Vice President Feinstein that they need to do more partnering to find alternative sources of funding. He suggested reaching out to the private sector for some of the deficits, such as the painters union when firehouses need painting or the plumber's union when they have plumbing issues. He confirmed that the 900-thousand-dollar estimate is a one-year allocation through June 30, 2021. He also confirmed that the \$900,000 goes to all the maintenance and repair along with their equipment purchases and they prioritize repairs based on need. He stated that his observations are that they have a critical number of needs and very little money to address those needs. He suggested selling the Chief's residence as it is falling and is not being used. Chief Nicholson responded to say that they are currently using the Chief's residence as offices and it is also an important piece of history and she would like to keep it in the Department.

President Covington stated that for a number of years, Commissioner Cleaveland has been talking about forming "Friends of the San Francisco Fire Department and she would like for him to revisit that because now they need an entity more than ever. She also commented that the department has a plethora of committees, but they do not have a grants committee and it is something that she has been asking for a long time. Chief Velo explained how the various committees work, and added that they all work on requesting grants, along with the grant writer, Director Corso, and Chief Arteseros. President Covington thinks it is a tremendous

oversight that they do not have a grants committee and thinks they need to formalize one. She also suggested that they bring back former employees on a 960 basis to work on the grants committee.

Commissioner Nakajo added that Chief Sullivan perished in that house when the 1906 earthquake occurred. He recalls over the years; they have sold different properties but not one with historical value.

Commissioner Nakajo Moved to approve the Capital Budget as presented. Commissioner Cleaveland Seconded and the motion was unanimous.

There was no public comment.

7. FIRE COMMISSION ANNUAL STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2021 [Discussion and possible action]

Discussion and possible action to adopt the 2021 Annual Statement of Purpose.

Commissioner Secretary Conefrey read the Statement into the record.

Discussion took place to potentially add to the Statement of Purpose, so President Covington tabled the item for a future meeting.

There was no public comment.

8. COMMISSION REPORT [Discussion]

Report on Commission activities since last meeting on December 9, 2020.

The commissioners had nothing to report.

There was no public comment.

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

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

Vice President Feinstein moved to adopt the 2021 Fire Commission Calendar and Commissioner Cleaveland Seconded. The motion was unanimous.

There was no public comment.

10. FIRE COMMISSION ELECTION OF OFFICERS [Discussion and possible action]

a. Nomination and election of Commission President.

President Covington nominated Vice President Feinstein for Commission President. Commissioner Rodriguez seconded and the nomination for Commission President was unanimously approved.

b. Nomination and election of Commission Vice-President.

Commissioner Cleaveland nominated Commissioner Rodriguez for Commission Vice President. Commissioner Nakajo seconded and the nomination for Commission Vice President was unanimously approved.

Vice President Feinstein thanked President Covington, who has taken her under her wing and taught her an awful lot about the ins and outs of the Fire Commission. She also thanked her fellow commissioners and Commission Secretary, Maureen, Chief Nicholson, and her command staff, both current and retired. She added that she looks forward to having a whole lot of fun with Commissioner Rodriguez and the rest of the commission as she takes over as President.

There was no public comment.

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

Discussion regarding agenda for next and future Fire Commission meetings.

- Update on our search for a new location for our training facility.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked President Covington for serving as President during challenging times over the last year.

There was no public comment.

12. ADJOURNMENT President Covington adjourned the meeting at 12: 25p.m.