

**FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES**

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**Wednesday, February 10, 2021 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
This meeting was held remotely on WebEx**

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The Video can be viewed by clicking this link:

[https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=180&clip\\_id=37760](https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=180&clip_id=37760)

President Feinstein called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

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

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

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
Tom O'Connor	AWSS

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 January 27, 2021.

Commissioner Nakajo Moved to approve the minutes and Commissioner Covington 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 January 27, 2021, including budget, academies, special events, communications, and outreach to other government agencies and the public.

(Chief Nicholson had to attend the Mayor's Department Head Meeting, so her report was delayed to later in the meeting)

Chief Nicholson reported on activities since the last meeting on January 27, 2021. She announced that she would have to leave the meeting again as there was an auto/pedestrian accident where a child was killed, and she needed to go to the scene.

She touched on COVID within the department and announced that a new H-2 academy class started on February 8, 2021, and that they are applying for another grant to see if they can get funding for another class next year. She mentioned that they are working diligently on the budget.

Commissioner Nakajo acknowledged the service and dedication and hard work of Chief Joel Sato while he was division chief of training and wished him well back in the field.

President Feinstein agreed with Commissioner Nakajo and stated that the Commission appreciates and deeply thanks Chief Sato for all the efforts he made improving and expanding the training under what have been adverse circumstances for the past year.

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 January 2021. He stated that Fire Prevention, Homeland Security, and the Airport Division have all been very busy. He mentioned that PIO Baxter has been busy engaging with the community. He touched on significant incidents, including one greater alarm, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Alarm at 32 Del Monte Street, and some dramatic cliff and surf rescues. He showed a couple of videos and described what was happening during them. He touched on the EMS Division, Division of Training, which he would love to give the Commissioners the opportunity to come out and observe some of the training once it is safe from COVID. He mentioned that they have a new device on the defibrillators that monitors the frequency and depth of compression during CPR. He announced that they recently graduated from an EMS academy class and that the Department has gotten itself into the vaccinator business.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked Chief Rubenstein for his report and confirmed that the difference between a paramedic and a community paramedic is that the community paramedic's focus is going to be on community paramedicine dealing with the housing and mental health issues rather than just showing up to vehicle accidents or survivors from fires or trauma. Chief Tong added that they have 19 paramedics going through a training course with

different topics that they anticipate will be able to better address outside of the emergent critical physical issues that they normally go to as paramedics. They are looking at more in-depth behavioral mental health issues, substance abuse issues, and how to address folks that are in crisis mentally. Commissioner Cleaveland suggested that the commissioners get the curricula that are used as it would be helpful to understand how much additional training the paramedics are getting to deal with the more serious problems that they are seeing on the streets every day.

Commissioner Covington thanked Chief Rubenstein for his report and stated she loved his graphics, as her career was in television. She asked for clarification on the breakdown of the incident's distribution by station and why Station 36 had 670 calls, which she thought was rather high. Chief Rubenstein explained that their system is built to collapse in and they pig pile on incidents so when one station gets busy, 36 will go into their area as well as issues with fentanyl in that area. Commissioner Covington also confirmed with Chief Johnson that the air bridge is a different way they practice being able to access aircraft when they're not at the terminal itself.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Chief Rubenstein for his comprehensive report and stated he enjoyed the videos and photos as well as they show how severe some of the fires and rescues are. He also confirmed the difference between a paramedic and a community paramedic. He also acknowledged and appreciated how Chief Tong incorporated the Street Crisis Response Team into the report and that the community paramedics will be part of that team. Chief Tong explained how the backfill and coverage of paramedic positions work. Commissioner Nakajo acknowledged that the Department established the EMS-6 program and from that, grew the Street Crisis Response Team which the City and County, through the Mayor's office, has asked the Department to fill paramedic positions and he is happy the Department can assist, but there's funding that is required and he hopes the decision-makers see the Department's contribution during budget talks. He asked for more information on the UCSF Street Nursing Team. He mentioned the high amount of Narcan used over the reporting period and stated he's looking at the bigger picture of what clientele they serve and the funding that is going to be needed for those kinds of services provided. He confirmed that on the report from Homeland Security, the acronym NCRIC stands for Northern California Regional Intelligence Center and that SAR stands for suspicious activity report.

Vice President Rodriguez confirmed that the Fire Department through the Street Crisis Response Team has taken over calls that the Police Department used to respond to and wondered how many calls a month has that added to the Fire Department. Chief Rubenstein responded that the data that was provided in his report, the calls that SCRT and EMS-6 are responding to, could fall under the umbrella of calls being reimagined from police calls to different forms of intervention and they are handled in a way calls are dispatched and in the way that the police are going to be handling things now and EMS is in the process of identifying how the transition will work. Vice President Rodriguez expressed his concerns on when the city is asking for a cut in the budget but at the same time asking the Department to take on more responsibility, how does one respond? Chief Nicholson responded that they will be advocating for every dime that they can get and looking to the Proposition C funding to ramp up the Street Crisis Response Team. Vice President Rodriguez confirmed that outside fires can be a trash can catching on fire, or Christmas trees left on the street being lit on fire.

President Feinstein confirmed that there are ½ addresses at the port, such as station 35 is at Pier 22 ½. She also confirmed that a failure in the fire protection system could be the lack of smoke detectors or malfunction of the sprinkler system and that the firefighters monitor carbon monoxide levels when fighting a fire. She expressed her concern about the safety of members responding to calls that the police would have responded to dealing with mentally ill patients. Chief Rubenstein responded that the members that will be responding are getting additional training to assess the risk and be able to observe the behavior and to control and de-escalate situations and if things go awry, they will call for police backup. She acknowledged Chief DeCossio and all the different tasks he is assigned to. She also confirmed that the department has made several attempts to work with the conservator's office to try and get some of the patients that they see conserved which has been a challenge.

There was no public comment.

##### **5. PRESENTATION FROM THE FIRE SERVICE WOMEN'S EMPLOYEE GROUP**

Julie Mau, President of Fire Service Women, to provide an overview of their Group.

Captain Julie Mau, President of Fire Service Women introduced herself as well as Lt. Heather Buren and firefighter Maiko Bristow. She added that the mission statement of the United Fire Service Women is to support and advocate for the welfare of women in the San Francisco Fire Department, create a network of women in the fire service, and ensure a diverse and unified department that represents the city they serve. She added that diversity is their strength, and it is part of their value statement in the San Francisco Fire Department. She provided a brief history, which consisted of when the first women entered the Fire Department in 1987 and 10 years later, in 1997, United Fire Service Women started, which was originally called Women of the San Francisco Fire Department. The group currently has 225 members out of 263 women members serving the Fire Department. As part of their organization, they offer members, social activities, training, and other events that are positive and uniting. The PowerPoint presentation is attached: [https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/UFSW%20PPT%202021\\_0.pdf](https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/UFSW%20PPT%202021_0.pdf)

Lt. Buren introduced herself and talked about breast cancer among women in the fire service. She stated that in 2012, they had concerns when so many members were diagnosed with breast cancer and all the cases were premenopausal breast cancer diagnosis which created a need for them to understand what the breast cancer risk factors were among women firefighters, particularly regarding chemical exposures on the job. This evolved into an exposure health study led by researchers at UC Berkeley and Silent Spring Institute where they created the Women Firefighters Biomonitoring Collaborative, which was the first study to focus exclusively on women firefighters and it was designed to assess the chemical exposures, including chemicals linked to breast cancer. The results in this first study showed that the firefighters had significantly higher levels of PFAS, four different PFAS chemicals, and two different flame retardants. She added that as they began to answer questions, more questions were raised, and over the last three years, additional funding from the California Breast Cancer Research Program was secured and it expanded the scope of the study to assess occupational exposures to environmental chemicals with nurses at UCSF to compare those exposures across the multiple occupations. Lt. Buren explained how the study worked and once the results started coming in, they wrote scientific papers, have been invited to professional conferences and symposiums nationally. They also helped develop post-fire gross decontamination policies, they have taught awareness and training on how to reduce exposures and they are

seeing changes in the narrative in fire service personnel regarding cancer and health and SFFD is recognizing the need to protect their greatest assets, the boots on the ground firefighters.

Captain Mau talked about the girls' fire camps that many of their members participate in, Camp Blaze, which started in San Francisco, and NorCal First Alarm Girls Fire Camp. She stated that every two years Camp Blaze takes place for one week with 25 campers. where they do hands-on with Fire Department ladders, aerial climb, hose handling, live fire and she added that it is an incredible opportunity for the girls to build leadership, teamwork, and confidence. She played a video where Battalion Chief Paratley describes the NorCal First Alarm Girls Fire Camp.

Firefighter Bristow introduced herself and talked about the community and social events that UFSW participates in, such as the toy program, women's history month in March, and breast cancer prevention fundraiser in October. She added that in 2017 they hosted an anniversary party for 30 years of women in the SFFD and it was to commemorate that first class of women that were hired in 1987 and the honorees included Francis Foshay, Mary Carter, Eileen McCrystle Tellez, Sara Coe, Sheila Hunter, and Anne Young and about 300 people attended the party.

President Feinstein thanked and commended them on their presentation that brought tears to her eyes on many different levels and she hopes to get involved when the opportunity presents itself. Lt. Buren added that during the time that the first five women came in they were dubbed Feinstein's finest and she attended that 30-year celebration.

Commissioner Cleaveland stated he thought it was a fantastic presentation and he's proud SFFD has the most robust women's employee group in the nation and he acknowledged what leaders they are in bringing more women into fire departments across the county. He confirmed that the Department is testing three turnout coats that are PFAS chemical-free.

Vice President Rodriguez thanked them for being such advocates and being involved and told them to continue the good work.

Commissioner Covington thought it was a fabulous presentation and covered so many areas, and she remembered the 30<sup>th</sup>-anniversary party and that Senator Feinstein spoke so eloquently and so passionately about those days of her insisting that women join the Department. She added that firefighting is such an inherently dangerous job that people do need equipment that does not make it even more dangerous and confirmed that the Environmental Protection Agency is not involved in revamping turnouts, that the drive to have PFAS chemical-free equipment is from Chief Nicholson, Chief Parks, the command staff and the men and women firefighters that are demanding this. Commissioner Covington stated that women are inherently strong, physically, and mentally and are such an asset to any department.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked them for their presentation and stated he was impressed with their comprehensive report. He thanked Captain Mau for the statistics of diversity by gender and ethnicity and he thanked Lt. Buren for her information on health and wellness issues and loves her passion. He mentioned what a great service firefighter Bristow did with her component and thanked them all for their leadership.

There was no public comment.

**6. DRAFT OPERATING BUDGET – FISCAL YEARS 2021-2022/ 2022-2023 [Discussion and possible action]**

Discussion and possible action to adopt the Fire Department's Operating Budget for Fiscal Years 2021-2022/2022-2023.

Director Corso provided a brief presentation highlighting some of the specific bigger items in the budget proposal. He noted that it is still very much a work in progress given timelines that they have and that they will be working with the Mayor's office over the next few months in advance of their budget proposal. He reviewed the process, timelines, instructions, and some of the changes from the last time they met. His PowerPoint is attached: <https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/Commission%20Presentation%20-%202021%2002%2010%20Budget%20Review.pdf>

He mentioned that in addition to reductions, there were impacts to the Fire Prevention Bureau and EMS revenues.

Supporting documentation is attached: <https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/SFFD%20Budget%20Book%20FY22%20FY23%20FC%20Meeting%20Feb%202021.pdf>

He reminded the commission that the budget instructions for this year, contains over a 650-million-dollar deficit over the next two years and all departments were requested to reduce their general fund operating budgets by seven-and-a-half percent and on top of that, a two-and-a-half percent contingency and for the department, it equates to eight-million dollars of budget reductions they are requesting. He touched on the department's limited flexibility for reductions. He mentioned that they are continuing discussions with DPW and the city administrator's office on additional resources for personnel to assist with facility and other requests from the Department, but he does not think they will have a resolution to that before the February 22, 2021 budget submittal. They are also exploring other avenues of funding and there are several things on the table that they will be continuing discussions with the Mayor's office.

Commissioner Cleaveland confirmed that the Prop C money is intended to cover the Street Crisis Response Team, which is about four to five million dollars a year fully implemented.

Commissioner Covington thanked Mr. Corso for his rapid response in giving the commission the information due to time constraints and asked if there would be an add-back night in the budget process. Mr. Corso responded that the City is trying to get back to the more regular budget process that was interrupted with COVID last year and he does anticipate there will be some sort of add-back process at the Board of Supervisors, but the exact process is up for discussion. Commissioner Covington stated she thinks it is important to know what the process is because she remembers pleading the case to get Battalion 5 back in service and she would like to know what the replacement for that sort of thing is going to be because as a commissioner, she likes to be proactive.

Commissioner Covington moved to adopt the budget as presented. Commissioner Nakajo Seconded. The motion was unanimous.

There was no public comment.

**7. COMMISSION REPORT [Discussion]**

Report on Commission activities since last meeting on January 13, 2021.

Commissioner Covington stated she watched the virtual graduation and thoroughly enjoyed it.

There was nothing to report.

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

Discussion regarding agenda for next and future Fire Commission meetings.

There was no public comment.

- Racial Equity – Next steps for the Commission
- Performance evaluations for Chief of Department, Department Physician, and Commission Secretary

There was no public comment.

**9. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEM 10**

Public comment on all matters pertaining to Item 10 below, including public comment on whether to hold Item 10 in closed session.

There was no public comment.

**10. POSSIBLE CLOSED SESSION REGARDING PERSONNEL MATTER**

**a. VOTE ON WHETHER TO CONDUCT ITEM 10 (b) IN CLOSED SESSION [Action]**

The Commission may hear Item 10 (b) in closed session pursuant to Government Code Section 54957(b) and Administrative Code Section 67.10(b).

*Commissioner Nakajo Moved to proceed into closed session. Commissioner Covington Seconded. The motion was unanimous.*

*The commission went into closed session at 12:10 p.m.*

*Commissioner Nakajo was excused from the meeting at 12:32.*

**b. CASE NO. 2020-02: COMMISSION DELIBERATIONS ON PROPOSED FINDINGS OF FACT, AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL OF FINDINGS OF FACT REGARDING COMMISSION'S DECISION ON EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE CONCERNING EMPLOYEE SUSPENSION APPEAL [Action]**

*At a Special Meeting of the Fire Commission on December 18, 2020, regarding the above-noted matter, following the evidentiary hearing, the Commission deliberated and reached a decision on employee discipline concerning employee suspension appeal.*

The Commission is now considering proposed Findings of Fact in relation to that decision. [Action]

**c. IF CLOSED SESSION IS HELD, RECONVENE IN OPEN SESSION**

*Reconvened in open session at 12:36 p.m.*

1. Report on any action taken in Closed Session as specified in California Government Code Section 54957.1(a)(5) and San Francisco Administrative Code section 67.12(b)(4).
2. 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 Item**]

*Commissioner Cleaveland Moved to not disclose discussions held in closed session.  
Commissioner Covington Seconded. The motion was unanimous with members present.*

11. **ADJOURNMENT** President Feinstein adjourned the meeting at 12:38 p.m.