

**FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

**Wednesday, January 27, 2021 – 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=37648

President Feinstein called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.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.
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 13, 2021.

Commissioner Covington suggested moving Commissioner Nakajo's comment regarding the Chief's residence so that it followed Commissioner Cleaveland's comments on his suggestion of selling the Chief's residence.

Commissioner Cleaveland 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 13, 2021, 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 January 13, 2021. She introduced Tom O'Connor, the new Assistant Deputy Chief PUC Liaison. She added that the Civil Grand Jury outlined the importance of rolling out the AWSS/EFWS and the Department worked with PUC to fund the position. Chief O'Connor addressed the commission and stated he was happy to be in the position and looks forward to working with the administration and move forward on the AWSS.

Chief Nicholson stated that on February 8, 2021, the H-2 firefighter academy will start and will have 25 recruits. Concerning the COVID vaccine, she mentioned that San Francisco is still in Tier-1-A and there are approximately 200,000 people in that tier, but the city has not received 200,000 vaccines yet and only has vaccinated 82,000 people. She added that the City College vaccine site has done 500 vaccinations a day, although they could do over 3,000 a day if they had the vaccine. The Department is providing two paramedic captains who are managing that site daily. She added that the department has had about 1,000 members who received their first dose and almost 400 who have received their second dose and 245 members that have declined the vaccine. She announced that she, CD2, and 3 have been trained to administer the vaccine and they are ready to step up and help.

Regarding the EMT City program, which they have been working on for the past year and a half as a collaboration with Supervisor Walton from District 10, the Humans Rights Commission, and some members of the Department. It is a wraparound program for young people between the ages of 18 and 26 and it enables them to get an EMT License. She added that they have selected 15 young men and women to participate in the program and are working on, that once they finish the training sometime in May, on a way for those who would like to get experience in the Fire Department by bringing those folks into the Fire Department on the EMS side and having them get hours on an ambulance and the Department is trying to create a pathway to get them into the Department. She stated that Mayor is going to give them a \$3,000 stipend per month and they are working on funding that through OEWS and HRC and the district 10 supervisor.

Fire Marshal DeCossio touched on recent developments of the shared spaces program and stated the Department plans to start-up and reinstitute what the program was before the last shutdown and that they will be surveying all the shared space sites and identifying any code concerns, Fire Department access concerns, documenting those and bringing that to the attention of the business owners and to DPW to take corrective action steps. He added that there is potential to transitioning this program into a permanent program and talks are ongoing.

Commissioner Covington confirmed that the 245 members choosing not to be vaccinated will not have different precautions at work. The Chief added that everyone will continue to act as if they could get infected whether they've gotten the vaccine or not and they can not force folks to get the vaccine. Commissioner Covington congratulated the Chief on the launch of the City EMT program and added that she is sure the young people are very pleased with the opportunity.

Vice President Rodriguez stated he installed fire sprinklers for a living and asked if the shared spaces become permanent structures, will they have to have fire sprinklers. Chief DeCossio answered that they haven't determined that as of yet, as they are just beginning talks around this subject.

Commissioner Nakajo welcomed and congratulated Assistant Deputy Chief Tom O'Conner and stated that he was going to be a great addition with all of his advanced knowledge and his understating of the importance of the AWSS. He also acknowledged Chief Nicholson for her work on the City EMT program and confirmed that he has also been working on the sidelines in terms of this endeavor and he is delighted it has come to fruition.

President Feinstein shared her concerns about the members who are refusing to get vaccinated as they are living in close quarters with other members and how to manage the number of people that choose not to be vaccinated who are living side by side with members that have been vaccinated. Chief Nicholson responded that they can't force the vaccine on members, and it is uncharted territory for everyone, and they will continue to remain vigilant with health protocols that are currently in place.

There was no public comment.

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 November and December 2020 reports. He announced that they have been assisting the city at vaccination sites and currently they have four members assigned to DPH and DEM and they have two members of the Department that are running the operation site management at the City College Site. He added that they have about 120 members that have been trained to be vaccinators and they are very happy to be able to be a part of the solution for this pandemic. He touched on the Division of Training, who hosted a virtual EMT graduation on January 8, 2021, for 19 EMTs and they are currently in the process of doing a training module that talks about forcible entry, K-9 training, they have resumed fire service training and in December at the Airport, they conducted air train safety training where Chief Johnson worked with all the agencies involved there. They also continue to do rope rescue training at the Cliff House. He gave an update on NERT where he announced that Brandon Tom was selected as the new coordinator and the NERT volunteers continue to do virtual training as well as support testing sites and food donations. He also touched on the Division of Health, Safety, and Wellness where they continue to meet with the Behavioral Health Unit and Peer Support team. He mentioned that the Physician's office has been very busy with preparation and safety protocols for the upcoming classes. He touched on the Investigative

Services Bureau where Captain Zalba continues to do random testing and post-accident testing and that Support Services has been extremely busy trying to keep up with maintenance at the various Department facilities as Chief DeWitt continues to work with DPW to get the issues resolved. He concluded his report by stating that members from Los Bomberos and Stations 7 handed out 300 boxes of meals to needy families in November and he gave a shout out to Commissioner Nakajo for his support at the new testing site.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Chief Velo for his comprehensive report and was glad Brandon Tom was appointed NERT Director and suggested he attend a meeting to introduce himself. He also mentioned that he thought it was good that the members who have COVID can talk about their experience because that's what is being talked about in the community, as there are folks who think that even if you get the vaccine, you don't have to wear the mask and safe distancing when those safety protocols need to be enforced. He told Chief Velo he enjoys the photos in his report as during the shelter in place, it is hard to get out and observe the progress in the new facilities and happenings throughout the city. He thanked the members from Station 38 for attending the COVID testing site in the Japantown community as he feels there is great comfort with members of the community when they see members of the Department in their turnouts and hats hanging, as he calls it, J-town.

Vice President Rodriguez congratulated Assistant Deputy Chief Tom O'Connor and that he looks forward to having him be part of the meetings and interacting with him. He talked about the JOC Program, where you have contractors who get certified by the city and they are on standby so when there is an issue, such as an electrical or plumbing problem you can call them and Chief DeWitt added that by charter, the Department must ask DPW to supply workers for most of the maintenance and repairs. Vice President Rodriguez confirmed the reason the department cannot partner up with unions to do the work is that the unions don't pay the workers and the Department is prohibited from working that way. Chief Nicholson added that they have recently met with the head of Public Works to talk about the Department having their own plumber, carpenter, and electrician to handle these issues and the conversations are ongoing, as it would save the Department a ton of money.

President Feinstein stated she thought getting our own maintenance and repair folks is an excellent idea and suggested the command staff figure out a good proposal for the Commission to support this idea so that repairs can get done in a timely fashion. Chief DeWitt responded that she would appreciate their support.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked Chief Velo for his comprehensive report and reminded everyone that he has been banging the drum for quite some time to be able to do our own repairs and wishing that they could make a change where they'd be a little more independent and able to do the minor repairs at the various fire stations much more quickly, more efficiently and more cost-effective. He added that he would like to see this change and applauded Chief Nicholson for working on it.

President Feinstein doesn't understand how it can be more expensive to have our own people doing the maintenance and repairs than it is going through DPW and every other city agency. Director Corso responded that it mostly has to do with policy and it's in the administrative code

and charter and it is not as simple as adding another position when you're talking about reallocation of existing resources. Commissioner Cleaveland suggested getting an opinion from the City Attorney on what it would take for the Fire Department to be able to employ its own artisans to take care of plumbing and electrical and other minor needs of the Department regularly. He added that he thinks they need a little independence from being shackled to Public Works. He also confirmed that two of the Fire Reserves will be in the next academy class and he was happy to hear that. He congratulated Assistant Deputy Chief Tom O'Connor and he confirmed how the random alcohol and drug testing program works. He confirmed that Station 14 is using portable heaters because the heat doesn't work in the station and that Station 1 was vandalized (broken window) when they were out on a run. He received clarification on the different leaves that members are entitled to.

Commissioner Covington stated that she didn't realize the DPW conundrum is in the Charter and that makes it much more difficult to change, you need a lot of money and it ultimately would go to the citizens of San Francisco for a vote and she thinks our energy would be better spent elsewhere in trying to figure out some way to get these things. She added that she understands why these safeguards are in place is to make sure that no side deals are made. She thinks that having Carmen Chu as City Administrator is going to be fabulous and hopefully if there is a way she will find it. Commissioner Covington also confirmed that members of the Department are allowed to donate vacation hours and sick pay hours to other members in need and are on the catastrophic leave program. She told Chief Velo that she enjoyed his report and appreciated receiving the glossary. She confirmed that cone testing is when they test the new members on their driving skills, they use cones to simulate streets and width that they must navigate the apparatus around them. The reason they don't use Pier 96 anymore is that the SFPD uses it for training their members' driving skills and the logistical challenge of having to move their cones and replacing them. She confirmed that the women firefighters study meeting was about the study that was done on members several years ago and has to do with cancer and the effect of cancer and the prevalence of cancer in women firefighters. She acknowledged the theme throughout Chief Velo's report "reduce, reuse, and recycle and thinks it's a good idea. She asked Chief Velo to explain what was meant by mitigating the addition of the new floating fire station and Chief Velo responded that the Bay Conservation Development Commission requires that if you put a structure in the bay, you have to remove something else, so when the floating barge was installed, they removed the dilapidated wharf at Pier 70.

President Feinstein thanked Chief Velo for the glossary he included in his report. She acknowledged that there was an issue with Ferrara Fire Apparatus and that the inspection trip was canceled because of COVID and that they reached an agreement that they would bring the vehicle here for testing and that TDA stands for Taylor Drive Apparatus. She confirmed that the City took two hose tenders from the Department's budget because of the budget crisis the city is in. She also confirmed that all stations have generators, and some require replacement and that the fire hydrants are maintained by PUC and even though the SFPD is the user end of the product and they look rusty, they still work.

There was no public comment.

5. FIRE DEPARTMENT OPERATING BUDGET – FISCAL YEARS 2021-2022/ 2022-2023
[Discussion]

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

Mr. Corso presented an overview of the budget, priorities, and challenges they are facing. He went over the timeline and instructions. He mentioned that the City is looking at over 650 million dollars projected deficit over the next couple of years and all city departments' have been requested to reduce their general fund amount by seven and a half percent contingency in both years and for the Department, the seven and a half percent equates to almost six million dollars and you add the two and a half percent which equates to an additional 2 million dollars. He added that Departments have been requested to prioritize core services and as a public safety department, the core services impact the city and several other departments as well. His presentation is attached here: [https://sf-](https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/Commission%20Presentation%20-%202021%2001%202027%20Budget%20Discussion.pdf)

[fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/Commission%20Presentation%20-%202021%2001%202027%20Budget%20Discussion.pdf](https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/Commission%20Presentation%20-%202021%2001%202027%20Budget%20Discussion.pdf)

The supporting documentation is attached here: [https://sf-](https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/SFFD%20Base%20Operations%20Budget%20Review%20Jan%202027.pdf)
[fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/SFFD%20Base%20Operations%20Budget%20Review%20Jan%202027.pdf](https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/SFFD%20Base%20Operations%20Budget%20Review%20Jan%202027.pdf)

He mentioned that their budget supports frontline operations, which is key as well as a good amount of deferred maintenance on equipment and vehicles, and facilities. He added that there is a lack of flexibility in the department's budget as a vast majority is going to salary, benefits, and operations. He touched on the Mayor's office priorities which include core services of departments, become more efficient, equity, racial equity, mental health, and homeless initiatives. He stated that some of the Fire Department's main priorities include the continuation of frontline EMS and Fire Suppression services, internal and external equity, and supporting members in mental, physical, and emotional health.

Vice President Rodriguez thanked Director Corso for his report and stated he doesn't like budget reports. He confirmed that the department has an instructor service agreement with City College where they enroll recruits and probationary firefighters into a class and they get credit and they have all the resources available to them as a City College student and the department pays for their registration. He also suggested trying to get something through besides changing the Charter for trades peoples to be hired by the department as they did with sprinkler fitters through the state fire marshal which allowed anybody working on fire sprinklers has to have a state certification which allowed them to work at universities, airports, and many other different agencies.

Commissioner Covington confirmed that the recurring sources of funds are what was approved last year and that the department is looking into finding other funding sources such as fees and discussions are ongoing. She added that it was good to know that those discussions are taking place because she thinks with a 400-million-dollar deficit, the Board will fully understand why some fees may have to be raised.

Commissioner Cleaveland acknowledged and supported the comments from Vice President Rodriguez and he also thinks any way they can make repairs to the facilities more efficient, more timely and will save money in the long run and be a better quality of life for the

firefighters should be done. He confirmed that the 275 million dollars of general fund support the department is asking from the Board of Supervisors does not include the 6 million dollar reduction.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Mr. Corso for his comprehensive and very real presentation in terms of the numbers. He confirmed that it is not fiscally feasible for the department to assume a 7.5 percent cut and still provide direct services to the city and asked Mr. Corso when he comes with a budget on February 10, 2021, will it take into consideration that equation between the cuts and what they can deliver and Mr. Corso responded “absolutely”. He also confirmed that the Department is presenting consistency in their justification for not being able to comply with reduction requests. He also confirmed that proposition F mandates the full staffing at fire stations.

There was no public comment.

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

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

This matter was continued at the call of the Chair.

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.

- Fire Service Women Presentation
- Operating Budget
- Update on stations 35 & 49 (through the Chief’s report)
- Introduction of NERT Coordinator Brandon Tom

Commissioner Rodriguez asked Chief Nicholson for an update once she has more news after talking with the City Administrator on retaining plumbers and electricians for the Department.

9. ADJOURNMENT

President Feinstein adjourned the meeting at 7:35 p.m.