

SAN FRANCISCO FIRE COMMISSION

FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 10, 2019

City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 416, San Francisco, California, 94102

The Video can be viewed by clicking this link:

http://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=180&clip_id=33598

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

1. ROLL CALL

Commission President	Stephen Nakajo	Present
Commission Vice President	Francee Covington	Present
Commissioner	Michael Hardeman	Present
Commissioner	Ken Cleaveland	Present
Commissioner	Joe Alioto Veronese	Present
Chief of Department	Jeanine Nicholson	Present.
Victor Wyrsh	Deputy Chief -- Operations	
Jose Velo	Deputy Chief --Administration	
Sandy Tong	EMS	
Dan DeCossio	Bureau of Fire Prevention	
Khai Ali	Airport Division	
Tony Rivera	Support Services	
Michael Cochran	Homeland Security	
Joel Sato	Training Division	
Staff		
Mark Corso	Deputy Director of Finance	
Clement Yeh	Medical Director	
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 276, 2019

Commissioner Hardeman Moved to approve the above meeting Minutes. Commissioner Cleaveland Seconded. Motion to approve Minutes was unanimous.

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 April 24, 2019, including budget, academies, special events, communications and outreach to other government agencies and the public.

Chief Nicholson touched on highlights since her last report on June 26, 2019. She announced that they have completed their meet and greets with the candidates for the 126th class and added that they had some very good candidates and for the 127th class they will change the process and have an interview panel with multiple members from the Department.

She mentioned that she met with Assembly Member David Chi who will be working with her on different state-level issues and with Christopher Colwell who is the head of the Emergency Department at Zuckerberg SFGH to discuss how the prehospital and hospital systems can be fixed so the ambulance crews aren't spending as much time at the hospitals. She added that she will also be meeting with Dr. Colfax from the Department of Public Health to see if they can come with a pilot program to also discuss the need for EMS prevention, as a lot of people don't necessarily need to go to the hospital.

Chief Nicholson also attended a meeting regarding Fire Station 13 plan review. She mentioned that they are planning a large-scale medical event drill on July 24th involving response to the area around the Chase Center to give the MTA an idea how difficult it will be to provide services and access when events are planned at the Chase Center and Oracle Ball Park and what the SFFD's concerns are that they have been communicating to them. She touched on the budget, the July 4th activities and the September 14th operations event that Local 798 is spearheading and which the Mayor and Board of Supervisors will be invited to participate in. She added that they are continuing station visits and she believes they have about three left to do. She concluded by announcing that the results from the Tubbs fire study, initiated by the Cancer Prevention Foundation were released yesterday and that there was press coverage about the ambulance staffing shortage.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked her for her excellent report and asked if 9-1-1 patients have to be taken to a hospital or can they be taken to an alternative location. Chief Nicholson explained that they are part of a pilot program where the Sobering Center is an alternative location, but it is something she is going to have a conversation with Dr. Colfax and Dr. Colwell on so that they are not jamming up the hospitals and keeping ambulances out of service. Commissioner Cleaveland confirmed that if a patient refuses to be taken to a hospital, they leave that patient where they are.

Commissioner Covington thinks it is an excellent idea to have the mayor and the supervisors go through simulated training and suggested having hose tenders there so people can visualize what they are. She also congratulated the Chief for finishing up on the station visits. She asked for more information on the Tubbs fire study and Chief Nicholson stated that it was about 2 years ago when a lot of Santa Rosa homes burned down and over 5,600 structures burned. Members were sent there under the mutual aid agreement to battle the wildland-urban interface and they knew there were many toxic materials burning, and that the exposure to firefighters who were breathing and absorbing many of those toxins was high. She added that the San Francisco Firefighters Cancer Prevention Foundation along with Tony Stefani realized this was

going on and although it took a few weeks to get all the pieces in place to test 180 firefighters, some from San Francisco, they took their blood and urine to test and the results were just released. Unfortunately, because it took over three weeks to set up the testing, some of the potential toxins were washed out, but they still showed elevated rates of several different toxins in their systems. She stated that they clearly need more studies as well figuring out what it is they can do to protect the members because there is no gear out there that is available to protect them.

Commissioner Hardeman thanked Chief Nicholson for her report and stated that he thought it was a great idea to involve CD2 and 3 in the interview process of the potential firefighter candidates. He also mentioned that he saw Chief Nicholson on the news explaining the difficulties and toxic exposures to members during wildland fires.

Commissioner Veronese was glad they will be doing a stadium drill and suggested that they schedule a future drill when there is an event at both the new stadium as well as the current stadium as that will show exactly what the members will be going through in order to get to an emergency because he thinks those are the worst-case scenarios of when the access is going to be at its worst. He also mentioned that concerning hospital up staffing, he appreciates the fact that she is meeting with the doctors and educating them to the problems the members are confronting daily. He also expressed his concern of the SFFD picking up the slack from other city departments who are failing in certain areas and the ambulances he consistently sees just sitting at St. Francis Hospital. He would like to see the Department charge the hospitals for the amount of time the members are up staffing at the various hospitals. He also acknowledged the hard work the commission and command staff committed to the budgeting process. He thinks the Department needs to do a better job at educating the Board of Supervisors as to what the needs of the Department are. He noted that he attended the press conference on the Tubbs Fire study and stated the work they are doing is groundbreaking and he suggested having an action plan.

President Nakajo confirmed that the 126th academy class would most likely start the end of September and the 127th would not start until after July of 2020. He also mentioned that he was in appreciation of her interview process and including CD2 and 3 into that process. He also confirmed that regarding the planned drill on 7/24, they will need to be careful in terms of lights and sirens, but still needing to be realistic and he asked that they keep the commission advised of developments.

There was no public comment.

REPORT FROM OPERATIONS, DEPUTY CHIEF VICTOR WYRSCH

Report on overall field operations, including greater alarm fires, Emergency Medical Services, Bureau of Fire Prevention & Investigation, and Airport Division.

Chief Wyrsh stated there were a total of 18 working fires in June and because of the Department's rapid response and quick extinguishment, all of them stayed at a first alarm. He touched on other notable instances including a coastal rescue at Bakers Beach, fires at 4135 Moraga, 571 3rd Street and 3391 30th Street all with no injuries, a Bay rescue on Pier 14, and five wildland fires. His report is attached: <https://sf->

fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/ops%20report%207-10.pdf

He also mentioned that off duty firefighter, Mac Baker who lives near the Mokelumne River was able to save two people using his kayak. He mentioned that Homeland Security will now report to the Chief of Operations and stated that Homeland Security was instrumental in the 4th of July activities with the new concept of Operation Kaboom. He also commented on the issues and concerns they have with the new Chase Center and being able to respond timely. He touched on the eighth anniversary of the passing of Vinnie Perez and Tony Valerio, community outreach presentations that took place and a Plan Check update, which is all covered in the attached report.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked him for his report and applauded him for Operation Kaboom as he witnessed what he believes many dangerous and illegal fireworks going off on the 4th of July in the Bayview area. He confirmed that Operation Genesis is a collaboration with the SFPD and PIO Baxter where they work with youths to come and experience how the two Departments work, and they run them through drills. He stated his concern on how many of the 9-1-1 calls are frequent flyer callers and that he thinks it is important that the elected leaders understand that so much of the 9-1-1 call now is going out to people who frequently and repeatedly utilize the department's services.

Commissioner Covington stated that it's good to know about Operation Genesis and that it sounds like a great program. She asked for clarification on what comes under the designation of wildland fire within the city and county. Chief Wyrsh responded that it is mostly grass fires that are usually not large and started sometimes by the homeless, such as with a discarded cigarette. Commissioner Covington confirmed that the companies have been out to the wildland areas to abate some of the issues and those fires have rapidly decreased. She also confirmed that over the month, they have been doing coastal rescue drills, consisting of rope rescue drills, water drills, low angle drills, high angle drills, and boat drills. She also confirmed that there will be an after-action report for the Chase Center drill and she stated that the commission will be very interested in seeing the areas of deficiencies or areas that need to be addressed in terms of public safety and so everyone will be able to sleep well at night anytime there is an event. She added that it's very important for the public to know that the fire marshal and the Homeland Security experts are both expressing concerns with the Chase Center and their response to a potential emergency.

Commissioner Veronese suggested that they make the Chase Center drill as natural as possible and not notify anybody that they are doing it. He also asked if in future reports Chief Wyrsh could add the total of the unidentified home address.

Commissioner Hardman thanked Chief Wyrsh for his fantastic report and stated that he likes to see that all the fires in the reporting period were all single alarms and hopes to see that every month. He also acknowledged the significant amount of promotions that Chief Nicholson made over the last couple of days and noted that there were a lot of deserving people on that list.

There was no public comment.

5. UPDATE FROM ASSISTANT DEPUTY CHIEF SANDRA TONG [Discussion]
Assistant Deputy Chief Sandra Tong to provide an update and overview of the EMS Division.

President Nakajo welcomed Chief Tong and Medical Director Clement Yeh.

Chief Tong thanked the commission for inviting her and shared what has been happening with the EMS Division since she started in her current position a couple of months ago. She gave a little bit of background about herself and stated she worked at DPH as a medic for about 10 years and then they merged with the SFFD and at that time she started working in the dispatch center as a rescue captain. She provided an overview of her approach to management, including creating a participatory process, one that recognizes and respects the chain of command and also solicits the expertise of the people that work for the Department. She touched on her top goals, which include providing the best emergency services possible based on gathering information, soliciting the participation of the stakeholders, identifying or determining best practices, devising or revising policies and procedures, and implementing them. She talked about her objectives, morale at Station 49, a strategic plan and disaster preparedness which is outlined in the attached presentation. <https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/EMS%201%20Fire%20Commission%20Presentation%20071019.pptx>

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked Chief Tong for her report and asked if she was pulling out of the larger department strategic plan and expanding on it. Chief Tong responded that she is looking at those points as well as other areas and that with her day to day responsibilities, she would hope to have accomplished that plan within the next 12 months. He confirmed that she is exploring alternative vehicle response which expands the way that you can offer services without having to transport to a hospital.

Commissioner Veronese acknowledged that EMS was a very essential division to the Department and he appreciates everything she is doing. He asked her to expand on what community paramedics are. Chief Tong explained that the community paramedics look at having a specially trained group of people that can provide other kinds of social services and can address and understand the needs of the frequent user population and making those connections. Commissioner Veronese stated that he struggles with understanding the problems that the Department of Health is having in staffing and taking care of the health and welfare of the city. Chief Nicholson added that she is moving forward with what she thinks is the best way to get to solutions and she is having conversations with Dr. Colwell and Dr. Colfax to see what they can put together and she is also telling the story that has not been told by the Department to the BOS or the mayor's office on how the Department is being impacted with this issue. Dr. Yeh agreed and added how wonderful it is to be working with a person with a wealth of experience as Chief Tong and also bringing a systematic approach to looking at some of the issues that have been highlighted. Commissioner Veronese suggested that Chief Tong report on the health of the city in future reports. He also recommended getting the cat back to Station 49.

Vice President Covington thanked Chief Tong for her report and said that because members of the Department do close to miraculous work every day, that should not be the normal thing to expect. She is encouraged as the Fire Department has a new Chief and the Health Department has a new Department Head and she thinks they will be able to work well together and there is

a new day on the horizon and she feels things will improve quite a bit and new channel of communications will be developed. She suggested that because so many cities across the nation are grappling with the same issues, it would be a good idea to know what best practices are in other cities, towns, and hamlets. Chief Tong touched on the technology called ReadyNet that identifies when hospitals have reached capacity and can alert the crews so they make take a patient to a different hospital. Vice President Covington stated she likes the fact that Chief Tong was addressing the law morale at Station 49.

Commissioner Hardeman thought it was interesting to hear everybody's comments and in his opinion about the situation in society except that the City has a lot of addicts who are not to be confused with homeless and that the city is always so welcoming. He stated that he was glad that Chief Nicholson picked Chief Tong for the position and that they learn so much listening to the presentation and he thinks she is at the top of her game.

Commissioner Cleaveland asked Dr. Yeh to explain the legislation regarding community paramedicine. Dr. Yeh responded that one of the reasons that the EMS-6 program and the Sobering Center entered into the pilot project is because the existing statute does not allow for paramedics to transport patients to non-acute care centers and also there is some controversy about whether the existing statute allows for activities that are sort of outside our traditional transport and for those reasons, they have been trying to change the statute. Dr. Yeh added that he is very appreciative of the Commissions' support and outreach in terms of the EMS-6 program and that it takes a village with a program like it.

President Nakajo thanked Chief Tong for her report and asked if she could get him the total number of uniformed members in her division. He also confirmed that the new Ambulance Deployment Facility is expected to open in October of 2020.

There was no public comment.

6. PROPOSED COMMISSION RULES TO PROVIDE AN ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL IN CERTAIN DISCIPLINARY CASES [Discussion and Possible Action]

Deputy City Attorney Brad Russi to provide an overview of proposed Commission rules to provide an administrative appeal of Commission decisions in disciplinary cases involving more than a 10-day suspension; possible Commission action to adopt such proposed rules.

Mr. Russi explained the proposed changes to the Rules. Questions and answers took place.

Commissioner Covington Moved to adopt the proposed rules subject to meet and confer with the affected unions. Commissioner Cleaveland Seconded. The motion was unanimous.

There was no public comment.

7. POTENTIAL CHARTER AMENDMENT CONCERNING FIRE DEPARTMENT DISCIPLINARY PROCESS [Discussion and Possible Action]

Deputy City Attorney Brad Russi to provide an overview of a draft amendment to the City Charter to modify the disciplinary process for members of the Fire Department; possible Commission action to recommend draft Charter amendment.

Mr. Russi explained the proposed Charter Amendment concerning the Fire Department disciplinary process, which will hopefully be on the ballot next year. Questions and answers took place.

Commissioner Cleaveland Moved to recommend that the Board of Supervisors consider this charter amendment. Commissioner Veronese Seconded. The motion was unanimous.

There was no public comment.

8. COMMISSION REPORT *[Discussion]*

Report on Commission activities since last meeting on June 26, 2019.

President Nakajo suggested that the commission should have a centralized informational method in the spirit of cooperation of Commission activities.

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

Discussion regarding agenda for next and future Fire Commission meetings.

- Fire Marshal Update (8/8/19)
- Dept. Physician Appraisal

10. ADJOURNMENT President Nakajo adjourned the meeting at 11:29 a.m.