

SAN FRANCISCO FIRE COMMISSION

**FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

Thursday, September 24, 2015 – 4:00 p.m.
698 Second Street, Room 102

The audio recording has been uploaded to the FC Website at:
http://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=133&clip_id=23795

President Evans called the meeting to order at 4:11 PM.

1. ROLL CALL

Commission President	Andrea Evans	Present
Commission Vice President	Francee Covington	Present
Commissioner	Stephen Nakajo	Present
Commissioner	Michael Hardeman	Present
Commissioner	Ken Cleaveland	Present
Chief of Department	Joanne Hayes-White	Present
Ray Guzman	Deputy Chief – Administration	
Dale Carnes	Airport Division	
Ken Lombardi	Support Services	
Shane Francisco	Homeland Security	
Richard Brown	Bureau of Fire Prevention	
Raemona Williams	Division of Training	
Assistant Chiefs		
Lorrie Kalos	Division 2	
Dave Franklin	Division 3	
Staff		
Mark Corso	CFO	
Jesusa Bushong	Personnel Officer	

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

President Evans stated that public comment is open for everyone including members of the department if they feel that they would like to make public comment this evening.

The following individuals spoke during public comment:

Tom Siragusa, Assistant Chief with over 33 year of service spoke about his experience as the Department's Operation Area Coordinator and representative for the State of California's Mutual Aid System. He provided a time line to the Commissioners (<http://www.sf-fire.org/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=4165>). He went on to express his disappointment and embarrassment of the Department's decision to not send a strike team to the Valley Fire. He concluded by apologizing for the Department's leaderships failure to provide assistance to the residents of Lake County and that the rank and file was more than ready, willing, capable, and able to respond.

Bob Postel, Assistant Chief, speaking as a private citizen stated that it needs to be clearly stated, the five engines that were already deployed were not from our regular fleet and had zero impact on the Department's daily staffing or operations. He added that for far too long, members of this administration, as well as others, have demonstrated a condescending attitude of superiority and isolation towards the rest of the California Fire Service. He concluded by stating we are part of this mutual aid agreement and it is beyond time to recognize and embrace our role, capabilities, and obligations outside of San Francisco when significant events occur, especially if we expect the same in return.

Battalion Chief Brian Rubenstein stated that it is his hope that the Commission will consider making an inquiry into what happened in the failure to respond to the call for help and provide direction to the Chief in the future when these tragedies occur with our neighbors.

Battalion Chief Jose Velo, a member of the Fire Department for 21 years, stated that he's currently the co-chair of the Mutual Aid Committee. He mentioned he felt the Department failed to respond in a moment when help was desperately needed. He added that his goal in making public comment today, is to make sure that it doesn't happen again, and when the next call comes, we're ready to respond.

Lt. Shon Buford, resident of San Francisco, member of the Department and United Employees Group, asked the Commission to truly listen to the messages and comments that come before them. He added that he thinks it's another example of disconnect between the current administration and the men and women who actually do the job.

Battalion Chief Tom Abbott, resident of San Francisco and employee of the Fire Department stated that he thought it was shameful that the Department did not send a team to the Valley Fire. He went on to explain what should have been done, what has been done in the past, and concluded that in this instance, the Department should have responded.

Mark Johnson, Battalion Chief of the Department stated he agreed with what the other speakers have said. He went on to offer examples of when other agencies came to the aid of SFFD and argued that we should be prepared to do the same thing for them.

Tom O'Connor, San Francisco Battalion Chief and President of the San Francisco Firefighters Local 798 described the historic Commission meeting of nearly one year ago wherein the Union cited their concerns regarding the level of service to San Francisco. He criticized the administration for not having a strategic plan, a fleet that is in adequate shape and lack of preparedness to send extra resources to help our neighbors. He continued to emphasize deficiencies he sees in the Department and concluded by stating it's time for the next generation of San Francisco firefighters to take the helm and lead this institution.

Shayne Kaialoa, Captain in the Department said his goal was to shed some light on the mutual aid system. He added that the Department and supervisors should look into our policy of mutual aid, and make sure it works better within the system. He concluded by stating if the Department had sent people to the Valley fire he thinks they could have made a difference.

Captain John Darmanin also spoke of his concerns with the lack of response for mutual aid. He stated it doesn't set a good example when we don't respond to the call for mutual aid and when they are there for us, we need to be there for them.

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

Discussion and possible action to approve meeting minutes.

- a. Minutes from the Regular Meeting on August 27, 2015.
- b. Minutes from the Special Meeting on September 10, 2015

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

There was no public comment.

4. CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT'S REPORT [Discussion]

REPORT FROM CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT

Report on current issues, activities and events within the Department, including Fiscal Year 2015-2016 budgets.

Chief Hayes-White's report covered the period following the meeting on September 10, 2015. She commented on the difficult decision she had regarding the deployment of apparatus both to the Butte fire and the Valley fire. She added that the Department did not turn their back on obligations they have to the State. She described the following scenario is from the audio recording which can be found on the Commission website:

On September 11th we deployed 26 members to the Butte fire and six apparatus. One is a State funded apparatus. The other five were formerly State apparatus which we purchased. Since July we have sent 91 members throughout the state on five deployments. We take that obligation very seriously.

We also take the obligation to protect the property and citizens here in San Francisco. I've said it before, this week it was, a damned if you do, damned if you don't situation. Our heart goes out to those that have lost lives and property in Lake County. I understand many of our members have property in that area, have friends in that area. We made the decision which deviated from a plan that was agreed upon last year by the Wildland Committee to send yet another engine, a seventh engine from our fleet to the Valley fire.

We wish we could have sent more but I felt it was not operationally prudent to do so. Also under a mandate that many of the members that spoke tonight, supported Proposition F which mandates minimum staffing of rigs, equipment and personnel in the Department. And so for those reasons and in conjunction with members of my command staff, including members of the division that oversees all of our equipment, I did make the decision to not send as many rigs as we would have liked to.

We explored all the alternatives. We looked at the rigs that we had at the Airport. Personnel was not an issue. I personally offered during a conference call on September 13th, to send members to the Valley fire via our vans at the Division of Training, or if we needed to, to get a Muni bus. I also made the same offer on Monday to Chief Kim Higuera who is the State Fire and Rescue Chief.

I personally spoke with him and made that offer. He was appreciative of our efforts to the Butte fire and all we were doing at that event. On Wednesday when the Butte fire strike team was told that they were no longer needed at the Butte fire they were originally redeployed to the Valley fire. We did have one engine that after being on the lines for the Butte fire had a mechanical issue so there was a delay in getting demobilized.

My understanding is the State then canceled and sent us home. We originally redeployed to the Valley fire last Wednesday. Given the delay of four or five hours, we were then sent home because I think there was a change in the weather pattern.

I also, heard loud and clear 90 miles. 90 miles is not 90 minutes. It might be 90 minutes from Petaluma but it's not 90 minutes from San Francisco. It's a good two and a half to three hour trip on a good day.

As you know, we're seismically vulnerable. We have a heavy call volume in this city and I was not willing to take that chance, to take that risk and also deviate from a proposition of mandatory staffing that our own firefighters lobbied heavily for.

I believe it was the right thing to do and I stand by that minimum staffing requirement. I think I would have received equal criticism if I made that decision and God forbid something happened here in the City which we were not able to apply all of our resources to.

One of the things that I think will come of this, and hopefully this is a good illustration, is the need to have additional equipment to put on the rigs and in the rigs themselves. The problem and the push back that we get is that an apparatus, an engine company, an engine unit is about \$850,000, and then you have to put equipment on it and then it needs to be maintained and housed.

Commissioner Cleaveland asked if Chief Hayes-White thought Prop F is in fact in conflict with out mutual aid agreements. Chief Hayes-White stated she thought it binds the Department somewhat. Commissioner Cleaveland suggested making changes to Prop F in some way to allow for the Department to respond to crisis like these.

Commissioner Nakajo stated he appreciated the information that Chief Hayes-White provided to the Commission in terms of reasoning and justifications. He also appreciated the member of the audience who came this evening to voice their opinion and concerns. He expressed his concerns of the Department's need for more apparatus. He suggested that his concerns call for more discussion on mutual aid and how the department should respond.

Vice President Covington stated how difficult it has been to hear the comments this evening. She added that she would take it on faith, that everyone who works for the Department, including Chief Hayes-White has the best interest of the Department, the City, neighboring counties and State. She also suggested that a deep conversation is needed about this issue to avoid a reoccurrence in the future. She continued that if Prop F binds our hands, we should look at ways in which we can unbind them, because we cannot say no again. She added that everybody wants to help and we need to solve this problem and solve it quickly.

President Evans stated that she thinks that reasonable people can disagree on the Chief's decision as to whether or not it was appropriate for the City of San Francisco. She added that what she doesn't find reasonable is that the Department does not have the apparatus to help when people need it and it amazes her that a city the size of San Francisco and our resources aren't equipped to help neighboring counties. She added that she is tired of throwing our hands up in the air and saying the mayor's not going to give us the money so there's nothing we can do. She added that there has to be a way forward and we have to be able to help. She concluded by saying that this Department cannot continue in this kind of manner where we're not adequately resourced.

Chief Hayes-White continued with her report. She touched on the ambulance work group, fleet replacement plan, 150th Anniversary plan and the Strategic Planning committee. She acknowledged the many members of the Department, specifically Assistant Deputy Chief Shane Francisco for putting on an incredible Urban Shield event drill and Marine drill. She stated that they participated with the Police Department and BOMA in an exercise at the Ferry Building. Chief Hayes-White stated that she met with the United Fire Service Women and the NERT Board during this reporting period.

Chief Hayes-White acknowledged the good work of Assistant Deputy Chief, Lombardi, Captain Rivera, and Assistant Deputy Chief Myers on the decommissioned front line MTA buses that were donated to us by MTA to be utilized in the event of a large scale emergency, multi casualty incident. She went on to describe them.

REPORT FROM ADMINISTRATION

Report on the Administrative Divisions, Fleet and Facility status, Finance and Support Services within the Department.

Chief Guzman reported for the month of September, 2015.

Chief Guzman stated that Support Services continues to manage the many ESER projects. Station 16 is on track to submit for a building permit in October with an anticipated start of construction in late spring of 2016. Tentative applications for Candlestick and Hunter's Point are under review. He added that members are in the process of being custom fitted by Honeywell for their new turnout gear. He also mentioned that they are currently working with Central Shops on new engine specifications. He also touched on the timeline of the deployment of the Butte and Valley strike teams.

Chief Guzman stated that the Division of Training under Chief Williams and her staff are training the 118th recruit academy and they are in their 5th of 17-weeks of training. He added that the H-8 preceptor field training will be completed this week. With regards to the Investigative Service Bureau, Acting Captain Hunter has conducted 30 random alcohol and drug tests, four of which were conducted on nights and weekend and all were negative. He gave a brief Fireboat update, and stated that he was informed that there is about a four-week delay in the delivery of the Fireboat.

Public Comment:

Captain Darmanin spoke in regards to Prop F and he begged to differ with the Chief's position that the Department's hands are tied. He went on to explain his understanding of Proposition F and ways around redeployment, including convening an emergency session with at least three of the Fire Commissioners and then to do the same with the Board of Supervisors. He added that we should have been proactive and not reactive.

Steven Giacalone, Director with Local 798 and Lt. in the SFFD talked about Prop F and stated that it had nothing to do with the ability to render mutual aid or immediate need to any of the counties. He added that it was incredibly frustrating for him to watch the complete and total inability to help Lake County.

Tom Siragusa stated he thought discussions were getting into technicalities of things. He touched on the vehicle replace program the Commission passed in 2006. He explained in detail his actions the day in question and concluded by saying that he didn't think the Department lived up to the expectations that he has of this Fire Department.

Bob Postel asked the Commission to take a close look at the timeline Chief Siragusa provided to them. He implied that somehow the magnitude of the situation was lost between Chief Siragusa and Chief Hayes-White. He added that sending one fire engine two days later did nothing, it was an insult and totally inexcusable.

Commissioner Nakajo asked in reference to the vehicle replacement program if there were strategies or a plan on how to move on it. He also mentioned that he appreciated the members of the public to utilize public comment in the process as it allows the Commission to be able to understand their feelings, information and expressions. He said if it wasn't for the process of public comment, we often don't get opinions and information that is sometimes helpful.

Chief Hayes-White stated that they have shared with the Mayor's office the fleet replacement plan year after year and between 2008 and 2013 they were denied, and were actually required to reduce the operating budgets just like every other city department. She mentioned that at the last budget negotiations, she brought it up again to try and get it back on track. She added that they have proposed a three-year and five-year plan to get in alignment with the fleet replacement program.

Vice President Covington suggested that it's probably a good time to seek a special allocation of funds in order to get the fleet that we need. She added that we have been very successful this year in getting a budget that is close to what we need, but we need multiple years of a good budgets for the Department. Vice President Covington thinks we should be unified as rank and file to go after those monies today and that time if of the essence. She suggested that this should definitely be included in the strategic plan.

Commission Cleaveland asked for a quick update on the details of the EMS headquarters. Chief Lombard replied that they are still on schedule to be on the health bond in 2016 in the tune of 42 and a half million dollars. They are doing an environmental impact report on the site at Jerrold Street behind Station 9. He added that the Department owns property behind Station 9 and the City owns the adjoining piece of property and they are looking at putting a three story EMS building with a three-story garage there.

President Evans acknowledged Chief Francisco for the Urban Shield exercise. She asked Mr. Corso to talk a bit more on the GEMT Funds. Mr. Corso explained that they are still waiting for approximately three million dollars in back payment from the GEMT Funds. There was a delay from the federal side to get reimbursed from the State. He stated he anticipates receiving those funds during the current fiscal year.

President Evans asked if the members at Station 5 are on board and happy with the plans. Chief Guzman answered that they were part of the whole design.

5. FURTHER DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING AVAILABLE OPTIONS FOR TELEVISIONING FIRE COMMISSION MEETINGS AT CITY HALL [Discussion and possible action]

Commissioner Cleaveland stated he was champion from day one of being appointed to the Commission to having the meetings televised. He thinks it's important for the public to be involved and understands what the Fire Department goes through, what the Fire Commission is dealing with and providing an opportunity to engage more of the citizens of the City in advising the direction for the Department. He went on to describe possible dates and times for televising the meetings at City Hall.

President Evans gave an update after her conversation with Police Commission President Suzy Loftus. She discussed possible options available at City Hall.

Further discussion ensued regarding conversations and alternative dates and rooms available for televising Fire Commission meetings at City Hall starting in January 2016.

Commissioner Cleaveland Moved to move the Commission meetings to City Hall in January of 2016. Vice President Covington Seconded. Motion to move meetings to City Hall in January of 2016 was unanimous.

Public Comment: John Darmanin stated how important it is for the rest of the City to hear what the public is saying and making the meetings more accessible is a great thing. He thinks the public will have more access.

6. AGENDA FOR NEXT FIRE COMMISSION MEETING [Discussion]

Discussion regarding agenda for the October 8 , 2015 regular meeting.

- Update from Commissioners and Chief of the Department on the 150th Anniversary Committee and Strategic Planning Committee
- Approval of SAFER Grant Resolution

7. ADJOURNMENT

President Evans adjourned the meeting in memory of retired Lieutenant Bob Fennell and retired Inspector Joe Sebastinelli at 6:00 PM.