

**FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

Wednesday, January 23, 2019 – 5:00 p.m.

City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 400, San Francisco, California, 94102

The Video can be viewed by clicking this link:

http://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=180&clip_id=32254

President Nakajo called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

1. ROLL CALL

Commission President	Stephen Nakajo	Present
Commission Vice President	Francee Covington	Present
Commissioner	Michael Hardeman	Present
Commissioner	Ken Cleaveland	Excused
Commissioner	Joe Alioto Veronese	Present
Chief of Department	Joanne Hayes-White	Present
Mark Gonzales	Deputy Chief -- Operations	
Jeanine Nicholson	Deputy Chief --Administration	
Dan DeCossio	Prevention	
Khai Ali	Airport	
Michael Cochrane	Homeland Security	
Andy Zanoft	EMS	
Joel Sato	Division of Training	
Assistant Chiefs		
Bob Postel	Division 2	
Lorrie Kalos	Division 3	

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 Special Meeting on January 4, 2019.

Vice President Covington Moved to approve the above meeting Minutes. Commissioner Veronese Seconded. Motion to approve above Minutes was unanimous. There was no public comment.

- Minutes from Special Meeting on January 8, 2019

Vice President Covington Moved to approve the above meeting Minutes. Commissioner Veronese Seconded. Motion to approve above Minutes was unanimous. There was no public comment.

- Minutes from Regular Meeting on January 9, 2019

Vice President Covington Moved to approve the above meeting Minutes. Commissioner Veronese Seconded. Motion to approve above Minutes was unanimous. There was no public comment.

There was no public comment.

4. FIRE DEPARTMENT OPERATING BUDGET – FISCAL YEARS 2019-2020/ 2020-2021
[Discussion]

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

Deputy Director Corso gave a recap and overview of the timelines and instructions and touched on the updates in the current year budget as well as some of the discussions that have taken place regarding priorities and challenges. He presented the attached PowerPoint: https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/budget%20update_1.pdf

He added that the city has projected approximately a 271-million-dollar deficit over the next two fiscal years, and those deficits are anticipated to increase and therefore all departments have been requested to make reductions to the support that they receive from the general fund to the extent of two percent in both years. He anticipates having the budget ready for approval at the next commission meeting and that the budget submissions are due to the Mayor's office on February 21, 2019. He explained each frame of the presentation in detail which included the historic budget overview, the general fund expenditures, the non-general fund expenditures, which all total a 400-million-dollar budget in the current year and increases to 416 million dollars next year and then reduced to 413 million the year after that because of a one-time equipment and capital expenditures that are stripped out. He added that they continue to work with division heads on budget issues and needs and they continue to work on updated staffing models, as well as revenue and fee projections for the next two years. They have also reconvened the internal budget committee to discuss the needs of the Department and prioritization of those needs. He touched on the challenges they face including how to submit a budget that would be in response to budget reductions, but also have the Department deal with increased call volume and increased demand for services. He mentioned that the consensus around the Budget Committee is that the Department should not submit reductions to its budget.

Commissioner Veronese thanked Mr. Corso for his presentation and asked about the 106-million-dollar uncollected ambulance fees. Mr. Corso explained how billing reimbursement is applied, including Medicare, Medi-Cal patients, private insurance patients, and uninsured patients. He added that the Department contracts with a billing company, Intermedix, who gets a 3 percent commission fee on amounts collected. Commissioner Veronese stated that he doesn't know why the Fire Department is in the business of collecting fees for ambulance rides. He suggested turning over that task to the receiving hospitals or other city departments. There was robust discussion pertaining to 40 percent of the homeless population using the ambulance service and Commissioner Veronese suggested that the Department of homelessness should pay for the 50 million dollars in homeless ambulance rides. He added that it is the mission of the SFFD to respond to 9-1-1 calls and to make sure that people are getting emergency care, but it seems like a large part of the budget is going to giving homeless people rides to the hospital, given they need those rides and some of those cases, he's witnessed himself, they don't need

those rides. He added that he thinks the Department needs to do a better job of trying to get some of the uncollected fees paid for. Mr. Corso responded that those discussions are ongoing and that homelessness is being treated as a city-wide problem, and to the extent that they have been able to insert the SFFD in those conversations, they are trying to advocate for the Department's position in those regards.

Commissioner Hardeman thanked Mr. Corso for his presentation and appreciated the graphs and charts. He also confirmed that the billing company tries to collect on bills that have unidentifiable addresses at the time of transport, they have a database that they research and follow-up with billing. Chief Hayes-White added that she agrees that it is a huge loss and has remained relatively steady over the last 10 years and wanted to make sure that what they are tracking is not an exact science, that the non-identifiable address does not always equate to a homeless person. She asked Mr. Corso to provide some historical data of the large urban jurisdiction collection rates.

Vice President Covington stated she also looks forward to getting those figures so that things line up in a logical manner and that they have the information they need to push for those dollars to come from other departments to assist the SFFD. She added that it is a very heavy load that they are required to carry year after year and the homeless crisis is not going to go away next year and they need to come up with a way to handle the crisis. She asked Chief Hayes-White to explain how the Department plans on recovering the uncollected EMS revenue. Chief Hayes-White responded that out of the 15 budgets she has prepared, 12 of them have asked for reductions and they have always pushed back as the EMS service is a service that they need to provide and as stated in previous discussions, they get shortened quite a bit on reimbursement and they bring that forward during the budget season and advocate for more resources but have been unsuccessful. She added that since there has been a new homeless department created in addition to the windfall of 181 million dollars, discussions will continue to occur in terms of making sure that they either get credited or that there is some sort of discussion at least to help offset that deficit. She stated that a city that has challenges in terms of people not being able to pay, she doesn't want to be a department that turns somebody away or does not provide service because they don't have insurance, but to be receiving the higher percentage, she added that would be something they would love to work on with the Commission. Vice President Covington confirmed that when EMS merged with the Department the only monies that shifted were the FTE's and the operating budget for the used equipment. Vice President Covington commented that the whole landscape of the city has changed from that time and the merger predates the crisis that we now find ourselves in and with the onset of the homeless crisis, they need to make adjustments and she thinks that the rest of the city will have to make adjustments because it's a situation that is untenable and cannot continue as is. She also mentioned that the hospitals that are not associated with the Department of Public Health have a philanthropic arm such as foundations that pick up a lot of the monies that would come to them but don't because people simply don't have the money. She added that the SFFD does not have a foundation that raises money. She also mentioned that reimbursements are not just a problem for the SFFD but for every other major city in America because it's a fixed amount and she suggested having the conversation at a much higher level, lobbying to get this figure raised, because this is not something that can be done at a local level, increasing the rate of reimbursement for Medi-Cal and Medicaid. Mr. Corso responded that there has been a desire to change the way the structure is set up because while

the costs of doing business in general has increased, those reimbursement rates have not really changed and have actually gone down due to state and federal funding issues overall.

President Nakajo thanked Mr. Corso and confirmed he will present the budget to the Commission for approval on February 13, 2019.

There was no public comment.

5. CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT'S REPORT [Discussion]

REPORT FROM CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT, JOANNE HAYES-WHITE

Report on current issues, activities and events within the Department since the Fire Commission meeting on January 9, 2019, including budget, academies, special events, communications and outreach to other government agencies and the public.

Chief Hayes-White reported on events and activities since the last meeting on January 9, 2019. She mentioned that they are on track in the current fiscal year related to the budget. Regarding the grant writer position, she announced that the deadline for applications is Friday, January 25, 2019, and they have received 50 applications and they are in the process of gathering those, sorting through them and categorizing them to make sure they meet minimum qualifications and Ms. Bushong will forward those to Mr. Corso for his review. She thanked Vice President Covington for her input on enhancing the job announcement. She announced that the 125th academy with 42 members will be starting on Monday and will be joined two weeks later by 12 members from Station 49. She added that they anticipate the 126th academy class starting in fall, also comprised of 54 members and they are also planning to have an H-3 Level 1 EMT class coming in the summertime. She touched on activities attended during the reporting period, including the Healthy Streets Operations Committee meeting, a CPR recertification session, a NERT Advisory Board meeting and the Martin Luther King march. She announced the ribbon cutting at station 16 which will be held on January 31, 2019, at 11:15.

Vice President Covington acknowledged that she had pressed quite strongly to increase the number of people admitted to the academy classes due to the fact that so many members of the Department were retiring and was wondering now that those numbers have decreased if it was still necessary to have a class of 54 recruits. Chief Hayes-White responded that they always take a look at the staffing levels and she believes they are on track to matching the new hires with the retirements. Vice President Covington asked Chief Hayes-White if it was still her intention to conduct preliminary interviews for potential recruits for the September academy class and Chief Hayes-White confirmed that is her intention.

There was no public comment.

REPORT FROM ADMINISTRATION, DEPUTY CHIEF JEANINE NICHOLSON

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

Chief Nicholson reported on events for the month of December. She mentioned that the Physician's Office has been very busy conducting physicals for the members of the new class, and eight promotional and permanent physicals in multiple ranks and 29 return to work evaluations. She announced that Captain Neal Cavallini is the new Captain at the Investigative Services Bureau and he conducted 72 drug and alcohol tests which were all negative and he

assisted with completing several background investigations in order to add alternates to the academy list. Regarding the assignment office, she mentioned that the 123rd academy class is about to complete their probation in February and will be assigned to vacation relief spots effective next month. She touched on Support Services and announced that Chief Rivera was absent from the Commission meeting because he was in Southern California to conduct the final inspections of the ambulances that are on order. She added that they have been working closely with DPW to streamline facility repairs. She mentioned that they are also working collaboratively with the City Administrator's office as well as Public Works to identify a piece of land for a new training facility. She added that the training center funding is slated to be in the 2019 ESER Bond and the suggested funding for the center is approximately 150 million dollars. She touched on the Ambulance Deployment Facility which is still scheduled for late 2020 opening and the Arts Commission is aware of the need for changes within the artwork that was presented earlier during a fire commission meeting and she mentioned that as revisions are submitted, she will pass them along to the Chief and to the Commission for review. She touched on Station 16, Station 5 and the AWSS which is included in the 2019 ESER Bond and slated for 125 million dollars. She reported on the Training Division, NERT, and Homeland Security, under the direction of Chief Cochrane, who is studying hard and getting ready for pilot school for his drone class.

Vice President Covington thanked Chief Nicholson for her report and asked her to explain what the Office of Resiliency is. Chief Nicholson explained that they are under the City Administrator and they work on building a more resilient San Francisco as it relates to disasters, homelessness, and neighborhood outreach.

Commissioner Hardeman thanked Chief Nicholson for her extensive report and asked for clarification on the 125 million dollars slated for the AWSS. Chief Nicholson suggested that he could talk to her, Chief Rivera or Olivia Scanlon and Chief Hayes-White suggested James Reidy to get more information on this issue.

Commissioner Veronese asked for an update on Station 35. Chief Nicholson responded that they are currently working with the Port on an MOU agreement and construction has not started on that project.

President Nakajo thanked Chief Nicholson for her comprehensive report and mentioned that he is very interested in the training facility and looks forward to a presentation when there is more to report on, as well as the potential artwork that has been projected for outside of station 35. He also asked if the 150 million dollars that was mentioned for the training facility is adequate and Chief Nicholson answered that they are still looking into that, and they are having those conversations with other departments within the city about that. He confirmed that the volunteer appreciation luncheon is scheduled for January 30, 2019, at 11:00 a.m. at SFFD Headquarters.

Vice President Covington expressed her concerns about the 2019 ESER Bond and the 150 million dollars that has been recommended for the training facility, as they don't know how much it will cost to purchase the facility, how much it will cost to do any grading, prep work, or toxins need to be removed and things of that nature as well as her concern of the timeframe to get the Bond on the ballot. Chief Nicholson confirmed she had the same concerns and would forward the timeframe that was provided to her.

There was no public comment.

6. COMMISSION REPORT [Discussion]

Report on Commission activities since last meeting on January 9, 2019

Commissioner Veronese announced that he visited two members of the Department at St. Francis Hospital to wish them well on behalf of the Commission. He also attended the Stress Unit meeting, which he thought was very informative and he reported that with the support of the Chief, the unit has trained about 50 members of the Department for stress-related identification and management. He added that he is looking forward to the Chief's continued support on this issue and her report on how we move forward to create a state-of-the-art Stress Unit.

President Nakajo reported that he has been in contact with the president and vice president of the Health Commission in the hopes of having a joint meeting to share information and revenue sources on dealing with homeless issues. He has also reached out to the Social Services Commission. He also mentioned that he would like to create a mentorship program between the commissioners and members of Department.

There was no public comment.

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

Discussion regarding agenda for the next and future regular meetings.

- United Fire Service Women
- Budget action item
- Housing on top of Station 13 update

There was no public comment.

8. ADJOURNMENT President Nakajo adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.