

**FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES**

**Wednesday, January 22, 2020 – 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:

[https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=180&clip\\_id=34983](https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=180&clip_id=34983)

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

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	
Michael Cochrane	Homeland Security	
Khai Ali	Airport Division	
Dawn DeWitt	Support Services	
Joel Sato	Training Division	
Assistant Chiefs		
Brooke Baker	Division 2	
Bob Postel	Division 3	
Staff		
Mark Corso	Deputy Director of Finance	
Olivia Scanlon	Communications and Outreach	

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Nancy Wuerful, a community activist, a 55-year resident city, and a former member of the Park Recreation Open Space Advisory Committee for nine years stated the following: "Tonight, I am happy to welcome our new commissioners, Feinstein and Rodriguez, to the Fire Commission to augment the long time dedicated service of Commissioners Nakajo, Covington, and Cleaveland, to protecting our lives and property. To that end, I wish to remind all the commissioners that the city charter empowers you with specific powers and duties that you shall perform. For me, your most important duties and powers are that you, quote, "Formulate, evaluate, and approve goals, objectives, plans, and programs, and set policies consistent with the overall objectives of the city and county as established by the mayor and the Board of Supervisors, through the adoption of city legislation," unquote and that you, quote, "conduct investigations into any aspect of government operations within your jurisdiction through the

power of inquiry, and can make recommendations to the mayor or Board of Supervisors," unquote. You are also authorized to hold hearings and to take testimony. The charter is clear that, quote, "Each board of the Commission, relative to the affairs of its own department, shall deal with administrative matters solely through the Department head or her designees," unquote. Also, the charter states that the Fire Commission, quote, "Is empowered to prescribe and enforce any reasonable rules and regulations that it deems necessary to provide for the efficiency of the department," unquote. You may be already familiar with the charter's requirements of the Fire Commission, but they are so important that they bear repeating. We, the members of the public, come to you with our concerns and requests because we believe that you will be informed by our comments and that you can take action on issues that concern you too. This commission shall set policies, goals, and plans. You do not have to wait for departmental requests or presentations to set policy. You can act as you see fit in response to the current needs you see. You can conduct investigations and hearings to give you objective information on public concerns. I look forward to participating in your Commission meetings to bring another point of view, the public's point of view, to your work."

Thomas Doudiet, a retired assistant deputy chief, San Francisco Fire Department, with 32 years of service in the SFFD, and 40 years of service to the city of San Francisco stated as follows: "As a private citizen and 60-year resident of the city, I want to welcome Commissioners Feinstein and Rodriguez to the firefighting community. Those of us who are advocates for improved fire protection and earthquake preparedness are heartened to have you here to become an important part of the solution to the ever-present challenges of the SFFD and carrying out its primary mission, the preservation of life and property. The particular problem of combatting post-earthquake fires when faced with the city's presently inadequate water supplies was addressed in-depth and in a very scholarly manner by the Civil Grand Jury in its 2019 report entitled "Act now before it is too late -- aggressively expand and enhance our high-pressure emergency firefighting water system." The need for the city-wide expansion of the auxiliary water supply high-pressure hydrant system, known as the AWSS, has been recognized for many decades but has remained unresolved. And continued postponement of this expansion will result in the destruction by fire of at least half the city following the next Bay Area earthquake. Appropriately, the two most essential conclusions of the Civil Grand Jury report are, one, the high-pressure hydrant system must be expanded to all San Francisco neighborhoods. And, two, time is of the essence. Given the geology of Northern California, the history of San Francisco, and a knowledge of urban conflagrations, it will be clearly understood that in the absence of adequate water supplies, 138,000 wood frame buildings and the 390,000 residents that occupy the 15 neighborhoods not currently protected by the AWSS will suffer catastrophic loss, including the loss of human life on an unimaginable scale. Our most vulnerable San Francisco residents, children, the elderly, and the physically disadvantaged, are those who are most likely to die as post-earthquake firestorms sweep through hundreds of blocks of partially collapsed buildings before rescues can be made. Unfortunately, all of the tax rates are equal throughout the city. At the present time, fire protection is not. This afternoon, I'm providing to each of you a packet of information expanded from the material that I have previously shared with the Fire Commission to reflect the recent developments related to the post-earthquake firefighting issue. And as background information for our two new commissioners, on the topic of vital -- of the vital importance to the survival of the city of San Francisco, which is the ultimate obligation of all public safety

employees. Once again, I wish to welcome Commissioners Feinstein and Rodriguez, and thank you for taking on the very serious task of overseeing the SFFD and carrying out its primary mission, preservation of the lives -- of the lives and property of the residents of San Francisco.”

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

Discussion and possible action to approve meeting minutes.

- Minutes from Regular Meeting on January 8, 2020

Commissioner Cleaveland Moved to approve the above meeting Minutes. Vice President Covington Seconded. Motion to approve the above Minutes was.

There was no public comment.

**4. FIRE DEPARTMENT OPERATING BUDGET – FISCAL YEARS 2020-2021/ 2021-2022 [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 the attached PowerPoint along with the attached supporting documents including a high-level summary of the Department's budget.: <https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/Commission%20Presentation%20-%20Budget%20Discussion%2020%2001%2022%20Full%20Slides.pdf>

<https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/SFFD%20Base%20Budget%20Review%20Jan%2022.pdf>

He gave an update on the timeline and current initiatives in the current year budget that were funded including the continuation of SFFD hiring plan, upgrades to the EMS-6 program, a newly created Health and Safety Chief position, upgrades at Fire Prevention and additional equipment. He provided an overview of the Department's base budget, the challenges that they are facing as a department related to the budget which includes required reductions, limited budget flexibility and the increase in demand for services, both in volume and scope. He added that the city is projecting approximately \$420,000,000 deficit over the next two years, and the request from the mayor's office to departments is a reduction in the amount of three-and-a-half percent in both budget years of the Department’s general fund support which is equivalent to 2.7 million dollars in the first year, and a cumulative 5.4 million in the second year. He stated that the current fiscal year budget is 427 million dollars and a slight increase to 433 million in the next year. He mentioned that other priorities for the Department are restoring the incident support specialists and adding additional personnel to the Peer Support Unit.

Public Comment: Nancy Wuerful stated the following: “I follow the money and understand the details of the city's budget. I wish to have my comments on the budget that relates to both the operating budget that you're looking at today and the capital budget approved at the previous meeting. I am asking President Nakajo to please request Mr. Corso to respond to my concerns and questions at the end of my comments. The issue I have concerns the source and timing of

money to funding the 20 hose tenders that were recommended in the 2019 Civil Grand Jury report. Hose tenders are the specialized apparatus designed for pumping and transporting large volumes of water from any source and are recognized worldwide for their ability to successfully move large amounts of water to a fire at high pressures and volumes of firefighting. The Board of Supervisors' official response to the Civil Grand Jury report that was sent to presiding judge, Garrett L. Wong, stated that funding for the first five hose tenders are in the current budget, and that the remaining 15 hose tenders will be dependent on appropriation actions in the future. It seems to me that we have to be ever mindful of how this bifurcation of funding is going to be implemented. My first question is, did you get the full \$5,000,000 for five hose tenders at \$1,000,000 a piece that's supposed to be in the current year's budget? I don't see it on page 9 for the capital outlay year for operating. Is the unspent money for any money that is in the current budget going to be carried forward? How? I'd like to see it in the budget if there's some left-over money this year because we aren't buying all five hose tenders this year. Also, I'd like to suggest that the budget next year is reduced for capital outlay by 2.7 million, but there's no explanation, so I would hope that we could hear more about why that reduction is happening. And my other question is where is the 15 million dollars to complete the funding for all 20 hose tenders? The capital plan budget that was approved on January 8th does not list any hose tenders to be put into the capital plan. As we all know, if it's not in the capital plan, it can't be done. So, we have to plan for it, put it in, and start looking for the money. But we're supposed to have 20 hose tenders, according to what we sent Judge Garrett Wong. Thank you very much for your attention, and I look forward to clarifications.”

Commissioner Cleaveland appreciated the comments of Ms. Wuerful and added that making sure that the entire city is covered for fire protection in an earthquake in a conflagration is a matter of utmost importance to all, including the entire Fire Commission. He asked Mr. Corso to expand on the community paramedicine training program. Mr. Corso explained that it is a training component that allows members who want to participate in the EMS-6 program and has been well received and educational for members who have gone through the training. He confirmed that over the last couple of years, the commissions' priority has been staffing and equipment. He expressed his appreciation for the cross-training of members.

Vice President Covington thanked Mr. Corso for his update and laying out the budget and budget challenges and thanked the members of the public that came forward and spoke. She asked if the \$420,000,000 deficit the city is expecting over the next two fiscal year, along with the fact that the mayor's office and the budget office has requested that we reduce our budget if we have a narrative that corresponds to us asking for many more positions so that we can convince the legislative branch of government of our needs. Mr. Corso confirmed that the Department has the justification for asking for the new positions. Vice President Covington stated that the Commissioners can be very helpful in lobbying efforts. She also confirmed that the EMS-6 rescue captain has been upgraded to a H-43 section chief. Vice President Covington confirmed that the department was allocated 6.7 million for engines and trucks and are in the process of ordering one additional truck and five additional engines which are smaller profiles than the traditional apparatus and that she has gotten good feedback from members of the Department regarding the new trucks and engines. She also confirmed that the five hose tenders they were allocated for are out to bid at OCA and that process closes in the next few weeks.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked about the reference to ADU's. Mr. Corso explained that there is dedicated staff of fire prevention employees that are allocated to dealing with a lot of the housing projects, which include ADU's.

President Nakajo thanked Mr. Corso for his comprehensive report. He commented that with an increase of 24 percent of incidents the Department responded to is a reinforcement that the Department's budgetary priorities are necessary.

**5. 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 8, 2020, including budget, academies, special events, communications and outreach to other government agencies and the public.

Chief Nicholson's report covered events and activities since the last meeting. She welcomed the new commissioners and stated how excited and happy the Department is to have them and they look forward to doing some great work together. She mentioned that they have hit the ground running on the budget process and they have spoken with the mayor's budget office and have given them a heads up on what the Department's needs are and what they are looking at in terms of efficiencies from within. She acknowledged the highly successful EMS-6 program and her meeting with the Director of the Homeless Department about getting some resources from him for EMS-6, as 80 percent of the call volume is medical, and of that, 35 percent is someone with an unknown address and the need of more resources and expanding EMS. She mentioned that they are asking for additional training during the budget talks, not just for EMS but for the suppression side and she acknowledged how important it is to have a comprehensive succession plan in place from the bottom to the top and it will include leadership in management training and officer training. She added that they will also be asking for the return of Incident Support Specialists that were removed from the Department about 15 years ago. She touched on the Opportunities for All program, the EMS Corps and restructuring of hiring incoming H-2 academy classes, including smaller class sizes. She suggested a new academy class possibly starting in July of 2020.

Chief Nicholson attended the following events: The Swearing in of Mayor Breed, Sheriff Miyamoto, D.A. Boudin, and the Fire Commissioners; the launch of the 2020 census, the Women's Day March, the MLK breakfast and that she is continuing with Station visits.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked her for her comprehensive report and commended her and the deputies for visiting all of the fire stations throughout the city and getting the input from rank and file as he thinks it is very important. He confirmed that the Department is working with the Human Rights Commission to get the funding for the EMS Corp program and that the chief has no doubt they will receive funding for it and she has the support of Supervisor Walton. He also confirmed that she will be asking for additional EMS personnel to staff the ambulances during the budget discussions as they are currently short on staff and overtime has been on the rise.

Vice President Covington thanked Chief Nicholson for her report and stated how wonderful it is that she continues to go to the houses and have conversations with the members. She also

agreed that smaller class sizes are wonderful and the reason she pushed for larger class sizes several years ago was because of the projected number of retirements. She confirmed that the new Station 49 is slated to open in the late fall of 2020. Vice President Covington confirmed that the new hose tenders will be located strategically throughout the city in neighborhoods where they would be most needed and that relief pieces that are currently in the fire stations will be moved to the old Station 49. She mentioned that she thinks that the EMS Corps program is a wonderful idea and was glad that women will be allowed to participate at a later date. She confirmed that Chief Nicholson is currently working with Michael Gibson, the gentleman who founded EMS Corps and she stated that she would like to see women in the program sooner rather than later because it's important to know if you are a young woman of color in the city, that there are jobs that are interesting and can lead to independence.

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, Homeland Security, Training within the Department.

Chief Velo's report covered the Month of December and January. He highlighted some of the incidents contained in the attached comprehensive reports.

<https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/dec%20admin.pdf>

<https://sf-fire.org/sites/default/files/COMMISSION/Fire%20Commission%20Support%20Documents%202015/jan%20admin.pdf>

Some of the highlights he is currently working on which include:

1. Continuing to work with the workgroups and committees which members are very engaged in the process of taking ownership and what the future of the Department looks like by working through the workgroups and committees
2. Finalizing the MOU with SPCA about emotional animal companions;
3. Searching for a replacement of Father Green, as he is retiring in June. He added that they are looking to expand the chaplaincy to be not just Catholic but other denominations
4. Preparing for a meeting with the chief from Contra Costa County whose department implemented a new program that has an overall health wellness check every year where they do a cancer screening, cardio screening and other things that SFFD is looking at implementing.
5. He announced that Special Projects Officer, Captain Brice Peoples started that position on Tuesday and has a full load of projects that were given to him.

He stated that the 126<sup>th</sup> academy has 48 recruits remaining and they are due to graduate on February 28, 2020, at the Scottish Right Auditorium at 9:00. He added that the 125<sup>th</sup> class completed their six-month testing and they will move to a second assignment and that

probation lasts one year. He touched on training drills that were conducted during the reporting periods, including ICS 300, which is a higher-level Incident Command system for members of the IMT.

Chief Velo stated that Chief Parks has been working on a project that the Mayor had emphasized, which is de-escalation training. He attended the Martin Luther King Day parade.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked him for his excellent report and asked him to expand on the meeting he had with Alameda Fire on their recruitment hiring process. Chef Velo mentioned that they are looking at it as a model to follow where they have panels of members in the department who will conduct the initial interview process and make recommendations to the Chief of the Department for the final interview, such as a filtering process. Commissioner Cleaveland stated he thinks Health Check is very important as it's part of prevention and keeping the members healthy is as important as it is to heal them once they're hurt. There was a discussion on the new Project Manager, de-escalation training and the Chief's residence.

Vice President Covington stated that she thinks that the de-escalation training is an excellent idea and a good way to keep the members of the Department safe and she acknowledged Mayor Breed, as she was a former Fire Commissioner, and is much more up on the learning curve than a lot of the legislators would be and she is happy that she supports this endeavor wholeheartedly. Vice President Covington confirmed that Los Bomberos started a new session of Spanish Language seminars. She stated that she hopes the Asian Firefighters help with an expansion of the program.

President Nakajo thanked Chief Velo for his comprehensive report. He also acknowledged Chief Wyrsh, Deputy Chief of Operations, who gives a comprehensive exposure on the operations aspect of the department at the first meeting of the month. He also mentioned members of the department that have contributed to the admin report, including Chief Sato, Section Chief Nicholas Pang, Chief Ali, Captain Arteseros; Firefighter Keith Baraca, Chief Parks, Captain Cavallini, Chief Tong, Captain Neuneker; Mary Ann Poon and Lucy Chiu of Human Resources, Chief Dewitt from Support Services, Olivia Scanlon, Lt. Baxter, Chief Cochran Chief Postel, and Captain Serrano and stated he appreciates all of the work they put in.

There was no public comment.

#### **6. COMMISSION REPORT *[Discussion]***

Report on Commission activities since last meeting on January 8, 2020.

Vice President Covington stated that she attended the swearing-in of the two new Commissioners as well as the reappointment of President Nakajo.

President Nakajo thanked Vice President Covington for her support and attendance and welcomed Commissioners Feinstein and Rodriguez and thanked Commissioner Cleaveland as well. He thanked Mayor Breed for reappointing him to continue the work that they are doing within the Department and he stated he is grateful for that opportunity. He mentioned that he attended the Census Gala Lunch with Chief Nicholson as well as the general meeting of the

Asian firefighters that were preparing for the Chinatown parade scheduled for February 8, 2020.

President Nakajo took the opportunity to express wholeheartedly the appreciation of all the hard work and dedication to Commissioner Michael Hardeman who served on the commission and the city for so long in terms of his earnest endeavors of really being a true fan and lover of what the Department does in terms of public services. He also extended his appreciation to Commissioner Joseph Alioto Veronese for his contribution to the Department as well.

There was no Public Comment.

**7. FIRE COMMISSION ELECTION OF OFFICERS [Discussion and possible action]**

a. Nomination and election of Commission President.

President Nakajo nominated Commissioner Covington for Commission President. Commissioner Cleaveland seconded and the nomination for Commission President was unanimously approved.

b. Nomination and election of Commission Vice-President.

Commissioner Cleaveland nominated Commissioner Feinstein for Commission Vice President. Vice President Feinstein seconded and the nomination for Commission Vice President was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Feinstein thanked her fellow Commissioners for their confidence in her and added that she feels it's a real honor to be able to serve in this capacity. She stated that she hopes she will be able to bring her experience and work with her fellow commissioners to help bring the Department along and that members of the Department have her gratitude.

President Covington welcomed Vice President Feinstein and thanked her for taking on the responsibility and stated she knows that she will do a super-duper job.

There was no public comment.

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

Discussion regarding agenda for the next and future regular meetings.

- Budget
- Drone
- Grant writer
- Certificates for Hardeman and Veronese.

**9. ADJOURNMENT** President Nakajo adjourned the meeting at 6:58 p.m. in the memory of Peter McElmury for his service to the city with the NERT program.