

**FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

**Wednesday, October 14, 2020 – 9:00 a.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=36840

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

Commission President	Francee Covington	Present
Commission Vice President	Katherine Feinstein	Present
Commissioner	Stephen Nakajo	Present
Commissioner	Ken Cleaveland	Present
Commissioner	Tony Rodriguez	Present
Chief of Department	Jeanine Nicholson	Present.
Victor Wyrsh	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	
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 September 23, 2020.

Commissioner Cleaveland moved to approve and Vice President Feinstein Seconded. The motion was unanimous. There was no public comment.

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 August 26, 2020, 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 September 23, 2020. She sadly announced the accidental death of Firefighter/Paramedic Jason Cortez who tragically died during a training exercise on October 7, 2020. She apologized for not being her usual upbeat self and stated they are in the middle of planning a vigil and a funeral for Brother Cortez. She stated that everything else in her report can wait for another two weeks as they are focused on Jason's wife, Patty, his sons Jackson and Grayson, his father Gil and stepmother Nelly, his brother Greg, and his mother Sonia. She also acknowledged all the members who have stepped up to help plan and organize the vigil and funeral services, including Chief Wyrsh, Chief Velo, Chief DeWitt, Chief Arteseros, Local 798, Pat Rabbit, Ian Crispin, Jim O'Connell, and other city agencies. She also mentioned that Floyd Rollins picked up the family without hesitation following the accident as well as Chief Johnson of the Airport who stepped up and took care of the family who arrived at the airport and for the firefighters, police officers who escorted them to see Jason and escorted them all over town with the utmost respect. She thanked Chief Tong for managing all the emotional members at Station 49...

President Covington thanked Chief Nicholson for mentioning all the people who are banding together to make sure that the member of the Department is given due respect and honor and for everyone that is taking care of the family.

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, Homeland Security, and Airport Division.

Chief Wyrsh's Operation report for September 2020 included one greater alarm which was a third alarm at 173 Shipley. He stated there were no injuries and that Chief Bryan Rubenstein was the commanding officer at that fire. He acknowledged all the members who are involved in the mutual aid as well as the members that backfilled those positions in the City. He mentioned that there were seven surf rescues, 10 bay rescues, two cliff rescues, and a high angle rescue for the reporting period.

Chief Wyrsh stated that his paper report includes the EMS Division; PIO Jonathan Baxter who has been doing an incredible number of interviews and keeping the public informed; Fire Prevention and Investigations Bureau; Airport Division and Homeland Security.

He read the following letter written by the captains at Station 3: "Members of the SFFD, on behalf of everyone at Station 3, we wanted to take a moment to thank all of you who have been there for us as we deal with the loss of our brother, Jason Cortez. Those of you who showed up at SFGH, companies that lined the procession from the hospital to the medical examiner's office, the members that came to Station 3 Wednesday night to fill in for regular members so

they could go home and process what had happened that day, the administration and Local 798 have been exceedingly supportive. All the stations that have volunteered to cook for 3, and down to all the individual members who have reached out to the station and the 3 members individually, we thank you for your sentiments, support, and effort. As we all know, there is more to come. And Patty, Jackson, Grayson, Gil, Nelly, Sonia, and Greg will need support from all of us going forward, so please keep Jason's family in your thoughts and prayers. And we thank you all for being there for us in this incredibly trying time. Sincerely, Captains Royale and Cordero."

Commissioner Rodriguez stated his condolences in the death of FF/Paramedic Cortez. He suggested that at the conclusion of arson investigations, that the reports be shared with the Commission. He also confirmed that all fires involving homeless encampments are investigated by the Arson Division to make sure that it is not foul play. He also received clarification on open and closed fire alarms and confirmed that businesses need permits to construct parklets/outdoor dining hubs and DPW is the custodian of those permits.

Commissioner Cleaveland expressed how shocked and saddened he was by the loss of Jason Cortez and that it brings to mind how important each of the members of the Fire Department is to each other as well as to the public at large and he expressed his condolences to the family and the personnel involved in the horrific accident and wished them a speedy recovery from the tragedy as best they can. He confirmed that the junior fire marshal program is headed by PIO Jonathan Baxter. He also requested that the arson reports be shared with the commission when the investigation is completed and he confirmed that the Fire Department does not charge fees for the permits which allow for parklets, although they do track their time and keep a running list of all the hours they spend on Shared Spaces, Slow Streets, etc., everything with the COVID emergency response the city is handling. . Chief Nicholson added that Mark Corso does apply for 75 percent reimbursement of COVID related activities that the department performs and since the reopening of the economy, Chief DeCossio and his crews' are working overtime to get this stuff done and work has ramped up even more because of shared spaces and slow streets and that we need to be mindful that we all support one another and support small businesses. She mentioned that the City is waiving some of those fees because these businesses are hurting, and we want them to get back on their feet.

Commissioner Nakajo extended his deepest condolences to Jason Cortez's family, to the members of Station 3, and to the general membership of the Department at this time of this tragic accident. He confirmed that Lt. Baxter received the Firehouse Magazine's Thomas Carr Community services award for 2019 and is in recognition of his outstanding work in public education outreach and social media. He confirmed that transport to certain hospitals usually depends on where the patient is located. Commissioner Nakajo also confirmed that DPW has issued approximately 700 permits for parklets and it is the Fire Department's responsibility to ensure there is reasonable access to buildings and structures and there is talk of expanding the program.

Vice President Feinstein expressed her heartfelt condolences to the Cortez family, and she appreciates all the effort that is going in to honor him for his service and commemorate him

appropriately and safely. She confirmed that the subject of Conservatorship will be addressed at the November 10th meeting under the presentation from EMS-6 and Chief Simon Pang.

There was no public comment.

6. PRESENTATION FROM LOS BOMBEROS DE SAN FRANCISCO AN SFFD EMPLOYEE GROUP [Discussion]

Mariano Elias, President of Los Bomberos de San Francisco to provide an overview of their SFFD employee organization.

Lt. Robert Lopez presented and introduced himself and stated that Mariano Elias was unable to attend the meeting as he was taking a class. He stated that he is currently a lieutenant for the Fire Department and works at 9-1-1- dispatch and he received the call for Jason Cortez's accident when it first came in. He added that Los Bomberos started in the 1980s and their primary objective is to have more inclusions for the Latino Hispanic members into the Fire Department although any member can join and that their foundation is based on recruitment, promotion, and retention with about 200 members. They are currently offering a Listos class online, which helps the Latino Hispanic community help themselves and assist the Fire Department in any natural disasters, such as earthquakes, fires, or floods. He acknowledged Erica Arteseros for making the class successful. He added that they also have a Mission High School program that teaches introduction to fire science for students. He talked about their trips to Nicaragua where they bring equipment donated by the Department and help train their members of the Fire Department. He added they assist other employee groups at Career Day and the Toy Program.

President Covington thanked him for his presentation and confirmed that the Department has helped them tremendously by donating equipment the SFFD can no longer use, such as turnouts, chainsaws, and other equipment.

Commissioner Rodriguez thanked Lt. Lopez for his presentation and stated it's important to note that anybody is invited to join, but it's nice to see where young adults or young kids can see programs that they can identify with for their future and he commended him on that. He confirmed that the recruitment that they do is mostly through FF Keith Baraka at certain events such as Carnival.

Commissioner Cleaveland thanked Lt. Lopez for his report, and he thinks Los Bomberos has been one of the most effective employee groups and commended him and all the members for their good work.

Commissioner Nakajo thanked Lt. Lopez for his report and extended his pride and gratitude to Los Bomberos for their work and he appreciated very much that Lt. Lopez talked about their mission statement and their philosophy of giving back to the community. He confirmed that the Spanish class that they were sponsoring is no longer available as the instructor was laid off from that program.

Vice President Feinstein echoed what everybody else has said and thanked him for being a leader in the organization and she believes that the department needs to look like a community and be part of the community and she appreciates the effort that they are making. She added

that to whatever extent the commissioners can do to support him, his organization, and the members of the organization, they are there to help.

President Covington thanked Lt. Lopez for attending the meeting and she appreciated him making the effort in these tragic situations and she knows it took a lot for him to be here and knowing the member who passed away last week was an active member of Los Bomberos. She added that it's important for people to hear Lt. Lopez's story, coming into the Department at age 30, and using it as an example of all the things that are possible in the world, that there are so many paths that people can take to be successful in their lives, and to be self-sufficient and admired in their careers.

7. RESOLUTION 2020-02 [Discussion and possible action]

Discussion and possible action regarding proposed Resolution 2020-02, recommending that the Board of Supervisors authorize the San Francisco Fire Department to accept and expend Fiscal Year 2019 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program funding in the amount of \$636,363.64 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the purchase of mini-pumpers.

Mark Corso introduced the resolution and explained that mini-pumpers are smaller firefighting apparatus, that are used to access much smaller areas that a truck or an engine may not be easy to access and they are used quite a bit in wildland response, but also, there are areas of the city where these vehicles could be quite useful. He added that the 4 new mini pumpers will be replacing the four existing pieces of equipment per the grant terms and he added they are very fortunate that they were allocated the funding. He introduced grant writer Shiloh Kaho who has been a great asset to the Department, and he thanked the Commission for their support of the grant writer position. Shiloh Kaho thanked Mark for the great introduction and stated she was honored to have the opportunity to join the Department where she started in January. She stated that she is a native San Franciscan, and she is extremely appreciative of the work that is being done and the opportunity to be here to support that work in any way that she can.

The commissioners congratulated Shiloh Kaho on her appointment to the position of Grant Writer and told her to keep up the great work and they agreed that if you do not go after the funding, then you don't get the funding. Commissioner Cleaveland added that it's a position the Department has needed for some time and he sees and feels that she is going to be keenly successful as a grant writer for the Department, and he's very appreciative of her being on board.

Vice President Feinstein thanked Ms. Kaho for taking on the challenge and she thanked President Covington for being on the interview committee for this position.

President Covington highly recommended that the Fire Department should create a grants committee sooner rather than later.

Commissioner Cleaveland Moved to approve the Resolution. Commissioner Rodriguez seconded. The motion was unanimous.

8. COMMISSION REPORT [Discussion]

Report on Commission activities since last meeting on September 23, 2020.

The Commission had nothing to report.

There was no public comment.

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

Discussion regarding agenda for next and future Fire Commission meetings.

- Black firefighters Association update
- Conservatorship update
- EMS-6 presentation

10. ADJOURNMENT President Covington adjourned the meeting at 10:57 a.m. in honor of Firefighter/Paramedic Jason Cortez at 10:57 a.m. who has left us way too soon. She added that we know that being a firefighter is an inherently dangerous job. Family members know that, and our larger community knows this as well. But when it happens to one of our members, it impacts all of us. All our hearts hurt, and we wish the best for the family, the families of blood and the families of badges. He will be sorely missed.