

**CITY OF SAN RAFAEL FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE COMMISSION MEETING**

Minutes of the Regular Meeting
January 12, 2022

VIA ZOOM

Present:

Chair Steve Mizroch
Vice Chair Larry Luckham
Thomas Weathers
Ken Johnson
David Fonkalsrud, Alternate
Stan Burford, Alternate

Absent:

Nadine Atieh

Guests:

Fire Chief Darin White

Chair Mizroch called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

1. OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

None.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 8, 2021

Chair Mizroch stated he will rotate who takes minutes each month; he stated Commissioner Weathers has agreed to take these January minutes; Chair Mizroch corrected “highlights” to “chief’s report” in the minutes; Commissioner Luckham moved to approve; Commissioner Burford seconded; approved unanimously.

3. FIRE FOUNDATION

Chair Mizroch reported no crab feed this past year; but sent out fundraising letter; raised \$27,007 for the Fire Foundation; two large donations; total in account is about \$99,000.

4. HISTORIC SUBCOMMITTEE

Chair Mizroch had nothing to report.

5. CHAIR AND COMMISSION MEMBER REPORTS

Chair Mizroch caught COVID-19 in late December; he quarantined and is now fully recovered; he said being fully vaccinated really helped.

Commissioner Luckham is back from Mexico; he had an interesting experience; nothing in particular to add.

Commissioner Weathers inquired about the fire in the apartment building in New York; Chief White said the fire started by a faulty space heater; Commissioner Luckham noted that many deaths in these types of buildings come from smoke inhalation; Commissioner Fonkalsrud noted faulty prior alarms in that building.

Commissioner Johnson commented on the New York apartment fire; he also stated he drove through the Colorado fire when recently driving back to California; he said property insurance is hard to place right now; he said it is a difficult marketplace for property insurance; he shared the PG&E digital video safety series "7 Saturdays" and recommended it for the website to share with the community.

Commissioner Fonkalsrud shared an article from the S.F. Chronicle about a start-up company trying to use artificial intelligence to see wildfires starting by watching photos of open spaces; he noted there are many start-ups in the Bay Area and some may want to partner with a local fire department; he thought it could be interesting to partner with a start-up; he also asked about going on a ride-along with a fire truck; Chief White said he will look into it once post COVID-19; Commissioner Fonkalsrud asked to hear about COVID issues from the Department; Chair Mizroch noted fire lookouts are located and still used throughout the state; Chief White said there is a lookout in Mill Valley.

Commissioner Burford also caught COVID-19 in late December; he does not know who or how he caught the disease; he said he was masked and distancing and still caught the virus; he said he is getting back to normal.

6. FIRE CHIEF REPORT

Chief White reported 8-9 persons have tested positive in the Department; he said unfortunately they were in close contact with other employees which included unvaccinated as well as vaccinated persons; he said guidance will be coming about boosters; he said circumstances will dictate if infected persons must still come to work even if test positive or will go home to quarantine; he said it depends on if the person is in a critical position; he noted it creates different categories on how persons are treated; Chief White said he was meeting with the bargaining unit about returning to work with limited or no quarantining; he said masks are still required; he said one must wear an N-95 mask up to 10 days after infection; he said this is creating an administrative burden dealing with COVID-19 infections; he was not sure which strain is infecting SRFD members; he said we may be dealing with this until

mandated vaccination; he said United Airlines just had 3000 employees test positive, but there were no hospitalizations or deaths because UA mandated vaccines; he wants a consistent approach; he fears everybody testing positive but not being treated consistently depending on when tested positive; he noted 8-9 persons in SRFD infected at different times so some coming back to work already.

Commissioner Luckham acknowledged this creates an administrative nightmare; he said it also impacts patients attended to by SRFD who may or may not have been exposed; Chief White is worried about lawsuits from patients possibly exposed to COVID-19 by infected SRFD personnel; he is getting legal advice; Chief White does not know when this will end, but probably not until unvaccinated get vaccinated; Chief White wants SRFD personnel to take responsibility and get vaccinated; he noted that an unvaccinated firefighter just infected an officer who told unvaccinated to get vaccinated; Commissioner Luckham offered to help by meeting with unvaccinated personnel to discuss getting vaccinated; Commissioner Luckham said he is bothered by unvaccinated SRFD personnel; Chief White noted we all have been vaccinated since being kids; Chief White acknowledged religious reasons might preclude somebody from getting vaccinated; Chief White wants to set up a process to encourage vaccination and/or make the employee and public safe; he said we are not serving the public's interest if personnel are virus carriers; Chief White noted misinformation out there about COVID-19; Commissioner Luckham noted that firefighters are highly educated medical professionals and should be vaccinated.

Chair Mizroch asked if SRFD had adequate number of tests; Chief White said getting low but just received couple hundred of tests; Chief White just learned government incentivizing availability of test kits; he is discussing which type of tests to use moving forward.

Chief White discussed the December 11, 2021 graduation ceremony; he said it was standing room only and there was a recognition for a Captain and a Battalion Chief who was leaving to another fire department; Chief White said 7 persons graduated but 1 was injured so he was held back; Chief White said firefighters start their probationary period once they are hired so he can hold a person back without that person having to repeat the academy; Chief White is trying to upgrade the Battalion Chief position to Deputy Chief which would create opportunities for SRFD to hire from within; he said for initial Deputy Chief the Department will need to hire from outside the organization.

Chief White noted that the Station 54 and 55 renovations are underway and will probably take about 12 months to complete the work; he said Station 54 is co-located with Station 52; Chief White mentioned he met Chief Marcucci at a gathering and they talked for a few minutes; Chief White said Chief Marcucci served as Fire Chief for 30 years which is an usually long time; Chief White said he is trying to learn all the San Rafael Fire Chiefs dating back to the 1870s.

Chief White reported a grievance being filed over advertising for an interim vacancy for training officer; he held a competitive process instead of using seniority from within; he said Capt. Nicholas Giusti was hired; Commissioner Luckham said it would be hard to find anybody better qualified and that Captain Giusti is a good guy as a training officer; Chief White reported a rollover accident WB on I-580; the roof of the vehicle had to be cut off roof to get the person out; Chief White had nothing else to report.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Mizroch asked if there was anything further from anyone, and there being nothing further, adjourned the meeting at 5:04 p.m.

