

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

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting
May 11, 2022**

VIA ZOOM

Present:

Chair Larry Luckham
Vice Chair Nadine Atieh
David Fonkalsrud, Alternate
Stan Burford
Donna McCusker, Alternate
Fire Chief Darin White (by phone)

Absent:

Thomas Weathers
Ken Johnson

Chair Luckham called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m. after we resolved some technical problems with Zoom.

1. OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION -

With no members of the public present, Chair Luckham moved on to the minutes from last month.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – March 9, 2022

Move to approve: Stan Seconded: Ken Voice vote: approved unanimously

3. FIRE FOUNDATION – Commissioner McCusker reported that the Foundation arranged for the purchase of 18 bags of breakfast goods, one to each fire crew. The goods came from Andy's Market. Chief White to deliver. Chair Luckham said it was a very good idea and suggested that in the future it might be possible to have Noah's Bagels deliver to the stations.

4. HISTORIC SUBCOMMITTEE – Chair Luckham reported nothing to report.

5. CHAIR AND COMMISSION MEMBER REPORTS –

Vice Chair Atieh – Pointed out that our public safety personnel every day are going into places where they may not know the situations and expressed her hope that they are all masked, vaccinated and boosted. Chair Luckham pointed out that it seems that COVID is here to stay and may require protocols well into the future.

David Fonkalsrud – Reached out to the IJ and others to see if he could interest them in running something in appreciation of Dr. Mizroch's years on the Fire Commission. Hasn't had calls back. Wondered if we ever do proclamations by the Fire Commission. Chair

Luckham asked if he would be willing to make a draft. He would. Discussion followed around whether we have any sort of sample. Chief White pointed out that there was a proclamation presented to Dr. Mizroch at the last City Council that might serve as an example. Chair Luckham suggested that since the Council already presented a proclamation maybe what the Fire Commission should do is something more along the lines of a letter of appreciation. Commissioner Fonkalsrud will draft and circulate.

Stan Burford – Pointed out that he had talked to several members at the end of the Station 54 ground breaking and that they had mentioned how much they appreciated the breakfast packages. So, we hit a home run on that one.

He asked about the publication mailed to San Rafael households by Parks and Recreation, and suggested that this would be a good place to include information from the first responder community. Who would we contact about that? Stan would be willing to make the contact. Chair Luckham voiced that's a good idea and suggested that he contact Parks and Rec.

Donna McCusker – Good feedback from Commissioner Burford on the breakfast and will relate back to the Fire Foundation.

Larry Luckham – Started by asking how many were aware that wildland fire fighting is also done by private contractor. Some are. He then mentioned that he recently learned from an article in Firehouse Magazine of the death of a firefighter employed by a private contractor that he knew from previous experience. While the majority of wildland firefighting is done by the U. S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and municipal firefighters from places like San Rafael, private contractors are in the mix too. Some of those personnel are trying to get employment with USFS, BML, or other public fire agency. Others, including the owners of the company he had experience with are themselves retired from a public agency such as USFS. The company he had experience with was also very active in training firefighters in the use of prescribed fire. Most public fire departments don't have the capacity to run training programs specifically in the use of Rx fire. This company is part of a consortium including the USFS, BLM, Northern California Prescribed Fire Council, that runs 14 full days structured based on the national Incident Management System.

The other thing he tried to do was to share his desktop with a photo of a 1963 fire engine in the Czech Republic, which didn't work.

6. FIRE CHIEF REPORT –

Chief White commented that prescribed fire is coming back as a fire management tool and that it was used very well for centuries by native Americans. We are now recognizing the value of Rx fire and are adjusting from our 1910-20 thinking. More to follow in the next year or two.

He had some difficulties logging on with his computer so is connected by phone.

The Marin Wildfire Prevention Agency met in April to discuss core proposals for projects for our fiscal year 2022-2023 workplan. Maybe not an overreach but there were requests for added funding that would have significant impact on every agency in the county. Myself and others on the committee took a closer look at the requests and were able to scale it down to manageable numbers which will allow for more local projects. We are also looking at grant funding to help. An effort is also being made to minimize the cost impact of compliance with CEQA. The idea being to make more funds available for things like home hardening, the use of AmeriCorps, chipper programs, and public education. After several reviews, the final plan will go to the board of directors on May 19. More to follow.

Covid is on the rise primarily on the East Coast. This seems to be an Omicron variant

A draft of our 2022 workplan is available and there's an officers meeting tomorrow to continue to work on it and get to a finished product. There will probably be some adjustments as far as what projects need funding and maybe what might not need to be done this year. Among the projects are things like vegetation management using non-mechanical methods like goats. Should we own our own goats? Another is a demonstration of the sort of landscaping around a home that people could come and look at to get ideas. Engine companies were recently assigned to survey their areas, particularly along evacuation routes for vegetation issues like canopies that might become problems in the event of evacuation. The idea is that evacuation may be avoided if there is good vegetation management in the first place. We would still plan for and be prepared to evacuate if needed but the best situation is if evacuation can be avoided. We had a recent incident in the San Rafael hills in which the crews were able to get to the fire quickly and knock it down because of some prior vegetation management work. More to follow.

In answer to a question from Luckham, the Chief says the workplan should be available on the MWPA website.

On COVID, the latest is that there seems to be another wave of another variant of a variant sweeping mostly the East Coast primarily New York but with rates similar to when the pandemic first started. These are variants of Omicron and we are also seeing spreads throughout the Bay Area. He is seeing cases not just at work but also in private life. The large gatherings are a risk. So far, this variant doesn't seem as deadly as prior variants. A concern is people getting Covid weary and Covid wary. The hope is that science will get ahead of Covid at some point.

Chief White talked about delivering the breakfast baskets with Councilmember Kertz to stations and that the crews were very appreciative. The Chief got to taste some of the maple bacon and rates it excellent. Thanks to the Fire Foundation. Most Oakland stations have three refrigerators, one for each crew. Our new stations only have two. Maybe next time some frozen goods.

The Chief also reported on the groundbreaking ceremonies at Stations 54 & 55. This is the first time he's participated in a groundbreaking and points out that for a community to

come together to completely replace their public safety facilities is exceptional and reflects the efforts of the many who have worked to make it happen over the years.

Chief White also reported on the mission undertaken by FF/PM Angel Landaverde, several other members of SRFD, Central Marin, and British Columbia Fire to Guatemala to train bomberos there.

Chair Luckham commented on the time in 2016 when he joined in with the team and deployed to Peru and Guatemala for a month. It was an extraordinary experience. The training center in Guatemala is a super facility but other than that they work with very little. They put the team up in a hotel in the old colonial city of Antigua an hour or so drive from the training facility and provided a van with an armed guard to ferry us to and from work each day.

Chair Luckham asked if anyone had more to add and there being none, adjourned the meeting at 4:51 p.m.

