

# CITY OF SAN RAFAEL FIRE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

February 8, 2023 at 4:00 p.m.

Meeting Via Zoom

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chair Luckham.

**Present:** Chair Larry Luckham, Vice Chair Nadine Hade, Commissioner Thomas Weathers, Commissioner Stan Burford, Commissioner Donna McCusker, Commissioner David Fonkalsrud

**Staff:** Chief Darin White, Thomas Wong

## 1. Open Time for Public Expression

- a. No public comments

## 2. Approval of Minutes

- a. Commissioner McCusker moved to adopt the minutes of the January Fire Commission meeting with Commissioner Hade seconding the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously with Commissioner Fonkalsrud abstaining.

## 3. Fire Foundation Update

- a. Commissioner McCusker reported that the Fire Foundation is considering a scholarship for high school students to promote careers in firefighting. She also mentioned that SRFF is considering re-starting the crab feed fundraiser this year.

## 4. Historic Subcommittee Update

- a. No update

## 5. Commissioners' Reports

- a. Vice Chair Hade reported that while she has left her employment role with the city, she will continue to serve on the Fire Commission.
- b. Commissioner Weathers: no report
- c. Commissioner Fonkalsrud noted the recent Marin IJ editorial "[Mobile crisis unit is right move as San Rafael addresses emergency issues](#)" and applauded the SRFD for this program aimed at addressing the root causes of many 911 calls. He also offered to help with media engagement for the opening of Station 55.
- d. Commissioner Burford, despite some Zoom technical issues, shared an article on skid-mounted rigs, which slip into the bed of pickup trucks, and he asked about their use. He provided information regarding "small" trucks for tight spaces and a solution through an equipment sled that can be quickly inserted into a regular multi-purpose pickups when needed: <https://www.kimtekresearch.com/products/firelite-transport-160-gallons/>.

- e. Commissioner McCusker: no report other than the Fire Foundation report noted above
- f. Chair Luckham started a discussion about the use of 14" gas powered saws that all teams carry. Given the large size and weight of this equipment, battery powered 6" saws could be an alternative and enable teams to move more quickly. Chief White is aware of these lighter tools, but is not aware of service testing of their capabilities, noting that blade size is an important consideration. Chair Luckham offered his assistance in reviewing demos and testing solutions.

Chair Luckham mentioned that there was an oil sheen in the canal behind his house which a neighbor said was caused by a tug that had tipped. Crews from Station 52 responded to the ensuing smell, and shortly thereafter the water was clean.

## 6. Fire Chief's Report

- a. Chief White thanked Chair Luckham for his passion and involvement
- b. **Fire Commission Meetings:** Chief White will share a document and continue to investigate policies regarding face-to-face vs. virtual attendance of Fire Commission meetings. It may be difficult to continue the pre-COVID practice of rotating the FC meeting to different stations, as there is not A/V equipment in all stations to facilitate Zoom calls and recordings. Options are the PSC or Station 52. Commissioners Hade, Weathers and Burford prefer the PSC location.
- c. **MWPA:** the Ops committee met this morning. Recent rains are the most since 1861 in a similar period of time, relieving some drought severity. Some damage from the rains is being investigated. The MWPA is partnering with Willow Labs as a part of the defensible space initiative and the assessment of properties within the WUI.
- d. **COVID:** has moved from pandemic to endemic. While new variants are not as deadly, they spread easily. State and then federal changes to COVID policies may have some impacts on operations. There have been 44,000 confirmed cases of COVID in Marin County, with 88 in last 10 days. This includes 273 total fatalities and 16 hospitalizations after the first case on March 8, 2020. Some schools may go back to mask mandates given recent breakouts.
- e. **Station Renovations:** Station 55 is scheduled for opening on Feb. 20 and Station 54 in the March-April timeframe.
- f. **Recent Storms:** Given the amount of rain, flooding in San Rafael was minimal. While there were some power outages, PG&E restored power quickly.
- g. **Promotional and Awards Ceremony:** A very impressive SRPD ceremony was held at City Hall, and SRFD is looking to move department ceremonies there as well.
- h. **Recruitment:** SRFD has five recruits who will go through fire academy in next few weeks.

## 7. Final Comments

- a. Commissioner Weathers noted the large homeless population at Albert Park and asked if the city is taking any actions. Chief White noted the recent closure of the homeless support center, and that Rangers patrol open space areas, where homeless

encampments could exist, to ensure fire safety. Commissioner Hade noted a court decision that limits actions the city can take. Commissioner Luckham noted that current law requires 48 hours notice for actions, and that homeless camps have been a consistent source of fires.

Meeting adjourned at 5:06 pm

