



Meeting Minutes
San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department
Board of Directors Regular Meeting
Tuesday, April 29, 2025 – 5:30 P.M.
Hybrid Remote Teleconference Meeting
2121 S. El Camino Real, Building D, San Mateo

1. OPENING

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 p.m. by Board Chair Mates

1.1. Call to Order & Determination of a Quorum

1.2. Pledge of Allegiance

1.3. Roll Call

Board Members Present: Newsom, Jimenez, Mates

Board Members Absent: None

2. AGENDA CHANGES

None

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

4. PRESENTATIONS

Item 4.1 Assembly Bill 2561 Public Hearing on Vacancies and Recruitment and Retention Efforts

Presented by Human Resources Director Aracelia Esparza. The presentation focused on Assembly Bill 2561, which requires an annual workforce report before budget approval and included an overview of staffing, recruitment, and retention trends. As of February 24, 2025, the department maintained a 4.9% vacancy rate, later reduced to 3.7% as of April 1, well below the 20% threshold requiring state notification. The department filled 15 positions in 2024 and currently has 8 vacancies, primarily in Operations, Community Risk Reduction, and Administration.

It was noted that internal-only recruitments are filled more quickly (averaging 60 days) than those open to external candidates (130 days). The recruitment process was summarized, and recent challenges were highlighted, including limited HR staff, difficulty recruiting for specialized positions, and delays in hiring steps. The HR team proposed solutions such as increasing HR staffing, streamlining hiring processes, targeting hard-to-fill roles, building external partnerships, and launching a formal employee recognition program. These initiatives are expected to improve both recruitment and retention, which has already been strong—2024 saw no involuntary separations, with a 33% turnover rate attributed largely to retirements and voluntary departures for personal or career reasons.

Board members praised the department's performance and supported the proposed efforts. Questions

were raised regarding the need for outside consultants, but staff indicated most initiatives could be managed in-house with some benchmarking and employee feedback.

Board Chair Mates asked if there was any public comment on this item, which there were none.

5. CONSENT

Board Chair Mates asked if there was any public comment on this item, which there was not. Board Member Jimenez moved to approve the Consent calendar; Vice Chair Newsom seconded. The Board Secretary took a roll call vote, and the Consent calendar items were approved 3-0.

6. NEW BUSINESS

Item 6.1 Introduce Ordinance No. 2025-01, updating the San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department Fire Code – 1st Public Hearing

Fire Marshal Workman provided a brief overview of the staff report for approval. Ordinance No. 2025-01, proposed updates to the San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department's Fire Code. This update incorporates new Local Responsibility Area (LRA) fire hazard severity zone maps released by the California State Fire Marshal in February. The ordinance also modifies existing language to include "moderate" fire severity zones in areas affected, specifically within San Mateo and Belmont.

Chair Mates asked if there was any public comment on this item, which there were none. Vice Chair Newsom moved to adopt the resolution and to move forward with a second reading; Board Member Jimenez seconded. The Board Secretary took a roll call vote, and the resolution was approved 3-0.

Items 6.2 Introduce Ordinance No. 2025-02, adopting the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) fire hazard severity zone map as recommended by the California State Fire Marshal – 1st Public Hearing

The second item, Ordinance No. 2025-02, was closely related and involved formal adoption of the new LRA Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map. General Counsel Schwarz clarified that while both items were linked and shared a staff report, they are separate ordinances due to legal requirements. The prior ordinance updated the code language, while this ordinance adopts the map itself. A minor typographical error was noted in the ordinance regarding the date of the second reading—it will occur at the next board meeting on May 21, 2025, not April 29. The department may choose to designate areas within jurisdiction with higher—but not lower—severity levels than those recommended by the state.

Chair Mates asked if there was any public comment on this item, which there were none. Vice Chair Newsom moved to adopt the resolution and to move forward with a second reading; Board Member Jimenez seconded. The Board Secretary took a roll call vote, and the resolution was approved 3-0.

Item 6.3 Receive a preview and provide feedback on the proposed fiscal year 2025-26 budget.

Budget Manager Halcon provided a PowerPoint presentation, and key points included:

- General Fund Overview:
 - Proposed revenues: \$52.8 million (7.4% increase)
 - Proposed expenditures: \$51.9 million (6.1% increase)
 - Member agency contributions increasing by 8%
 - Ending projected fund balance: \$1.5 million
 - Moving toward reserve policy target of \$6.1 million
- Fire Protection & Life Safety Fund:
 - Proposed revenues: \$3.6 million (6.5% increase)

- Proposed expenditures: \$3.8 million (5% increase)
- New costs include the HR/Finance contract and office space lease
- Starting balance: \$1 million; projected to end at \$800,000
- One fire inspector position will remain unfunded to maintain a balanced budget; may be funded once revenue projections improve
- Vehicle & Equipment Replacement Fund:
 - Revenues from internal collections (General Fund + Life Safety Fund)
 - Revenues remain flat to avoid strain on operations
 - Fund balance expected to grow to \$6 million over several years
 - Ensures capacity to purchase multiple fire trucks and engines in future years

Board members raised questions regarding the unfunded fire inspector position, asking why fee increases weren't used to cover the role. Staff clarified that fees were recently adjusted, but conservative revenue projections and timing are factors in holding off on filling the position. It remains authorized and can be reactivated if service demands increase. Additional discussion focused on the sustainability of the proposed 8% increase in member agency contributions, which is significantly higher than the historical 3–4.5%. Staff acknowledged this concern, attributing the increase to labor negotiations and regional salary competition, and emphasized the importance of long-term planning. The model remains one of the most cost-effective in the region, and future budget strategies may require more creative approaches to ensure financial stability.

Staff will incorporate board feedback into the proposed FY 2025–26 budget and return in May with the final draft for review and potential approval. No formal action was taken at this meeting, as the item was informational and intended to preview the upcoming budget. Continued communication with member agencies will take place to ensure alignment ahead of the final budget presentation.

7. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice Chair Newsom reported on the April 16 County Department of Emergency Services JPA meeting, highlighting concerns about reduced County funding for Hazmat services, with over a third of the budget potentially unfunded next fiscal year. The aging Hazmat truck, now over 20 years old, is due for replacement, but procurement delays could push delivery up to five years, with uncertainty around potential state requirements for an electric vehicle. New state staffing guidelines may require eight full-time personnel on call, increasing costs if mandated. Although Hazmat falls under County jurisdiction, Newsom stressed its direct impact on the department. The Fire Chief responded that the County is responsible for the truck's replacement and noted that staffing changes are not yet mandated; if they are, associated costs would be borne by the County. He added that Battalion Chief Jeff Thorne is well-prepared to manage these issues.

Vice Chair Newsom thanked the department for its participation in two recent events: the Red Cross Sound the Alarm event and the County Wildfire Expo. Both were reportedly successful and well-received by the community.

Fire Chief provided a verbal update. Some highlights include:

- We participated in the Sound the Alarm event, with Engine 24 representing the department. Participation in events like the San Bruno town hall and the County Expo was also acknowledged.
- Deputy Chiefs Agresti and Mackintosh were introduced as they settle into their new roles.
- Firefighter Tim Galvan was promoted to Fire Captain.
- Three new firefighters have joined the department and are performing well.

- Thirteen new CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) members graduated last week.
- Departmental statistics are tracking at typical levels for the time of year.
- A 1997 Hi-Tech fire truck and a 2001 Hi-Tech Spartan fire engine were donated to the Bomberos de Guatemala. The donation coincided with the department's acquisition of new ladder trucks and addressed challenges sourcing parts for older apparatus. It was noted that California regulations make maintaining older equipment increasingly difficult. The donated vehicles will be transported to Guatemala via Long Beach.
 - The Board acknowledged the value of this international donation and suggested it receive more visibility through the department's social media channels once officially announced.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT ON CLOSED SESSION ITEMS

None

9. CLOSED SESSION

The Fire Board adjourned to Closed Session at 6:16 p.m. General Counsel Schwarz reported out from Closed Session, indicating that a written report describing any reportable action will be prepared and will be included in the meeting packet for the next Board meeting.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The Board meeting was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.