



Meeting Minutes

San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department Board of Directors Regular Meeting Wednesday, January 12, 2022 – 4:00 P.M. Zoom Video Teleconference

1. OPENING

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm by Board Chair Goethals.

1.3. Roll Call

Board Members Present: Goethals, Lieberman & Awasthi

Board Members Absent: None

2. CLOSED SESSION

The Fire Board went into Closed Session at 4:02 p.m.

3. RETURN FROM CLOSED SESSION

Legal Counsel Ross reported that the Board adjourned from Open Session at 4:02 p.m., reconvening in Closed Session at 4:03 p.m. to consider Agenda Item No. 2.1. The Board concluded Closed Session at 4:12 p.m. and reconvened into Open Session.

With respect to Closed Session Agenda Item No. 2.1., there was reportable action in that Board Chair Goethals announced that the Board decided to make the permanent Fire Chief Kent Thrasher. All Board members expressed their appreciation for Thrasher's time as Interim and look forward to working with him.

4. AGENDA CHANGES

Chief Thrasher requested to move Agenda Item No. 9.1.2 "Community Risk Reduction Division Update" before Agenda Item No. 9.1.1 "Fire Chief Update".

5. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Board Chair Goethals provided a Resolution expressing gratitude for retired Battalion Chief Bill Euchner on his years of distinguished fire service.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Brian Kelly commented on the selection of Fire Chief Thrasher. He stated that leadership is a critical component of any successful fire department which starts at the top. It involves integrity and honesty and a passion of service to community we serve. Kent fills all those checkboxes. He works collaboratively and has done a great job establishing himself in the leadership role. Brian also congratulated Battalion Chief Euchner on his retirement.

7. CONSENT

Board Member Lieberman commented on Agenda Item No. 7.4 “Consideration of a resolution authorizing Continued Use of Remotely Teleconferenced Meetings”. Moving forward, he would like to have this item be addressed as New Business each time so we can explicitly acknowledge it. Approved by Board Chair Goethals and seconded by Board Member Awasthi.

The Acting Board Secretary took a roll call vote, and the Consent calendar items were approved 3-0.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Item 8.1 - Consider the options regarding the Fire Chief Position.

As presented and reported in Closed Session, Interim Chief Thrasher was appointed to the role of Fire Chief. Board Chair Goethals asked if there was any public comment on this item, which there were none. Board Member Lieberman made a motion to adopt the resolution, which was seconded by Board Member Awasthi. The Acting Board Secretary took a roll call vote, and the resolution was approved 3-0.

Item 8.2 - Adopt a resolution approving the State Mandated Fire Inspections Compliance Report.

Fire Marshal Marshall provided an overview of our annual state mandated fire inspections of all public and private schools, apartments, condominiums, hotels and motels within our jurisdiction. He reported this our 3rd year in a row that we were able to achieve 100% compliance with the state mandates. This is a team effort by our engine companies and fire inspectors that complete the inspections.

Board Chair Goethals asked if there was any public comment on this item, which there were one. Public Comment – Drew asked how we find apartments or buildings that are not declared? Fire Marshal Marshall stated this is something we dedicate quite a bit of time to. We are involved with all new construction from the construction outset and before plans are submitted to the city. Once the construction is done, it’s moved in queues and become permanent. Other ones can be found through observation while inspecting in areas, by checking the County tax records, and by fire response incidents.

Board Member Awasthi made a motion to adopt the resolution, which was seconded by Board Member Lieberman. The Acting Board Secretary took a roll call vote, and the resolution was approved 3-0.

Item 8.3 – Receive the 2021-22 Mid-Year Budget Update and adopt a resolution approving an appropriation of \$2.1 million in mutual aid deployment reimbursement revenue and \$0.3 million in available fund balance in the General Fund.

Budget Analyst Renee Halcon provided a Power Point presentation on the 2021-22 mid-year budget update for the general fund and the Fire Protection & Life Safety fund. Beginning with the general fund, it started the year with a \$1.5 million fund balance. The adjusted budget assumes \$43 million in revenues and \$43.1 million in expenditures. Based on the financial data through November 2021, total revenues through the remainder of the fiscal year are projected to be \$45.1 million, which is approximately \$2.1 million higher than anticipated. This is largely due to the reimbursements from mutual aid deployments earlier in the fiscal year. Total expenditures are projected to be \$45.4 million through the remainder of the fiscal year which is approximately \$2.3 million higher than we anticipated. This is also largely due to the deployments and the overtime that was needed to meet minimum staffing requirements. Based on the current year-end estimate for revenues and expenditures, the general fund is projected to end the fiscal year with a balance of approximately \$1.2 million. As we navigate through these times of new Covid variants, there have been a significant number of individuals out due to covid, and overtime is anticipated to increase. We will continue to monitor this closely and are also looking into ways to receive federal relief for these overtime costs.

Fire Protection & Life Safety fund began the year with \$226,000 in fund balance. The adjusted budget assumes \$2.6 million in revenues and \$2.8 million in expenditures. Based on the financial data gathered through November of 2021, total revenues are projected to end the year at \$2.3 million, which is approximately \$300,000 lower than anticipated. This is primarily due to the decrease in fire inspections for construction permits and multi-residential units. Total expenditures are projected to end the year at \$2.6 million which is approximately \$200,000 lower than anticipated. This is largely due to the vacancy savings within this fund. Based on the current year-end estimate for this fund, there is projected to be a loss of \$245,000. This would decrease the fund balance to approximately negative \$20,000. If this does happen, the general fund would then be required to provide a temporary loan at the end of the fiscal year to bring this fund back to \$0.

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

Board Member Awasthi made a motion to adopt the resolution, which was seconded by Board Chair Goethals. The Acting Board Secretary took a roll call vote, and the resolution was approved 3-0.

Item 8.4 – Adopt a resolution to approve job classification for the position of Systems Analyst I/II.

Fire Chief Kent Thrasher provided a brief overview for the recommendation to approve the job classification of a Systems Analyst I/II. Through an internal assessment, we have identified that other fire agencies our size provide support through positions specifically created for internal Informational Technology (IT) needs. This topic has been discussed with the IT Managers of Belmont, Foster City, and San Mateo and they agree that SMC Fire needs an internal IT position. We will continue the agreement with City of Foster City for hardware and network support. With the elimination of contracts, a per diem position and overtime savings, this position will be cost neutral.

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

Board Member Lieberman provided feedback stating that when items are budget neutral or close to it, it's almost always better to have someone on staff rather than relying on vendors for many reasons. He also stated that this is a great move to help improve things to a much greater extent.

Board Member Liberman made a motion to adopt the resolution, which was seconded by Board Chair Goethals. The Acting Board Secretary took a roll call vote, and the resolution was approved 3-0.

Item 8.5 – Fire Board discussion regarding a retreat to discuss the Department's current state, long-term goals, organizational changes.

Board Chair Goethals started the discussion by stating this is a great idea and opportunity to look back at what has worked, minor tweaks that were made, and to look forward putting SMC Fire on a path for long-term sustainability. Fire Chief Thrasher provided further overview of the implementation plan to include minor and major changes to the organization. A few of the major changes includes restructuring of the Training Division, reorganizing the current command staff org chart, enhancing the functionality of administration which includes the addition of a Systems Analyst, and implementing an overtime reduction plan. Lastly, something we should do on a regular basis, review the current JPA Agreement. Staff has identified minor changes and would like Fire Board insights as well. The retreat will take place in late February or early March. Board briefly discussed their availability. Legal Counsel will be included for the discussion of the JPA Agreement.

Board Member Awasthi shared that today the Foster City Council had their Annual Policy Summit, and she was appointed as the JPA Fire Liaison again.

9. REPORTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Interim Division Chief/Fire Marshal Marshall provided the following CRR update:

- Major focus on the last few months was working to make sure we continue to complete 100% of our annual state mandated fire inspections.
- OES staff has completed the periodic update of the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. This involved meeting with stakeholders of the three cities including working with the County to complete the annexes. After the Board of Supervisors and three cities vote on the plan, it goes to FEMA and the State. As of last week, this went through the final step for approval, and we now have a viable Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- A couple years ago, we were awarded the FP&S Grant to help us reduce our wildfire exposure through NFPA Firewise training workshops for community groups. There were timing delays due to Covid and we were offered an extension to the grant deadline. Several weeks ago, we were able to final offer a training which was held at San Mateo City Hall. The presentation included guest speakers and had about 50 residents in attendance. We are now preparing for the second workshop which will target a specific homeowner's group that is in a wildfire area. Between now and September, we will offer 8 more workshops. Additional outreach will be on a YouTube channel and through televised commercials.
- We continue to monitor Fund 37 budget and are now starting to see increases from the permit fees while keeping in mind the safety of the residents. Part of this involves having the employees that can perform the jobs. Next week we will have a promotional assessment center for the Deputy Fire Marshal that retired last year. Four inspectors who applied and are hopeful to promote from within. We had two inspectors leave and we offered a full time position to a current Per Diem Fire Inspector Jose Andrade. Today we also brought on another Per Diem Inspector Jennifer Mecham.

Board Member Lieberman asked for the amount of the grant. Marshal Marshall stated it was for around \$85,000 and we are responsible for about \$6,000 of it.

Chief Thrasher provided the following Chief and Operations update:

- From 2019 to 2020, we saw a drop in call volume to just over 10%. In 2021, our call volume increased by almost 24%.
- Our new Type-6 engines were in high demand and crews were deployed to wildfires in California, Oregon, and Montana. With the new state provided Type-1 fire engine, several of our personnel were deployed as single resources. The assignments put our crews in positions much more involved with active fires in remote areas.
 - We deployed a total of 9,413 hours/\$2,076,332 in 2021. For comparison, 2020 was recorded at 22,962 hours/\$2,574,114. All fully reimbursable through the state.
 - We are mindful to a concerning new trend involving the inability of local fire department to send resources when requested. San Diego, Contra Costa, and Redwood City Fire Departments are examples of departments that turned down requests in 2021. Though we had to reduce our ability to deploy, we were able to support most requests.
- Throughout the impacts of Covid in 2021, I am incredibly proud of work done by all members of SMC Fire. With an increased call volume, substantial wildfire season and increased training requirements due to Covid restrictions the previous year, the workload on Operations was significant. Our OES and Prevention divisions were faced with staffing cuts and navigating process changes due to the pandemic. Administrative and Command Staff personnel continued to work diligently through the year providing oversight and behind-the-scenes functions that are necessary to keep the department running smoothly.
- Tomorrow marks our 3-year anniversary as SMC Fire. As Fire Chief, I am extremely excited to apply what we've learned over those 3 years, right size our organization and map out a strategic plan that will successfully carry us well into the future.

Board Member Goethals asked if there was any public comment on this item, which there was one.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The Board reminded the participants the next meeting will take place April 13, 2022, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:58 p.m.