Minutes of Regular Public Meeting
Honolulu Fire Department Headquarters
Honolulu Fire Department Auditorium
Wednesday, August 25, 2021

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Nekota called the special meeting to order at 10:32 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Charlotte Nekota, Max Hannemann, Dennis Morton, William Hong, Nicholas Teves and Craig Nagamine.

IN ATTENDANCE: Acting Fire Chief Lionel Camara, Jr. (HFD), Acting Deputy Fire Chief Sheldon Hao (HFD), Brian Ancheta (Corporation Counsel), and Nadine Murata. The public was allowed to participate through audio and video-teleconference.

II. PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON ALL AGENDA ITEMS.

Chair Nekota asked the public to identify themselves and to keep their testimony brief.

Public testimony began at 10:33 a.m.

Chair Nekota mentioned that she would like to end public testimony. Commissioner Morton moved and Commissioner Teves seconded. The public testimony concluded at 10:52 a.m. with 25 participants.

III. APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 14, 2021.

Chair Nekota called for any comments or corrections to the minutes of the special public meeting of July 14, 2021. Commissioner Morton moved and Commissioner Teves seconded. There being no further comments or corrections and with a unanimous vote in favor, the Commission approved the minutes.
V. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF JULY 21, 2021. Chair Nekota called for any comments or corrections to the minutes of the regular public meeting of July 21, 2021. Commissioner Morton moved and Commissioner Teves seconded. There being no further comments or corrections and with a unanimous vote in favor, the Commission approved the minutes.

VII. REPORT OF ACTING FIRE CHIEF. Acting Fire Chief Camara passed out his July 2021 monthly report and highlighted the following:

A. Major Incidents.

Acting Fire Chief Camara went over major incidents with the Commission. Details can be found in the monthly report.

1. Fire.

Acting Fire Chief Camara mentioned that there were 11 fires with 1 fatality.

2. Rescues.

Acting Fire Chief Camara mentioned that there were 76 calls which 46 were working calls.

Acting Fire Chief Camara mentioned there were 18 injured hikers, 14 lost hikers, 1 industrial accident in Kalihi, 1 overturned refuse truck.

Chair Nekota asked if the rescued hikers were tourists or local people.

Acting Fire Chief Camara answered 24 residents, 31 tourists, 6 military, and 15 unknowns for a total of 76.

Commissioner Hong asked if incidents are analyzed and what preventive measures/education is the department doing.

Acting Fire Chief Camara answered the department works with the State Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and they are the law and education enforcement.

Acting Fire Chief Camara mentioned that the department puts out educational information to the public.

Acting Fire Chief Camara mentioned Hawaiian Airlines is trying to educate the tourists regarding sea lions and turtles.

Chair Nekota asked if the State could work with the department on hiking and
Acting Fire Chief Camara mentioned there was a downed Trans Air aircraft 737, 2 boaters in distress, 1 missing swimmer, 3 distressed swimmer calls, and a missing fisherman off Mokuleia Beach Park.

3. **Hazardous Conditions.**

- 44 Stalled elevators
- 12 Downed trees
- 9 Gas leaks
- 6 Arcing wire calls
- 4 Downed power lines
- 3 Chemical spills

4. **Vacancies as of July 31, 2021.**

Acting Fire Chief Camara went over vacancies with the Commission. Acting Fire Chief Camara mentioned with recent retirements and the releasing of 2 candidates from recruit class the department currently has 56 vacancies.

Commissioner Morton asked with the Mayor’s implementation of COVID-19 vaccination and taking a weekly test what is the percentage of vaccinations within the department.

Acting Fire Chief Camara answered the department has a rough estimate of 945/1126 who are vaccinated.

Commissioner Morton asked if one’s not vaccinated what is the department mandated to do.

Acting Fire Chief Camara answered it’s a City stance… one can be vaccinated, get a medical or religious exemption, or go on leave until the Mayor decides what to do.

Vice-Chair Hannemann asked if there are any issues that the department is seeing between fire fighters who are vaccinated and unvaccinated working together.

Acting Fire Chief Camara answered the department hasn’t come across any issues and everyone has respect for one another’s beliefs within their work space.

Commissioner Morton asked if the department knows who’s vaccinated and who’s not.
Acting Fire Chief Camara answered both he and Chief Hao do not know, but each City department’s personnel section knows who is and who is not vaccinated.

5. Hawaii Fire Fighters Association (HFFA).

Acting Fire Chief Camara mentioned that no meetings held with HFFA in June 2021.

Acting Fire Chief Camara also reported on the following:

1. During the month of July, HFD received no complimentary correspondence and 4 complaints. Details can be found in the monthly report.

2. Acting Fire Chief Camara had each member of the executive staff give a brief description of their sections’ recent activities.

Acting Deputy Fire Chief Sheldon Hao. Acting Deputy Fire Chief Hao gave the Commission an update on recruitment.

Chief Hao mentioned that the department has started its recruitment class with 24 candidates in July and an upcoming class of 50 in November with split classes to limit COVID-19 exposure.

Chief Hao mentioned the mandate may impact the amount of retirements within the department and recruitments depending on the mandate for vaccination.

Chair Nekota asked if the retirement is something the department is guessing or if its numbers it has.

Chief Hao answered that the department has been hearing that personnel out in the field are making a decision to leave sooner.

Acting Assistant Fire Chief Joseph Kostiha- Fire Operations. Chief Kostiha went over rolling back into the station bubble due to the increase of COVID-19 cases.

Chief Kostiha gave the Commission an insight to what it was like during pre-COVID days at stations in regards to staffing, overtime, and backfills.

Chief Kostiha mentioned when the pandemic came and positives started to show in stations, the department started to implement station bubbles.
Chief Kostiha explained what a station bubble is. It’s where personnel are stationed at a certain station and you are only allowed to work there and not another station as contact tracing is easier to perform.

Chief Kostiha mentioned when the pandemic situation improved, the station bubble was lifted.

Chief Kostiha mentioned with the current surges the stations have rolled back into the station-bubble concept to keep fire fighters safe.

Chief Kostiha mentioned the only time the bubble is broken is when there’s a service.

Vice-Chair Hannemann asked how many close contacts are in the department.

Chief Kostiha answered the positives are not station related but personal activities.

Vice-Chair Hannemann asked how many were in close contact in stations.

Chief Kostiha answered if one is vaccinated you don’t have to quarantine, you test and are allowed to come to work.

Chief Kostiha mentioned with the new variant, contact tracing is light.

Commissioner Hong asked where and when do fire fighters get tested.

Chief Kostiha answered at the Daniel K. Inouye airport, it’s free and is overseen by the City. Results are available within 24 hours.

Commissioner Hong asked if someone could be designated to the department and test periodically.

Acting Fire Chief Camara mentioned rapid testing is currently being used and the department is also looking into purchasing antigen test.

Assistant Fire Chief Jason Samala- Operations. Battalion Chief Reid Yoshida stood in for Chief Samala and reported on the arson accelerant canine program.

Chief Yoshida mentioned the arson accelerant canine program was a pilot program initiated back in April 2018. State Farm gifted the City $25,000 for the canine’s training.

Chief Yoshida mentioned monthly training and maintenance for canine is supported by the Fire Prevention Bureau.

Chief Yoshida mentioned the program is a great tool for fire investigators, public education and community awareness and supporting the neighbor islands.
Chief Yoshida mentioned that the canine and handler had responded to 113 fire incidents and 76 were positive accelerant alerts and 44 were arson.

Chief Yoshida mentioned that the department is anticipating the retirement of both canine and handler at the end of the year.

Chief Yoshida mentioned State Farm once again has gifted $25,000 to the City and it will go before the City Council as a resolution.

**Acting Assistant Fire Chief Damien Kahauleilio**- Planning and Development. Chief Kahauleilio went over upgrades to the HFD website and portal and HFD’s support of the State of Hawaii, Department of Health COVID-19 response with the Commission.

Chief Kahauleilio mentioned the redesigned HFD’s website fire.honolulu.gov launched in April 2021.

Chief Kahauleilio mentioned that the website is user-friendly and the primary feature on the website is an online request for information.

Chief Kahauleilio mentioned this website educates users on how to create a safer community with fire prevention and community risk reduction and was recently awarded best in class by the Interactive Media Awards.

Chief Kahauleilio explained the departments newly designed portal has been modernized to show customized features for personnel including web notifications of physical exams, apparatus maintenance appointments and drills/preplans scheduled by the company office. It replaced the old portal on June 30, 2021, and it can only be used with Google Chrome.

Commissioner Hong commended the department on its website.

Chief Kahauleilio went over the closure of the Leeward Community College Pod and its current partnership with the community to offer vaccination to the public on behalf of the City and County of Honolulu.

Chief Kahauleilio mentioned on August 14th the department participated in the mass testing at the Aloha Stadium averaging 650 test per day. Positives average 47 at a 7.2% positivity rate. A total of 4,563 were tested with 96 vaccination at the site.

Vice-Chair Hannemann asked how much longer the department is planning on testing.

Chief Kahauleilio answered till the end of the month and continue community testing.

Vice-Chair Hannemann asked what is the average wait time.

Chief Kahauleilio answered between 30 minutes to an hour.
Chair Nekota asked about positives and where do the results go.

Chief Kahauleilio answered results are sent to the State and positives are sent home and asked to isolate and follow up with their primary physicians.

Commissioner Nagamine commended Chief Camara and his administrative team on a job well done in putting the department in the forefront to fighting the pandemic.

VIII. CITIZEN COMPLAINT REGARDING HFD PERSONNEL.

Acting Fire Chief Camara mentioned that the complaint went to fire operations and they conducted its investigation and a reply will be sent to the complainant shortly.

Vice-Chair Hannemann asked for a copy of the report.

IX. SELECTION PROCESS OF THE FIRE CHIEF, INCLUDING COMMISSION CONVERSATION WITH FIRE CHIEF FINALISTS LIONEL CAMARA, JR. AND SHELDON KALANI HAO REGARDING EDUCATION AND TRAINING BACKGROUND AND OTHER QUALIFICATIONS.

Chair Nekota mentioned due to raised questions regarding the qualifications of the finalists and its personnel records/privacy issues this agenda item will be discussed in executive session.

Commissioner Morton mentioned that former Fire Chief Neves is a caller on hold and asked if he could ask him questions.

Chair Nekota answered yes.

Commissioner Morton asked if Target Solutions was started with his administration and what was the reason.

Former Fire Chief Neves answered during a conference he saw a lot of fire departments using this product and decided to implement this into the department.

Former Fire Chief Neves explained that it’s an online tool that’s been utilized within the department for about 3 – 5 years and it can be used to disseminate important information as well as training requirements.

Commissioner Morton asked about assignments.

Former Fire Chief Neves answered assignments come from the Fire Chief’s office or from the 4 Assistant Fire Chiefs or their subordinates which is the training center and Fire Communications Center (FCC).
Vice-Chair Hannemann asked who oversees this program.

Former Fire Chief Neves answered the training bureau, Assistant Fire Chief Samala.

Commissioner Morton asked about deadlines and who sets them.

Former Fire Chief Neves answered the department who is disseminating sets the deadlines, and if the deadlines are due to requirements from laws, the Mayor, or accreditation/certification then they are set based on those needs. Some of the classes are conducted in phases, one must complete a phase in order to move on and some phases are hands on.

Former Fire Chief Neves mentioned that the department spends a lot of its time following up with persons who are behind in their training. Staff reports will show who did not complete their training, and in staff meetings Assistant Chiefs and Battalion Chiefs will conduct a follow-up.

Former Fire Chief Neves mentioned persons who are on leave have an excusable reason for not completing training on time.

Commissioner Morton asked what the recourse is if assignments are not completed.

Former Fire Chief Neves answered the department tries to resolve it informally at the fire station/fire truck level (fire company) and the Captain will work with the individual.

Former Fire Chief Neves mentioned the department had some non-compliance, and formal disciplinary action was taken. The departments discipline is progressive oral, written, 1, 3, 5 shifts.

Former Fire Chief Neves mentioned that training assignments are important.

Vice-Chair Hannemann expressed that he was not expecting a call from him and asked if he had spoken to a Commissioner prior to today’s meeting.

Former Fire Chief Neves answered yes, Commissioner Morton.

Commissioner Morton explained that he was assigned by the Commission to speak with someone from the training center regarding training records and they informed him that it was implemented during Fire Chief Neves’s administration and any questions should be directed to him.

Commissioner Morton said after he spoke with the training center he did a follow up with former Fire Chief Neves regarding training records.

Commissioner Morton asked what assignments are important and which is not important.

Former Fire Chief Neves answered all assignments are important for different reasons, as some are mandated by law ……..Department of Transportation, hazmat, EPA, mandates from the
City’s Department of Environmental Services (need to be taken on a timely manner), certification in the medical field, continuing medical education. Training is customized for you……specific to your assignment and the needs of the department.

Commissioner Morton asked if training is mandatory.

Former Fire Chief Neves answered yes, it’s a direct order from the Fire Chief.

Chair Nekota asked about training mandated by law and if the software tracks classes that have been done.

Former Fire Chief Neves answered yes, it can track the individual’s classes that he/she took, the number of days overdue on assignments, and scores.

Former Fire Chief Neves mentioned when one does not complete training on time it puts the department at risk.

Former Fire Chief Neves gave an example and explained the roles of the Hawaii Occupational Safety and Health division (HIOSH) and the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) during the Marco Polo incident and mentioned that the department did get an investigation from HIOSH asking for training records and what had mitigated a large fine that the department was facing was the fact that the department could produce a report that showed the last couple of months that the department had trained every fire fighter in the use, care and cleaning of their protective equipment.

Vice-Chair Hannemann asked former Fire Chief Neves during promotions under his administration did the hiring staff review all Vector Solutions to ensure that the applicants are up to date prior to offering the promotion.

Former Fire Chief Neves mentioned that the department does not look at their performance evaluations and annual performance evaluations, it’s a clean slate when they come to an interview, it’s based on their written test ……no pre-bias on anyone. It’s the responsibility of the individual to complete their assignments and checks and balances are conducted by their supervisors.

Vice-Chair Hannemann asked does the hiring panel pull reports of each applicant to see if they’re up to date.

Former Fire Chief Neves answered no, the department does not use any sick leave records and performance evaluations as one is given a clean slate when you take the written test/interview. There is no organized way in which the department does research on an individual.

Commissioner Nagamine asked former Fire Chief Neves whether he did or did not consider performance evaluations in making promotions.

Former Fire Chief Neves answered no, he did not.
Commissioner Hong thanked former Fire Chief Neves for his expertise in explaining training.

The Commission thanked former Fire Chief Neves.

Chair Nekota asked if the public had any questions for the finalist. There were none.

Chair Nekota asked for a motion.

Vice-Chair Hannemann moved and Commissioner Teves seconded that the Commission go into executive session regarding the selection process of the Fire Chief to “consider the hire, evaluation, dismissal, or discipline of an officer or employee or of charges brought against the officer or employee, where consideration of matter affecting privacy will be involved” [HRS Sec. 92-5(a)(2)] and to “consult with the board’s attorney on questions and issues pertaining to the board’s powers, duties, privileges, immunities, and liabilities” with regard to these matters [HRS Sec. 92-5(a)(4)]. By unanimous vote, the Commission went into executive session at 11:52 a.m. and the regular public meeting reconvened at 12:34 p.m.

V. ANNOUNCEMENT: The next monthly Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 22, 2021 at 10:30 a.m. in the Honolulu Fire Department Auditorium.

VI. ADJOURNMENT: There being no other business, Commissioner Morton moved and Commissioner Nagamine seconded that the meeting be adjourned. By unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned on August 25, 2021 at 12:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Nadine Murata, Secretary.

APPROVED:

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CHARLOTTE NEKOTA, Chair