



Meeting Minutes
San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department
Board of Directors Regular Meeting
Wednesday, January 29, 2025 – 5:30 P.M.
Hybrid Remote Teleconference Meeting
Foster City Council Chambers

1. OPENING

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 p.m. by Board Chair Mates

1.1. Call to Order & Determination of a Quorum

Legal Counsel Schwarz confirmed that a quorum of directors was present and confirmed that the meeting could proceed.

1.2. Pledge of Allegiance

1.3. Roll Call

Board Members Present: Newsom,
Teleconference Board Member: Jimenez, Mates
Board Members Absent: None

2. AGENDA CHANGES

None

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

4. PRESENTATIONS

Item 4.1 Proclamation honoring Fire Chief Kent Thrasher on his retirement.

Board Chair Mates read a resolution honoring Fire Chief Kent Thrasher for his distinguished 32-year career in public safety. Members of the Board expressed their deep appreciation for Chief Thrasher's service to the department, cities of Belmont, Foster City, and San Mateo, and the community at large.

Public Comment: Joe Goethals, a previous member of the fireboard, and Charles Stone thanked Chief Thrasher for his leadership and friendship, emphasizing the positive impact of his service. Additional remarks were made highlighting Chief Thrasher's leadership and contributions to blending three departments into one, leaving the organization in better shape.

Vice Chair Newsom expressed deep gratitude for Chief Thrasher's leadership and his efforts to improve the department. He emphasized how much he will be missed, particularly his commitment to putting the team first. She mentioned looking forward to future events, like chili cook-offs, where they could continue to connect.

Board Member Jimenez acknowledged that while she didn't get to experience Chief Thrasher's

leadership firsthand, as a resident, she felt the positive impact of his work, particularly in uniting three diverse departments. She thanked him for his hard work and vision for the future.

Board Chair Mates expressed admiration for Chief Thrasher’s leadership, quoting, “Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail,” which summarizes his approach to leadership. She highlighted his role in shaping the department, particularly during the complex consolidation of three fire departments. She thanked him for leaving the Department strong and well-positioned for the future.

Chief Thrasher thanked everyone for the kind words but expressed his discomfort with receiving accolades. He acknowledged the tremendous support he received from his family, the Board, and colleagues throughout his career. He particularly thanked his staff, including the administrative and operational staff, as well as the labor group, for their collaboration in making the department successful. Chief Thrasher emphasized the importance of teamwork and transparency in the Department’s success and expressed confidence in the future of the fire department, particularly under the leadership of Deputy Chief Turturici, who will take over his position. He concluded by thanking the Board and the entire team, recognizing their collective effort in shaping the Department’s future.

5. CONSENT

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

6. NEW BUSINESS

Item 6.1 Fire Board appointment of current Deputy Fire Chief Turturici to the vacant Fire Chief position.

Chief Administrative Officer Khojikian provided an overview of the staff report. On September 23, 2024, Fire Chief Kent Thrasher announced his plans to retire at the end of the year. On December 26, 2024, an official notification of Fire Chief Thrasher’s retirement was received. An internal recruitment process was initiated with three applicants for the Fire Chief position. The selection process included two panel interviews: one with four retired fire chiefs, and another with three city managers from various agencies. A final interview was held with the Fire Board members. Deputy Fire Chief Turturici emerged as the top candidate and accepted a conditional offer for the position of Fire Chief at a salary of \$315,880.92.

Public Comment: Tony Panacci, representative of San Mateo Consolidated Firefighters Local 2400, provided the following remarks: He expressed gratitude to Chief Thrasher for his leadership, particularly during difficult times, including the loss of Firefighter Mike Ramsey. He stated Chief Thrasher will be recognized for the Daniel W. Gadwah Chief’s Commendation award. He offered his support for new Chief Turturici, noting his readiness and leadership qualities and thanked Chief Turturici’s family for their support.

Board Member Jimenez welcomed Chief Turturici and thanked his family for their sacrifice in allowing him to take on the role. She expressed excitement for the future with someone of Chief Turturici’s caliber stepping up.

Vice Chair Newsom echoed the Board Member Jimenez’s comments, congratulating Chief Turturici and expressing confidence in his leadership. He acknowledged the great team within the department and reassured Chief Turturici of the Board’s support.

Board Chair Mates congratulated Chief Turturici and emphasized the importance of continuing the department's success. She light-heartedly mentioned Chief Turturici's frequent attendance at Belmont City Council meetings and expressed appreciation for the ongoing collaboration.

Vice Chair Newsom motioned to approve the appointment of Deputy Fire Chief Turturici to Fire Chief. Board Chair Mates seconded the motion. The Board Secretary took a roll call vote, and the Consent calendar items were approved 3-0.

Chief Turturici thanked the Board for the appointment and expressed his excitement about serving as Fire Chief. He acknowledged the strength of the department and emphasized the importance of the people in the organization. He expressed his deep gratitude for the support from Chief Thrasher, the department, and his family. He reflected on his 35 years in the fire service and expressed a commitment to the continued success of the department. Chief Turturici concluded by officially accepting the role of Fire Chief and expressed his eagerness to lead the department in the years to come.

Item 6.2 Adopt a resolution approving the Annual Fire Inspection Compliance Report from the Fire Chief and approve publishing the report as part of the 2024 Department Annual Report on the Department's website.

Fire Marshal Workman presented an overview of the staff report, stating that SB 1205 mandates an annual report on state-required inspections. For 2024, the department achieved 100% compliance for high-rises, schools, residential apartments, and jails (noting that jails require inspections every two years). A total of approximately 2,000 properties were inspected.

Members of the Board acknowledged the importance of the program and commended the Department for achieving 100% compliance. Board members expressed appreciation for the Department's efforts, emphasizing the significance of the inspections for community safety.

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

Item 6.3 Receive the Annual Financial Report for the year ended June 30, 2024.

Treasurer Karen Huang presented the audited financial report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024. Key highlights of the report included:

- The Department completed its fiscal year audit with a clean opinion and the process was smooth, with no audit findings.
- Financial performance overview included total assets: \$37.5 million, liabilities and deferred inflows: \$16.3 million, net position: \$21.2 million, and unrestricted net position: \$10.8 million.
- The General Fund revenue has steadily increased, primarily from contributions by member agencies.
 - Member contributions have remained stable, increasing by approximately 4.5% for FY 2024-25.
 - Fiscal Year 2023-24 ended with a small surplus of \$0.7 million, increasing the General Fund balance to over \$1 million.
 - The current General Fund reserve level is 3% of operating costs, with a target of \$1.5 million.
- The Fire Protection Fund, designed for cost recovery, ensures revenue matches expenditures.
 - Over the past five years, financial performance has improved from losses to a break-even status.

- Current fund balance: \$1 million, exceeding the 25% reserve target.
- Vehicle & Equipment Replacement Fund:
 - The fund balance includes both liquid cash and fixed assets.
 - A plan is in place to rebuild liquid cash reserves to \$5 million over five years.
 - Fund balance increased from \$1.6 million in FY 22-23 to \$2.7 million in FY 23-24.
- Benefit & Dental Fund:
 - Maintains reserves for pension obligations and post-retirement benefits.
- Workers' Compensation & Liability Fund:
 - Current balance: \$1.5 million, ensuring adequate coverage for liabilities.

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

7. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Board Members extended a Happy Lunar New Year greeting to all who are celebrating. Belmont's Lunar New Year celebration will take place Sunday, February 2nd 2:00 PM - 4:30 PM at Twin Pines Senior & Community Center.

Vice Chair Newsom reminded the group that while the fire budget includes personnel and equipment, the responsibility for the buildings lies with the three cities. Foster City's fire station is in good condition; however, Belmont and San Mateo each have fire stations that require capital improvements. He encouraged board members to work with their respective city councils to prioritize funding for these improvements.

Fire Chief Turturici provided a PowerPoint Operational Division update. Some highlights include:

- Summary of 2024 operational data:
 - 15,823 incidents handled and 19,939 apparatus responses.
 - Average response time: 5 minutes, 11 seconds (excluding extreme cases).
 - Station 23 (Engine 23 and Truck 23) was the busiest in 2024.
 - Battalion 5 handled a significant number of incidents.
 - 241 fire responses (increase of 15 from 2023).
 - Hazardous Materials Team responded to 28 incidents.
 - Water rescue team responded 48 times.
- Deployments and Mutual Aid
 - Response to major fires, including Palisades and Park fires.
 - 20 mutual aid incidents in 2024.
 - Total personnel hours deployed: 25,535.
- Training Division Updates
 - Led by Battalion Chief Cook.
 - Significant training efforts due to 64 employees with under 10 years of experience.
 - Training statistics:
 - 32,706 hours of operations training.
 - 3,655 hours of driver training.
 - 3,686 hours of EMS training.
 - Certifications issued:
 - 4 truck tiller operators.
 - 4 truck operators.
 - 2 acting captains.

- 2 hazardous materials technicians.
 - 1 hazardous materials consult.
 - 3 water rescue technicians.
- 15 firefighters and 5 captains currently on probation with ongoing evaluations.
- Acknowledgment of Fire Chief Thrash for his contributions.

Deputy Fire Chief Marshall provided a Community Risk Reduction Division update. Some highlights include:

- With a primary focus on wildland fire prevention due to recent wildfires in Southern California, a document was published on the department's website detailing protective measures against wildfires, including tree trimming, defensible space, and maintaining clear areas around power lines.
- The public was reminded of the importance of signing up for SMC Alert and knowing their evacuation zones through the Genesis Project.
- Additional emergency preparedness recommendations included having a go-kit and understanding evacuation protocols.
- Increased social media engagement and the release of a video series on fire prevention and safety.
- The first video focused on general fire prevention efforts; the second video addressed defensible space requirements.
- Ongoing community engagement, including direct outreach to homeowners' associations, particularly in Belmont.
- Continued focus on emergency planning by evaluating responses to the Southern California wildfires and implementing best practices.
- Wildland fire inspections scheduled to begin in late April or early May, depending on weather conditions.
- Continued enforcement of local ordinances, including the tree ordinance approved in prior years.
- Anticipation of the state's release of updated wildland fire severity zone maps, which may require adjustments to local ordinances.
- Efforts to push for the timely release of the maps to ensure proper planning ahead of the peak fire season.
- Deputy Fire Chief Marshall announced his upcoming retirement at the end of March after a 34-year career in the fire service. He expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve the community and assured continued leadership and mentorship over the remaining months.

Members of the Board expressed appreciation for Deputy Chief Marshall and his contributions to fire prevention efforts.

Board Chair Mates emphasized the importance of continued community outreach and education, as many residents remain unaware of available resources. She acknowledged that while significant progress has been made in risk reduction, more outreach is necessary to ensure preparedness across all neighborhoods. Vice Chair Newsom's specific concern was raised about high-risk areas, particularly in San Mateo and Belmont, and whether additional mitigation measures are needed. Deputy Fire Chief Marshall reassured the Board that risk assessments have been conducted, and mitigation strategies are in place. He stated anticipated updates to fire hazard maps may expand identified risk areas but should not significantly impact current operations. He noted the importance of increasing community enrollment in SMC Alert, as current participation is only around 20-25%. Lastly, he encouraged residents to utilize available resources, including www.smcfire.org and www.readyforwildfire.org, to enhance personal preparedness.

Fire Chief Thrasher provided a brief organizational update:

- Special thanks his two deputies, Chief Turturici and Deputy Chief Marhsall, for their contributions and noted that Deputy Chief Marhsall will be missed as an integral part of the organization and team.
- Due to the mentorship and leadership of Chief Turturici and Deputy Chief Marhsall, the department remains strong and will ensure continued leadership in Deputy Chief Marhsall's absence.
- A formal badge pinning and command transition ceremony is planned for Chief Turturici. The date has not been finalized but is anticipated to take place at the end of March or the beginning of April.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT ON CLOSED SESSION ITEMS

None

9. CLOSED SESSION

The Fire Board adjourned to Closed Session at 6:53 p.m. General Counsel Ross 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 7:08 p.m.