

HONOLULU FIRE COMMISSION
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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CHARLOTTE NEKOTA

STEFANIE LEE

WILLIAM HONG

Minutes of Regular Public Meeting
Honolulu Fire Department Headquarters
Honolulu Fire Department Auditorium
Wednesday, September 20, 2017

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Wataru called the regular meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: James Wataru, Arnold Wong, Dr. Joseph Young, Max Hannemann, Charlotte Nekota, Stefanie Lee, and William Hong.

IN ATTENDANCE: Fire Chief Manuel Neves (HFD), Deputy Fire Chief Lionel Camara Jr. (HFD), Assistant Fire Chief Socrates Bratakos (HFD), Assistant Fire Chief Nathan Ramos (HFD), Battalion Chief Howard Naone (HFD), Battalion Chief Jason Samana (HFD), Battalion Chief Keith Yasui (HFD), Battalion Chief Wayne Masuda (HFD), Battalion Chief Anthony Lee (HFD), Battalion Chief Jeff Sanchez (HFD), Battalion Chief Daryl Evangelista (HFD), Battalion Chief John Pacheco (HFD), Battalion Chief Mark Nakagawa (HFD), Battalion Chief Craig Uchimura (HFD), Battalion Chief Debbie Eleneki (HFD), Battalion Chief Geoffrey Chang (HFD), Battalion Chief Alan Carvalho (HFD), Battalion Chief Paul Fukuda (HFD), Battalion Chief Kevin Mokulehua (HFD), Paul Hoshino (Corporation Counsel), Randall Ishikawa (Corporation Counsel), and Nadine Murata.

Chair Wataru apologized for the cancellation of last month's meeting due to absence of quorum and asked if there was anyone from the public who would like to provide public testimony.

II. PUBLIC TESTIMONY: Bobby Lee, President of the Honolulu Fire Fighters Association passed out a power point presentation and highlighted several topics which included the Marco Polo fire response, HFD leadership, and the post Marco Polo response. Mr. Lee invited Fire Chief

Neves to interact anytime during the presentation, no interaction was made. Mr. Lee went over the incident timeline and mentioned that 28 vehicles were dispatched at the time of the fire and voiced his concerns on why Assistant Chief of Operations failed to show leadership and questioned why the Mobile Command Center (MCC) was cancelled during a critical time which could have been beneficial to fire fighters battling the fire.

Mr. Lee indicated that the MCC is a fully integrated vehicle with a communications systems equipped with video monitoring and provides a meeting area to plan strategies and coordinate resources.

Mr. Lee mentioned that it is HFD's dispatch policy to dispatch the MCC to fires that have reached third-alarm status, which is ten or more companies and stated it was cancelled less than 20 minutes after the fire was reported.

Mr. Lee noted that HFD's rules and regulations clearly state that failure to respond to all incidents to which they are assigned is considered a Class A and C violation. Mr. Lee voiced his concerns again on why Assistant Chief of Operations was a no show and not reprimanded for his actions.

Mr. Lee concluded by going over the post Marco Polo asbestos response timeline and questioned the PPEs if they were properly bagged before returning to the stations and if gross decontamination was conducted at the scene.

Mr. Lee indicated that Chiefs are supposed to lead and if operations are going to be conducted in such manner, then more Captains and fire fighters are needed than Battalion Chiefs.

Commissioner Hong asked what the arrival time was. Mr. Lee indicated within a few minutes and commended the fire fighters on a great job.

Commissioner Nekota asked Mr. Lee if the MCC would have been beneficial even though it was cancelled. Mr. Lee noted that there would have been a more controlled environment and it would have given other Chiefs a better understanding that this is a command post for more than one Chief to communicate.

Commissioner Nekota asked about the MCC. Mr. Lee noted that they have reached out but have not been given an answer as to why.

Commissioner Hong asked how the MCC equipped. Mr. Lee indicated that it has different types of communication devices to communicate with different agencies and it contains spare batteries, chargers, and TV monitors.

Commissioner Hannemann quoted that the MCC would be automatically dispatched if it reached 3rd alarm status and if there could be any exceptions to that rule. Mr. Lee mentioned that it is a set dispatch procedure.

Commissioner Wong indicated that the investigation is ongoing and no statement will be given, however questioned that if a MCC had existed at that time during the First Interest Building if it

would have made a difference between the MCC and the Battalion Chief's vehicle. Mr. Lee mentioned that the MCC would have provided more opportunity and capabilities. Commissioner Wong asked Mr. Lee if he recalled where the Battalion Chief's vehicle was at the time of the Fire Interstate incident. Mr. Lee indicated that he did not respond to that incident.

Commissioner Wong asked if senior levels could have contributed to the incident without being on site. Mr. Lee mentioned that it's against HFD incident and command procedures.

Commissioner Lee asked if there were any known problems with the MCC during the incident such as batteries needing replacement. Mr. Lee indicated, "Yes, batteries needed replacement" and voiced his concerns on why personnel had to go back and forth to stations to get back up batteries when the MCC could have provided such.

Commissioner Lee asked where the MCC is stationed. Mr. Lee mentioned at the airport.

Commissioner Wong indicated that he would like to continue this conversation at a later date when the investigation has concluded and conduct another hearing with both sides communicating about its procedures and other issues they might want to work on. Mr. Lee agreed and noted "safety" is the main concern.

Commissioner Hannemann asked what the union's position is on decontamination on the PPE's and if it's for every fire or fires that have potential asbestos. Mr. Lee mentioned that the position has changed on both sides and noted that PPE's should be cleaned all the time as contamination causes all kinds of respiratory diseases.

Commissioner Hong asked what is the difference between the hazardous material response team and the fire fighters turnouts and what do they do with it. Mr. Lee mentioned he is not sure what type of uniform the hazardous response team uses but believes that there are disposable covers that are used. Commissioner Hong indicated that disposal covers are the difference. Mr. Lee mentioned that this is a serious issue and disposal is not the issue and there are things that can be done.

Commissioner Hong asked if there are policies with the International that could be helpful in dealing with this. Mr. Lee stated, "No" International can provide education and research but not policies.

Commissioner Wong asked Mr. Lee if he knew of any laundries that could launder the turnouts. Mr. Lee mentioned there are extractor units at some of the stations.

Commissioner Young asked if the MCC was there on the day of the fire. Mr. Lee indicated, "No". Commissioner Young asked who made the decision. Mr. Lee answered, "Assistant Chief of Operations, Ron Rico".

Commissioner Young asked if Mr. Lee thought the administration did its best on the fire. Mr. Lee indicated that he would limit it to the executive group with a "no" however noted that the Battalion Chiefs did a great job.

Commissioner Hannemann asked about the First Interstate incident and asked if Fire 3 was a MCC or a Battalion Chief. Mr. Lee noted that it was Wayne Nojiri who was in command.

Chair Wataru asked if administration chiefs could create confusion as to who is in charge by having other rank and file there and what control does the Fire Chief have as to where and what they do. Mr. Lee noted in the policies and procedures, the incident commander is in charge but at times it may change.

Commissioner Young mentioned that an Assistant Chief was in charge and when does he ask the Deputy Fire Chief and Fire Chief to become involved. Mr. Lee noted that it was a Battalion Chief in charge and the concern was not having a high ranking Chief taking responsibility of command.

Commissioner Young asked about micro managing. Mr. Lee indicated there was no issue of micro managing.

Chair Wataru asked if the Chief of Operations takes control on the scene or does he have to be assigned by the Chief or a commanding officer. Mr. Lee noted that by duty and responsibilities he doesn't have to take command but is responsible for what is taking place.

Commissioner Nekota asked if the MCC was cancelled could someone else have reversed that decision. Mr. Lee answered, "Yes".

Commissioner Hannemann asked how many fire fighters the Battalion Chiefs were in charge of. Mr. Lee noted between 7 – 11.

Chair Wataru asked if there was anyone else from the public who would like to give testimony, there was none and Chair Wataru thanked Mr. Lee for his testimony.

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF JULY 19, 2017: Chair Wataru called for any comments or corrections to the minutes of the regular public meeting of July 19, 2017. There being no further comments or corrections the minutes were approved as circulated.

IV. REPORT OF THE FIRE CHIEF: Chief Neves passed out this monthly report and highlighted the following:

1. 2017 National Association of State Fire Marshals Conference. Chief Neves indicated that he had attended the conference in Orlando, Florida as Chair to the State Fire Council.
2. Federal Bureau of Investigation's Joint Terrorism Task Force Quarterly Meeting.
3. Meeting with Councilmembers Carol Fukunaga and Ann Kobayashi. Chief Neves met regarding the high rise and sprinkler retro fit efforts.

4. U.S. Coast Guard's Employer Recognition Event. Chief Neves mentioned that the department got an award for support in supporting their personnel who is a Coast Guard member.
5. 103rd Fire Fighter Recruit Orientation. Chief Neves noted that the class will be graduating in March 2018, and currently there are 50 recruits in training.
6. Diamond Head Lighthouse Celebration.
7. High-Rise Fire and Life Safety Summit. Chief Neves mentioned that he attended this meeting in Minnesota at the request of Fire House Magazines and spoke about the Marco Polo fire.
8. Honolulu City Council Hearings. Chief Neves indicated it was about the high rise retro-fit and the resolution.
9. Mayor's Cabinet Retreat. Chief Neves mentioned that it was held at the Queen Emma Summer Palace.
10. Meeting with Hawaiian Electric Company Executives. Chief Neves noted that the department meets with them one a month.
11. Senior Managers Meeting. Chief Neves mentioned it was a leadership meeting by the Mayor.

The Fire Chief also reported on the following:

1. During the month of August, HFD received 2 complimentary correspondences, and no complaints.
2. During the month of September, HFD received 4 complimentary correspondences, and no complaints.
3. Chief Neves mentioned that the Hawaii Fire Chiefs Association conference will be held on November 29 – December 2nd and information will be online.
4. Chief Neves passed out the new Fire Safety Fire Guide and noted that it's done in house with this issue being collaboration with all 4 counties.
5. Chief Neves had each member of the executive staff give a brief description of their section's recent activities.

Deputy Fire Chief Lionel Camara Jr.- Chief Camara mentioned that the department assisted the military in trying to recover a fuselage last month and the search went beyond 3 days.

Assistant Fire Chief Scott Lawton- Administrative Services. Chief Lawton spoke about the Assets Program and noted that it's a key organization as to its inventory system as to planning and budgeting and how the department tracks its assets. Chief Lawton noted that prior to this the department had used a system called "Maximo" which was not user friendly and attached with fees such as licensing, maintenance, and customization cost. Chief Lawton indicated that the head of DIT is working with HFD on creating different programs as well as customized programs without fees.

Assistant Fire Chief Socrates Bratakos- Support Services. Chief Bratakos spoke about Bill 69 which was introduced by Mayor Caldwell which is a bill that retro fits existing high rise buildings with sprinklers. Chief Bratakos mentioned that he had self dispatched himself to the high rise incident and checked on the building codes, prior inspections, and any incidents the building may have encountered and briefed the Fire Chief and the Mayor on the status of the building and its fire code systems.

Chief Bratakos noted that he oversaw the multi agency investigation in the building and worked with the public information officer.

Chief Bratakos mentioned the first bill had inputs coming from the City and it required 360 buildings to be retrofitted with sprinklers within 5 years and Council had asked the Mayor and the administration to reform the residential fire advisory committee and have the Fire Chief act as Chair. There are 15 organizations participating in this committee, including the Trades Council, HFFA, and the VIA.

Chief Bratakos also noted that this committee will be putting together a report and finalization will be completed the same time as the National Fire Incident Report.

Chief Bratakos noted that the department has disclosed to the public that the fire was not intentionally set, it was not related to cooking, and it started in Room 2602.

Commissioner Hong thanked Chief Bratakos for Bill 69 and asked about the status of the bill. Chief Bratakos indicated that it had its first reading and was deferred because City Council wanted more information. Since then the committee has been meeting every week.

Chief Neves clarified the bills for the Commission and indicated that one was a bill and the other was a resolution. Chief Neves noted that Bill 69 is to retro fit the high rise buildings which was deferred and what passed was a resolution to form an advisory committee and their reports will determine if Bill 69 will pass.

Commissioner Young asked if the department tried to retro fit the buildings. Chief Neves mentioned that 5 years ago the department tried to retro-fit the buildings.

Chief Bratakos mentioned that in 2003, an ordinance was passed and required that business buildings be retro-fitted and in 1982 hotel buildings were subject to the same requirement.

Commissioner Wong mentioned if flame retardants paint could be used. Chief Bratakos noted that it's not an alternative to sprinklers in the fire code or the building code and mentioned that

has limited usage. However the department is always looking for alternatives having to do with fire safety.

Commissioner Hannemann asked about and estimated time for the completion of the investigation. Chief Bratakos noted that the investigation is completed and the department is reviewing and finalizing it within a few weeks.

Chair Wataru asked Chief Bratakos that he mentioned that he had self dispatched himself to the fire. Chief Bratakos answered "Yes" and noted that his position as assistant chief of support services is not usually dispatched in an emergency but noted that he might be working at the emergency operating center at the municipal building or HFD's operating center.

Chief Bratakos indicated when he learned that the fire had escalated from a 4 to 5 alarm he knew he would be useful in supporting the Fire Chief and assisting the public information officer on the building codes.

Chair Wataru thanked Chief Bratakos for his initiative.

Assistant Fire Chief Nathan Ramos- Planning and Development. Chief Ramos indicated that the department has finally filled the grant manager's position.

V. COMMUNICATION FROM JEFFREY BARRET REGARDING APARTMENT COMPLEX FIRE ALARM SYSTEM.

Chair Wataru indicated that the Commission had received a letter from Mr. Barrett and the Commission has no jurisdiction over this matter. Chair Wataru noted that a letter will be sent to both Mr. Barrett and HFD.

Chief Bratakos mentioned to Chair Wataru and the matter has been handled by the Fire Prevention Bureau.

Chief Neves indicated that the department gets letters like these every month and if one should have a question a referral will be made.

VI. REVIEW OF ACTIONS INVOLVING CONDUCT OF FIRE PERSONNEL AT TFIRE SCENE FOR CONFORMANCE WITH THE DEPARTMENT POLICIES.

VII. REVIEW OF ACTIONS INVOLVING CONDUCT OF FIRE PERSONNEL AT AFTER ACTION REVIEW MEETING FOR CONFORMANCE WITH THE DEPARTMENT POLICES.

VIII. REVIEW OF DEPARTMENT ACTIONS AT FORE SCENE FOR PURPOSE OF RECOMMENDING IMPROVMENT TO THE FIRE CHIEF.

EXECUTIVE SESSION- Commissioner Wong moved that the Commission go into executive session on these three matters “to consider the hire, evaluation, dismissal, or discipline of an officer or employee where consideration of matters 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)]. The motion passed unanimously. The Commission went into Executive Session at 3:16 p.m. and the regular public meeting reconvened at 4:30 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT: The next meeting will be held on October 11, 2017, at 2:00 p.m., at the HFD auditorium.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no other business the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Nadine Murata, Secretary.

APPROVED:

JAMES WATARU, Chair