

HONOLULU FIRE COMMISSION

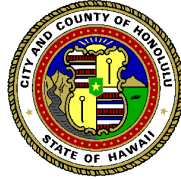
*Komikina Kinai Ahi o Honolulu*

**CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

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Minutes of Regular Public Meeting  
Honolulu Fire Department Headquarters  
Honolulu Fire Department Auditorium  
Wednesday, June 19, 2024

I. CALL TO ORDER: Vice-Chair Matlin called the meeting to order at 10:33 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Matlin, Craig Nagamine, Butch Galdeira, Debbi Eleneki and Max Hannemann.

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Dennis Morton and Charlotte Nekota.

IN ATTENDANCE: Fire Chief Sheldon Hao (HFD), Deputy Fire Chief Jason Samala (HFD), Assistant Fire Chief Reid Yoshida (HFD), Assistant Fire Chief Craig Uchimura (HFD), Laiu Sechyi (State Counsel), Brian Ancheta (Department of the Corporation Counsel), and Nadine Murata (Commission Secretary).

II. PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON ALL AGENDA ITEMS. Vice-Chair Matlin asked if there was anyone from the public who wished to give public testimony. There was none.

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF APRIL 17, 2024. Vice-Chair Matlin called for any comments or corrections to the minutes of April 17, 2024. Commissioner Eleneki moved and Commissioner Nagamine seconded. There being no further comments or corrections and with a unanimous vote in favor, the Commission approved the minutes.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES OF April 17, 2024. Vice-Chair called for any comments or corrections to the executive session minutes of April 17, 2024.

Commissioner Hannemann moved and Commissioner Galdeira seconded. There being no further comments or corrections and with unanimous vote in favor, the Commission approved the minutes.

V. REPORT OF THE FIRE CHIEF. Fire Chief Hao briefly went over workforce with the Commission. Details can be found in the May 2024 monthly report handed out at the meeting.

Fire Chief Hao mentioned currently there are 85 vacancies within the department and 31 recruits in training.

Fire Chief Hao noted that the department is anticipating hiring 38 individuals on July 15, 2024.

Fire Chief Hao discussed anticipated retirements at the end of the year.

Fire Chief Hao went over staffing costs with the Commission and mentioned that the department depends on salary savings to fund deficits.

Fire Chief Hao briefly discussed the department's pending FY'26 budget with the Commission, saying HFD will be asking for more funding for staff including bump-ups for Holiday and Overtime Pay (which have not been adjusted much in years).

Fire Chief Hao went over the department's live fire program with the Commission and mentioned that it's in the process of creating a standardized package that is consistent with the department's standard operating guidelines.

Fire Chief Hao highlighted training on page 4 of his monthly report and discussed the department's commitment to work with the City's Department of Facility Maintenance (DFM) and Department of Design and Construction (DDC).

Fire Chief Hao mentioned that the live fire training center sits on DFM property and they have a 5-year lease.

Fire Chief Hao noted that the department continues to look for permanent land for its live fire training program.

Fire Chief Hao highlighted injuries on page 6 of his monthly report and mentioned that there are approximately 50 – 60 individuals who are on leave, which increases the vacancy count in the department.

Fire Chief Hao explained how the department will be monitoring injuries, adjusting its techniques in training and looking into its wellness and sickness programs.

Fire Chief Hao said keeping staffing levels has been a challenge.

Fire Chief Hao reached out to the City's Department of Human Resources (DHR) regarding the department's aging workforce, and discussed with the Commission how the highest five years of income determine retirement benefits for its members.

Fire Chief Hao brought up the department budget and spoke on FY'25.

Deputy Fire Chief Samala passed out a Community Lifelines handout to the Commission which is modeled after the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Deputy Fire Chief Samala mentioned that the diagram shows the basic functions on how the government survives and how the community depends on one another.

Deputy Fire Chief Samala spoke on Public Safety Power ShutOff (PSPS) with the Commission and described PSPS as a long-term outage.

Deputy Fire Chief Samala explained the department's role in the PSPS and its planning strategies.

Vice-Chair Matlin asked who is in charge.

Deputy Fire Chief Samala answered the department is co-chairing.

Fire Chief Hao noted that multiple workshops have been conducted over the years and not every department understood what role they would play as they were not used to working outside of their role.

Commissioner Nagamine asked if a presentation by the department could be given to the Commission.

Fire Chief Hao gave credit to Captain Keith Ito and his work with Assistant Fire Chief Uchimura on this matter.

#### Assistant Fire Chief Reid Yoshida- Administrative Services Bureau.

Chief Yoshida spoke on injuries and how his division is enhancing communications and collaborating with DHR on workers compensation.

Chief Yoshida mentioned to understand DHR's process the department will be conducting monthly meetings.

Chief Yoshida discussed trends such as mental health and how can the department support its members.

Chief Yoshida shared the Captain's promotional process with the Commission and mentioned that they worked with the Hawaii Fire Fighters Association (HFFA) and discussed how assessment was implemented in this process and how improvements can be made.

Fire Chief Hao mentioned in the past a written test was given, and if you passed you were put on a list and depending on vacancies you would be placed per the Rule of Five.

Fire Chief Hao explained the Rule of Five and said that the list would expire within a year.

Fire Chief Hao mentioned currently the department is focusing on creating promotion projections based on anticipated retirements as opposed to using the Rule of Five. The department has found this process to be favorable and uses these four components:

1. Education and Experience.
2. Written examination
3. Assessment
4. Interview

Fire Chief Hao mentioned next year the department will have its Fire Fighter II and III written examinations.

Chief Yoshida added that the department is hopeful the updated and more transparent promotion process will yield well-rounded individuals.

Chief Yoshida mentioned that the department continues to look at trends and technology as well as safety within the department's assessments.

Fire Chief Hao went over a survey that was given to participants who participated in the exam with the following topics.

1. Fire Operations scenario
2. OSHO (forms to fill out should one get injured/)
3. Performance evaluation worksheet
4. Training plan

Fire Chief Hao said the department is telling candidates what will be on the assessment in advance – i.e., no curve balls. And since the whole candidate pool studies accordingly, the overall knowledge of the group goes up.

Chief Yoshida commended Battalion Chief Michael Jones for his work on this matter.

Chief Yoshida additionally touched on facilities, equipment and budget with the Commission.

### Facilities

1. Waianae station- rehabilitation work is almost completed; minor fixes (e.g., screens) are still pending.

2. Waipahu store room- roof recoating has been completed; replacement of skylights due to leaks is in process.
3. Kahaluu station- interior remodeling is done; sewer project has an anticipated completion date of August 2024.
4. Kalaeloa hangar- in its planning stage; funding is coming from the Honolulu Police Department (HPD), which will also use the hangar.

### Equipment

1. Currently five (5) engines and one (1) aerial. One (1) tanker will be arriving around July 1, 2024, and an additional aerial will be acquired.

Fire Chief Hao mentioned that due to the anticipated implementation of PSPS IN July 2024, the department is currently working on enhancing its staffing and moving its resources around.

Chief Yoshida added that the department is working closely with State and Federal Fire Stations on their resources.

Chief Yoshida mentioned that the department will be sending a pilot on June 23, 2024 to Tennessee for a mid-point inspection of its twin-engine helicopter, and anticipated pre-final acceptance is November 2024. Delivery should take place around November – December 2024.

Vice-Chair Matlin asked when does the helicopter become operational.

Fire Chief Hao answered the department will need to work on staffing, as the individual operator will need to have knowledge on aircraft and rescue.

### Budget

Chief Yoshida said the City's FY'25 budget was delivered to the Mayor's office on June 14, 2024, and if the budget is not approved it will go into ordinance on June 28, 2024.

What Operating Budget funds the department had proposed, the department has received. See Bill 12, CD2, FD1.

Chief Yoshida mentioned that the department had submitted an emergency procurement based on Governor Green's emergency proclamation relating to the wildfires on Maui. This will help expedite the department's procurement.

Chief Yoshida discussed hiring challenges and receiving timely procurement with the Commission.

Fire Chief Hao mentioned disaster funds in the amount of 3 million dollars were recently awarded to the department. Money received will go towards purchasing apparatuses.

Chief Yoshida spoke on when funds will be received.

Chief Yoshida gave an update on the department's Quint 31. Current time estimate is 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2025.

Commissioner Galdeira commended the department on its promotion process and repair of the Waipahu store room.

Commissioner Galdeira asked about the department's apparatuses.

Chief Yoshida explained the delay of apparatuses could be due to demand nationwide.

Fire Chief Hao explain purchasing of apparatuses with the Commission and how the department had to be flexible on their construction, as waiting is better than not getting the items at all.

Commissioner Eleneki expressed her gratitude to Fire Chief Hao and commended the department on the direction it's going.

#### Assistant Fire Chief Craig Uchimura- Support Services.

Chief Uchimura mentioned that the department purchased its live fire prop from Waihona Emergency & Training Consultants and its owner is a retired Battalion Chief from Maui, Amos Lonokailua-Hewitt. Mr. Lonokailua-Hewitt is currently the Director for the Maui Emergency Management Agency (MEMA).

Chief Uchimura discussed gears with the Commission and explained that gears used for props differ from front line.

Chief Uchimura spoke on limiting the terms of its instructors due to health issues from such work (heat exhaustion, smoke inhalation, etc.), and implementing mandatory work/rest cycles.

Chief Uchimura mentioned on June 2, 2024, Hawaiian Electric Company (HECO) conducted its tabletop exercise of the PSPS program.

Chief Uchimura discussed the relationship the department has with the Board of Water Supply (BWS) and how Captain Ito has been out in the field scouting for potential remote hydrant locations, and dip tanks at water reservoirs.

Chief Uchimura went over a recent brush fire incident behind Mahaka Elementary and mentioned that the BWS had been monitoring the department's usage of water.

Chief Uchimura discussed weather conditions on the west side, noting that the heavy rains in May resulted in a lot of plant growth and brush fires will likely be worse this year as a result (and also later in the year due to the La Nina weather effect).

Chief Uchimura went over HECO's purchase of cameras. The department will be meeting with HECO tomorrow on its capabilities it has for Honolulu and who will be in charge, currently cameras are in place at the airport. HECO will be installing 34 more cameras, these cameras detect signs of combustion. To see a visual example, go to [alertwest.live](http://alertwest.live).

Chief Uchimura gave the Commission an update on the water situation at the training center.

Chief Uchimura went over Bill 22. The Ordinance banning consumer fireworks which took effect on 2011. Chief Uchimura informed the Commission that structure, brush, rubbish fires, and medical calls all declined 80 percent.

Chief Uchimura explained that City Council is thinking of bringing fireworks back via Bill 22, as banning causes illegal consumer purchases.

Chief Uchimura mentioned that the department has testified in opposition to the Bill and will continue to push against it.

Fire Chief Hao expressed his thoughts and asked what the purpose of PSPS is.

Chief Uchimura shared with the Commission that HFD personnel will resume in-person attendance at Neighborhood Board meetings and showcasing links. The HFD will be updating its "Frequently Ask Questions" (FAQ) page on its website to provide more standardized responses in regards to PSPS.

Chief Uchimura spoke on the promotion of Captain Pao-Chi Hwang to Battalion Chief in Fire Prevention and the relocation of Battalion Chief Jean-Claude Bisch to OSHO, move date is set for the week of July 7, 2024.

Chief Uchimura briefly spoke on interview questions, improving promotion process and having the annual evaluation done more comprehensively. The department is currently working on digitizing its interdepartmental form.

Vice-Chair Matlin asked if the form needs to be vetted through DHR.

Chief Uchimura answered yes.

Commissioner Eleneki asked if the department is looking for something similar to a position task book.

Chief Uchimura answered the department is currently using reference guides and the idea of position task book has been floated, the department is currently trying to figure out how to implement it.

Fire Chief Hao discussed the individual evaluation process with the Commission.

Commissioner Eleneki asked about interviews for soft skills questions.

Chief Uchimura explained the process for soft skills questions.

Commissioner Hannemann excused himself at 11:56 a.m.

Vice-Chair Matlin asked if there were any questions or comments. There was none.

VI. Citizen Complaint Alleging Employment Discrimination, Retaliation and Lack of Invitation to Testing.

Commissioner Nagamine moved and Vice-Chair Matlin seconded that the Commission go into executive session meeting on this item 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 this matter [HRS Sec. 92-5(a)(4)]. By unanimous vote, the Commission went into executive session at 12:02 p.m. and the regular public meeting reconvened at 12:13 p.m.

Vice-Chair Matlin mentioned that the Commission is preparing a response to the complaint.

VII. Honolulu Fire Commission’s 2023 Annual Report.

Commissioner Nagamine moved and Vice-Chair Matlin seconded that the Commission go into executive session meeting on this item 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 this matter [HRS Sec. 92-5(a)(4)]. By unanimous vote, the Commission went into executive session at 12:02 p.m. and the regular public meeting reconvened at 12:13 p.m.

Vice-Chair Matlin mentioned that the annual report is being drafted and the Commission will review, evaluate, and approve at the next Commission meeting.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENT: The next monthly Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 17, 2024, at 10:30 a.m. in the Honolulu Fire Department Auditorium.

IX. ADJOURNMENT: There being no other business, Commissioner Nagamine moved and Commissioner Galdeira seconded that the meeting be adjourned. By unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned on June 19, 2024 at 12:14 p.m.



Respectfully submitted by: Nadine Murata, Secretary.

APPROVED:

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DAVID MATLIN, Vice-Chair