



**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING  
Tuesday, September 7, 2021**

**The Public Safety Commission convened a videoconferencing meeting Tuesday, September 7, 2021 at City Hall 301 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in Austin, Texas.**

**Chair Rebecca Gonzales** called the Board Meeting to order at 4:00p.m. Chair Gonzales took a moment to remember the recent lives lost due to COVID-19 in our Public Safety Departments: Senior Police Officer, Randy Body, Sergeant Steve Urias and Firefighter Rodney Kelly and express appreciation for their service.

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Rebecca Gonzales	Queen Austin
Kathleen Hausenfluck	Rebecca Webber
Nelly Ramirez	Amanda Lewis
John Kiracofe	Rebecca Bernhardt

**Board Members Absent:** None

**Staff in Attendance:**

Robin Henderson, Assistant Chief, Austin Police Department  
Jasper Brown, Chief of Staff, Austin/Travis County Emergency Medical Services

**Citizen Communications** - Citizens signed up to speak: None

**1. Approval of Minutes** – Chair Gonzales called for any edits/changes to the draft minutes of the August 2, 2021 meeting. Hearing no edits from the board, she deemed the minutes approved.

**2. NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Public Safety Organizations Quarterly Report – Austin Fire Department** (sponsors: Commissioner Hausenfluck and Gonzales) 4:25pm-4:40pm

Chief Vires was not in attendance due to the funeral services for firefighter Rodney Kelly. Chair Gonzales presented the AFD Quarterly report in his absence.

Charts presented:

- New fire station #51 opened in District 5
- Calls/Request for Service –Q3 comparison
- Emergency Responses by District

- Emergency Incidents Comparison by District
- COVID 19 impact at AFD 2020 – August 25, 2021
- Vaccination efforts
- Cadet Hiring Update
- AFD Recruitment

**Chair Gonzales** called for any questions after presenting the quarterly data from Austin Fire Department. **Commissioner Ramirez** asked for Austin Fire to provide 2019 data on volume of calls and incidences, to compare with the 2020 and 2021 data provided to try and gain a better sense of how normal is the current data being presented. **Commissioner Hausenfluck** welcome any commentary on Ramirez’s request for additional data, as she would like to understand numbers of incidents being higher in 2021 verses 2020, but the response times are down.

**b. Bi-annual wildfire readiness update-Resolution #20160512-016**

(Sponsors: Commissioners Gonzales and Webber) 4:40pm -5:05pm

**Speaker(s):**

**- Justice Jones, Austin Fire Department**

**Chair Gonzales** – welcome Justice Jones to the meeting and turned the meeting over to him for his presentation. Mr. Jones begin his presentation with sharing the latest update on AFD’s wildfire readiness in that currently the six month and annual wildfire readiness update is automated and can be accessed through the Austin and Travis County Wildfire HUB.

Information presented to the commissioners:

- Number of community wildfire protection plans completed and implemented
- Number of local level community wildfire protection plans that have been started, but not completed
- Number/Percentage of high risk areas in which identification of potential local level CWPP(Community Wildfire Protection Plan) is still ongoing
- Number of Public Presentations and Home Systems AFD as provided
- Hours AFD (Austin Fire Department) has dedicated to training internally and externally
- Actively Engage Communities
- Community Engagement includes virtual events, i.e. Annual Wildfire Symposium
- Currently pivoting in this COVID environment to try to reach as many people as possible maintaining education on Public and Private Safety
- Conducted 6,065 training hours for Austin Fire Department and community members
- Conducted 5,360 training hours for the public

**Chair Gonzales** asked Mr. Jones, what are your next challenges concerning continued work on wildfire readiness for the City of Austin as it relates to Resolution #20160512-016.

Commissioner Bernhardt commented on the huge amount of education and outreach in the District 10 area by AFD, but not as much outreach in the District 1 area, which still has significant wildfire risk. Mr. Jones acknowledge her observation and agreed that there is an imbalance on the education and outreach in District 1; and he hopes with the new wildfire HUB that will help with education and the community opening up to and accepting AFD's outreach.

**c. Update from Public Safety Organizations on Vaccinated Personnel** (sponsors: Commissioner Webber and Bernhardt) 5:05pm -5:25pm

**Speaker(s):**

- Rick Randall, Wellness Director, Austin Police Department
- Ed Piker, Division Chief, Austin Travis County EMS

Commissioner Webber introduced this item and noted what she and Commissioner Bernhardt asked for on the "Agenda Request" was for the name or number of each public safety department's policy on vaccinations.

Ed Piker, EMS presented first and begin by stating 91% of EMS employees/staff are vaccinated. EMS does not have a specific policy on requiring masks in the workplace except to follow City Managers policy. Jasper Brown shared EMS has police #404 for EMS employess, but does not state anything on COVID 19 vaccinations. Commissioner Ramirez requested clarification on the number of instances and number of personnel numbers listed in EMS report on vaccinations. Jasper Brown responded/elaborated on the difference in the numbers in the report.

Rick Randall, presented APD's vaccinated data and Commissioner Gonzales asked him to explain why you don't have a number for sworn personnel vaccinated. Is this something that APD is not tracking? Mr. Randall responded APD is not tracking employee vaccinations and his best guess is that 50% of our APD population has been vaccinated.

There was much discussion on policies for COVID-19 vaccinations and mask requirements within public safety departments. Rick Randall commented APD sworn are informed via APD training bulletins as to COA requirements on mask wearing and vaccinations. There were additional comments and questions from the board members, Bernhardt, Ramirez, and Sierra-Arvelo on the polices and surveying APD employees. Rick Randall committed to conducting a survey before the next PSC meeting.

Chair Gonzales offered to bring this item back at the next meeting for more discussion and possible work on a possible recommendation concerning vaccinations and public safety.

**d. Discussion on APD Police Chief hiring process** (sponsors: Commissioners Gonzales and Ramirez) 5:25pm -5:55pm

Unfortunately, ACM Arellano was not able to attend today's meeting, however Chair Gonzales read his response via email on the Austin Police Chief hiring process at the meeting.

*From ACM Rey Arellano:*

*On August 30<sup>th</sup>, the City Manager and Assistant City Manager received feedback from the community sessions held August 17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>. In addition to reviewing this information, they are connecting with representatives in Los Angeles, Dallas and Austin to help inform their final decision. The City Manager intends to announce the successful candidate in early/mid-September. The earliest Council meeting that the City Manager can present the new Police Chief for confirmation is September 30<sup>th</sup>.*

**Chair Gonzales** asked for questions/discussion after reading the response and several commissioners responded:

Commissioner Lewis asked if there is any way to submit questions to the Police Chief candidates from community groups and advocates.

Commissioner Hausenfluck asked the commissioners who were invited to meet the candidates to share their experiences. The response from commissioners who attended was, it was a controlled, scripted interview where they were only allowed to ask a couple of questions. The consensus was they really did not learn anything about the candidates and Commissioner Webber commented she faulted the process not the candidates.

**3. Future Agenda Items (5:55-6:00pm)**

Update on Legislative Agenda – Gonzales

COVID Policy follow up data/information – Webber

Cost Associated with Prop A – Webber

Budget Recommendations from Reimaging Public Safety – Lewis

Impact of Forensic Lab and 911 moving back into APD - Bernhardt

Impact of ballot initiative on overall budget – Ramirez

APD Training Academy and 3<sup>rd</sup> party trainers cost and which trainers were hired – Sierra-Arevalo

Gender breakdown and equity in Public Safety – Webber

Office of Violence Prevention to present regularly at PSC meetings – Lewis

Invite COA Civil Rights Officer – Gonzales

Invite New Police Chief - Ramirez

**Adjourn @ 6pm**

Vote to adjourn:

Yes: Commissioners Ramirez, Webber, Austin, Lewis, Lane, Bernhardt, Gonzales, Kiracofe, Sierra-Arevalo, and Hausenfluck

No: None

Absent: None

Abstain: None

DRAFT