REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & CUSTOMER SERVICES

Voting Members:
Val A. Okimoto, Chair; Esther Kia'āina, Vice-Chair;
Scott Y. Nishimoto, Augie Tulba, Matt Weyer

Committee Meeting Held
May 29, 2025

Honorable Tommy Waters
Chair, City Council
City and County of Honolulu

Mr. Chair:

Your Committee on Public Safety & Customer Services, to which was referred the review and evaluation of the Honolulu Fire Commission ("Commission") pursuant to the Revised Ordinances of Honolulu 2021, Chapter 3, Article 15, reports as follows:

The purpose of the review and evaluation is to determine whether the Revised Charter of the City and County of Honolulu 1973 (2017 Edition) ("Charter") establishing the Commission should be retained, amended, or repealed. Ordinance 17-44 implements Charter Section 13-103.2, which mandates the periodic review and evaluation of certain City boards and commissions as provided by ordinance.

The Commission consists of seven members, appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Honolulu City Council ("Council"), to staggered terms pursuant to Charter Section 13-103.

The Commission was established by Charter Sections 6-1005 and 6-1006, and has the following powers, duties, and functions:

1) Appoint the Fire Chief, pursuant to Section 6-1003 of the Charter.

2) Adopt rules necessary for the conduct of Commission business and review the rules for the administration of the Honolulu Fire Department ("Department").

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3) Review the annual budget prepared by the Fire Chief and make recommendations thereon to the Mayor and the Council.

4) Review the Department's operations, as deemed necessary, for the purpose of recommending improvements to the Fire Chief.

5) Evaluate at least annually the performance of the Fire Chief and submit a report to the Mayor and the Council.

6) Review personnel actions within the Department for conformance with the policies under Section 6-1002 of the Charter.

7) Hear complaints of citizens concerning the Department or its personnel and, if deemed necessary, make recommendations to the Fire Chief on appropriate corrective actions.

8) Submit an annual report to the Mayor and the Council on its activities.

By Departmental Communication 77, dated January 28, 2025, the Commission submitted to the Council a report on its accomplishments and activities as required by the ordinance. By Departmental Communication 385, dated May 21, 2025, the Commission further amended its report.

At your Committee's meetings on April 3, 2025 and May 29, 2025, Fire Commission Chair David Matlin provided comments on the report.

No public testimony was received on the matter.

Your Committee, after due consideration, makes the following findings:

- Commissioners should continue to perform facility site visits to review operations to help assess and make recommendations on the Department's annual budget. The Commission should continue the practice of holding in-person meetings at Department facilities to facilitate further public access and participation.

- Encourages the Department to provide additional storage space for the Commission to ensure its paper files are secured until they can be converted into an electronic format. It is further recommended that the Commission work with the Managing Director to confirm if there is shared space at Kapalama Hale, and that access can be provided to ensure the safekeeping of paper files.

- Commends the Commission and its Secretary for maintaining a regularly updated website to ensure the public has access to meeting agendas, minutes, reports, and administrative rules.

- Your Committee finds and recommends that the Commission, in addition to e-mailing evaluations and annual reports, should consistently file them with the City Clerk, as they did in 2023.

- Recommends that the Commission reach out to the Charter Commission to address perceived ambiguity found in Section 6-1006 of the Charter.

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Based on the foregoing, your Committee makes the following recommendations:

1. That the Commission be retained in the Charter and continue to fulfill its powers, duties, and functions as prescribed by the Charter.

2. That no modifications or revisions to the Commission's membership number and qualifications; organization; purpose; or powers, duties, and functions under the Charter are needed at this time.

Your Committee on Public Safety & Customer Services recommends that this Committee Report be scheduled for a public hearing and be adopted by the Council as the Council's determination on the review and evaluation of the Honolulu Fire Commission. (Ayes: Kia'āina, Nishimoto, Okimoto, Tulba – 4; Noes: None; Absent: Weyer – 1.)

Respectfully submitted,

Val A. Okimoto

Committee Chair

HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL
Ke Kanihela o ke Kalana o Honolulu
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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