

News Release

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Robert Sapien:
<http://sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/80266>

City of San José Names New Fire Chief

Acting Fire Chief Robert Sapien, Jr. will assume the permanent role today, making him the 30th Fire Chief in San José history

SAN JOSE, Calif. (October 2, 2018) – City Manager David Sykes has appointed Robert Sapien, Jr. Fire Chief for the City of San José Fire Department, effective immediately. Sapien, currently the Acting Fire Chief, also holds the permanent Assistant Fire Chief position. In his role, he will lead 823 full-time staff who respond to approximately 91,000 calls for service each year and conducts approximately 12,000 thousand fire prevention inspections annually. He will oversee an annual operating budget of approximately \$238 million and a five-year capital budget of \$51.6 million.

A San José native, Sapien joined the San José Fire Department (SJFD) in 1989 as a Firefighter and has held six different positions during his nearly 30 years with the department. He has risen through the ranks at the City of San José, holding positions as a Fire Engineer, Fire Captain, Battalion Chief, and Deputy Chief of Bureau of Field Operations. In 2016, he was appointed Assistant Fire Chief, where he directed oversight of Bureau Directors including the Office of Emergency Services, Bureau of Support Services, and Bureau of Field Operations. Former Fire Chief Curtis Jacobson retired in late 2017, and Sapien assumed the role of Acting Fire Chief in December 2017.

“Chief Sapien has made significant contributions to the Department over the last three decades, and brings with him a tremendous amount of experience,” said David Sykes, City Manager. “He is committed to San Jose and he is devoted to our amazing Fire Department, and I am thankful for his leadership during this period of transition and continued service and response to our residents.”

Sapien’s career has spanned diverse operational experiences, administrative assignments, and almost 20 years of combined labor/management experience as both an IAFF Local 230 Executive Board elected officer and a member of the Department’s Senior Staff.

“Chief Sapien is a smart and capable leader, and I look forward to working closely with him to implement several key public safety initiatives,” said Mayor Sam Liccardo. “As a lifelong San Jose native who has risen through the ranks of the San Jose Fire Department, Robert also brings a wealth of experience that will greatly benefit both our department and our community in the years ahead.”

Under the “Vision 2023” Strategic Business Plan, SJFD has identified key focus areas including operations, sustainable workforce, community alliance, infrastructure and support, and revenue



generation and cost savings. Through these focus areas, the Department will strive to become a national leader in all-risk emergency response and fire prevention services by 2023.

“After 29 years of service, I am profoundly grateful and honored for the opportunities that the City and Fire Department have provided me, and I look forward to reinvesting my knowledge and experience back into the department,” said Sapien. “I am excited for what the Department will achieve in advancing our Vision 2023 plan, and how it will benefit the San José community.

Sapien holds Associate degrees in Fire Science Technology and Liberal Arts from Mission College, and a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science with a Public Administration Concentration from San Jose State University. He is an alum of Archbishop Mitty High School and has served the San José community through coaching youth sports and volunteering with Project Cornerstone, the East Valley Family YMCA, and the Big Brothers/ Big Sisters Program. He and his wife Denise live in San José, with their daughter, and two sons, who are both attending college away from home.

About the City of San José

With more than one million residents, San José is one of the most diverse large cities in the United States and is Northern California’s largest city and the 10th largest city in the nation. San José’s transformation into a global innovation center has resulted in one of the largest concentrations of technology companies and expertise in the world. In 2011, the City adopted Envision San José 2040, a long-term growth plan that sets forth a vision and a comprehensive road map to guide the City’s anticipated growth through the year 2040.

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