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Hayward Fire Chief Garrett Contreras retires but visionary legacy will endure

HAYWARD, Calif., June 7, 2024— Hayward Fire Chief Garrett Contreras retires today, bringing to a close a 30-year fire service career and 28 years with the Hayward Fire Department that began as a firefighter-paramedic in 1996 and will end after a 12-year run as Chief.

Prior to being appointed Hayward's 11th Fire Chief in 2012, Contreras was promoted to Captain in 2005, Battalion Chief in 2008, and Deputy Chief of Special Operations in 2011. He also served as President of Hayward Firefighters Local 1909 from 2002 to 2008 and chair of the union's Political Action Committee, which has been instrumental in passage of voter approved revenue measures to restore, sustain and improve Hayward municipal services, facilities, roadways and other critical infrastructure.

Contreras' tenure as Chief has been a period of innovation and leadership as the Fire Service has taken on a greater role in emergency medical response regionally, statewide and nationally. He also has been a visionary builder and creator of partnerships that will continue to serve the Hayward community and diversify and advance the Fire Service for decades to come.

Under Contreras, Hayward opened the nationally recognized Firehouse Clinic in November 2015. Co-located on the grounds of a new Fire Station No. 7 on Huntwood Avenue across from Tennyson Park, the Firehouse Clinic is managed and staffed by Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center and provides preventative and primary medical care in the South Hayward community.

In June 2023, also through Contreras' vision and leadership, Hayward and Chabot-Las Positas Community College District celebrated the opening of a new campus dedicated to fire, rescue and emergency response training and education. Made up of a new regional Fire & Rescue Training Center and new Fire Station No. 6 on the grounds of Hayward Executive Airport, the new campus is now the new home of the Chabot College Fire Academy, a base of operations for firefighting and paramedic response on the City's westside, and a state-of-the-art facility for fire service continuing education and learning locally, regionally and beyond. It also hosts Eden Area Regional Occupational Program (ROP)

educators and students, providing a laboratory for hands-on training and a base for career-oriented mentor relationships between Hayward firefighter-paramedics and area high school-age youth.

Between the opening of the Firehouse Clinic and the new Training Center and Station No. 6, Contreras oversaw the seismic strengthening and updating of five neighborhood fire stations, teamed up with a Menlo Park laboratory to establish the first city-initiated free COVID-19 testing site in the nation, and helped start with the Hayward Police Department a program called Hayward Evaluation and Response Teams, or HEART, to more effectively and safely respond to people who are homeless and experiencing behavioral and mental health crises.

The COVID-19 testing site, initially opened on the grounds of Fire Station No. 7 on March 23, 2020, and later moved to Cal State University East Bay, would set the tone for a City of Hayward response to the pandemic that would include a City- and volunteer-staffed hotline call center, weekly no-contact food distribution, eventually a COVID-19 vaccine clinic at Station No. 7, and an array of grant programs to sustain local businesses and help them recover that continue today.

Contreras' contributions extend beyond the City of Hayward. He serves on the Board of Directors of St. Rose Hospital, where he has been a leading force to help put the safety-net hospital on a sustainable economic path. He also has co-chaired an Alameda County Health Care Services Agency Emergency Medical Services Redesign Working Group trying to improve ambulance response countywide. Previously, he served on the Alameda County Central Labor Council executive board.

On Tuesday, the Hayward City Council celebrated Chief Contreras' career and contributions, presenting him with a Certificate of Commendation for his "untiring dedication" and "unwavering service," and for "making the Hayward community a safer and better place to live, work and play."