

To: Erie County Legislature

May Work Session

From: Tom Chmielowiec Sr.
Erie Community College
FASNY Representative for ECC Transition Programs

Dear Legislative Members,

The following report reflects on the past 4 years of the FASNY (Fireman's Association State of New York) Grant. This grant was established to allow Volunteer Firefighters from across the state to get tuition assistance at any of the 30 community colleges in New York State.

The original Federal grant totaled 9 million. FASNY was given 4.2 million for the tuition assistance program. The remainder of the money was distributed across the state for other public safety purposes. The Erie County Fire Safety Division received funds from this allocation for firefighter recruitment under the Firefighter -1 program. Because of this, Erie Community College was not eligible to receive FASNY funds. The grant became active in the fall 2011. During the winter 2012, through the efforts of Leg. Ed Rath, Leg. Body and a special committee formed, a resolution was drawn up to allow ECC to participate in the grant without issue. Three other counties had similar issues. The resolution signed in Erie County granted them the same privilege. This FASNY grant was a 4 year grant and runs out in June 2015.

FASNY has applied for another grant of approximately 9 million for the next 4 years. The application was submitted in February 2015. We are hoping to hear something by July. Since this Legislature had great influence the last time, my committee and FASNY is asking you, the honorable body, to draft a letter to FEMA re-enforcing our interest in getting another 4 year grant state wide.

Letter(s) of support for our new grant application should be sent to:

Brian E. Kamoie
Assistant Administrator, Grant Programs Directorate
Federal Emergency Management Agency
800 K. Street NW, 9th Floor North Tower
Washington, DC 20001
Fax: 202 – 786 – 9938

Beneficial Results for Erie County:

- 242 local firefighters have taken courses at Erie Community College since Fall 2012. ECC has taken in approximately \$1.2 million in revenue due to this program with additional tuition assistance from TAP /Pell, Private Scholarships, VA Funding, and the FASNY reimbursement.
- The 242 firefighters that have registered at ECC represent 89 local fire companies in Erie and surrounding counties.
- The FASNY tuition assistance has increased interest in joining fire companies under the recruitment and retention plan and has increased fire company enrollment by 1,600 over the past 3 years.
- Provides professional development for Firefighters and an incentive to continue their service while completing degrees.

- Starts the foundation to build on from childhood to adulthood.
- Offers an incentive through the fire company and workforce development at ECC to assist getting a job in a field of choice.
- Allows firefighter to save money for bachelor's degree if desired to further their education.



SAFER Grant Application Background Information

Presently, volunteer firefighters provide emergency response to more than 10 million New Yorkers spread over 47,214 square miles. In the 1990's, there were approximately 110,000 volunteer firefighters in New York. By 2010 that number had precipitously dropped to around 84,000. While firefighting tactics and equipment constantly advance, protecting lives and property is fundamentally dependent on having enough trained individuals available when a need arises. Unfortunately, in many communities around New York this is not the case.

In 2010, the Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY) was awarded a Federal Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant to address the chronic decline of volunteer firefighters. The activities contained in that grant request were designed to assess the statewide status of the service, stem the loss of personnel and to implement structural mechanisms to reverse the deterioration. In fact, our current action plan and activities have been used as templates by other states and the National Volunteer Fire Council to secure their own SAFER awards.

Yet, despite our accomplishments, New York's volunteer service is still significantly understaffed. In fact, too many of our fire departments still indicate that their average turnout per incident is seven (7) total individuals, often with three (3) or less that are qualified to conduct suppression efforts. This number is inadequate to safely and effectively mount a fire attack or address a non-fire emergency incident. An equally alarming reality is that fire companies in New York have closed or been absorbed by other entities as a result of insufficient manpower. This puts increased stress and fatigue on neighboring departments and decreases public safety due to the limitations of mutual aid response.

A highly educated, motivated and trained volunteer fire service is a key factor in determining the level of public safety in the state. Further, alternatives to a volunteer firefighting force are simply unaffordable in many of our communities. In fact, a 2003 study by the American Economics Group concluded that the costs associated with the replacement of the volunteer fire service with a paid fire service would result in a 19.7% annual property tax increase. If a community were to lose their volunteer base and move to a career force they would be faced with either a significant tax increase or a reduction in personnel and equipment. Therefore, preserving a healthy and growing volunteer fire service is in the best interest of both the government and the citizenry.

Our SAFER funded efforts have slowed the decades of hemorrhaging personnel. It is now time to build on the momentum we have created and bring New York's volunteer fire service back to health. Towards this goal, we have recently applied for a new SAFER grant to continue to implement our recruitment and retention action plan. This grant request represents a public safety investment that comes out to less than one dollar per person we protect.

FASNY Program Financial Report

Semester	FASNY	TAP	PEL	STUDENT	FTE FUNDS	TOTAL \$	Roster	Active
Fall 2012	\$27,192.00	\$7,061.00	\$3,400.00	\$38,600.61	\$35,724.50	\$84,786.11	38	34
Spring 2013	\$32,843.00	\$10,914.50	\$5,516.00	\$38,890.80	\$35,724.50	\$91,045.80	79	46
Fall 2013	\$30,384.00	\$16,296.50	\$27,387.00	\$124,567.08	\$53,816.84	\$222,067.42	73	54
Spring 2014	\$23,205.00	\$10,770.50	\$21,938.00	\$54,142.75	\$49,852.83	\$136,704.08	79	46
Fall 2014		\$32,195.00	\$61,000.00	\$194,132.87	\$103,580.00	\$390,907.87	204	104
Spring 2015		\$23,990.00	\$55,980.00	\$139,450.25		\$219,420.25	242	85
		\$101,227.50	\$175,221.00	\$589,784.36		\$1,144,931.53		

Projected ECC Income for Spring 2015 with FTE Funds: \$1.2 Million

Fall 2014	\$113,624.00	\$77,237.50	\$119,241.00	\$450,334.11	\$278,698.67	Total ECC Has Received
	Student Rebate					
						\$925,511.28

Fall 2014 Final Report in May 2015