

## Response to Questions on the FY 2010 County's Line of Business & Schools Program Review Processes Fall 2008

**Request By:** Chairman Connolly

**Question:** Could the Fire and Rescue Department's Peer Fitness Trainer Program (proposed reduction #16) potentially be outsourced?

**Response:** The job of fighting fires and responding to emergency situations is one of the most dangerous and physically demanding professions. To help improve the safety, performance and quality of life of uniformed personnel, the Peer Fitness Trainer Program was developed.

Peer Fitness Trainers hold a Peer Fitness Trainer (PFT) Certification developed by the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and the American Council on Exercise. The PFT Certification identifies fire fighters that have demonstrated a certain level of knowledge and skill required to design and implement fitness programs, improve the wellness and fitness of their departments and assist with the physical training of recruits during the physically challenging entry tests.

The Fire and Rescue Department (FRD) does not recommend outsourcing this program. The knowledge, skills and abilities required to function in a peer fitness capacity within the fire service are highly specialized. The role of a Peer Fitness Trainer differs from a Personal Trainer since fire service personnel have very specific needs and an extreme work environment well beyond what the average exerciser will ever face.

Peer Fitness Trainers need to have first hand knowledge of the complexities in the fire and rescue service in order to effectively provide oversight, evaluation and mentoring in the following areas: work performance evaluation, candidate physical abilities testing, physical training of candidates, recruits, and incumbents, incumbent physical fitness assessment, fitness facilities and equipment management, fitness and wellness related information dissemination, and a mentoring program for personnel who fail to meet or who are at risk of failing to meet FRD physical standards.

The cost of the current Peer Fitness Trainer Program is \$132,801 annually. This includes one full-time position and 30 peer fitness trainers to provide support to 1,558 career and volunteer uniform members of the department, in addition to mentoring and testing applicants participating in the Candidate Physical Abilities Test (CPAT). The minimum hours required to support this program equals 4,672.

This program is also a part of the 1997 IAFC/IAFF Wellness Fitness Initiative endorsed by the department to comply with Fairfax County's recruitment and hiring process in ensuring a balanced and healthy workforce. Statistics from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reveal that outsourcing this service could cost upwards of

\$100.00 per hour with the average hourly fee of \$48.75. Based on this statistic, the minimum cost to outsource the 4,672 hours would be \$227,760 annually, which is an increase of \$94,959 over current program costs.