

Dollars and Sense:

The Argument for Maintaining the Cleveland Fire Training Academy

The Cleveland Fire Training Academy has been the starting point for Cleveland Fire Fighters since 1965¹, providing Cadets with a consistent and quality foundation for their careers. Fire fighting in a large, urban environment is different than in suburban or rural areas, which is why every major city in Ohio and most across the country train their own firefighters.

It should be noted when the City of Akron (large by fire service standards, but still about half Cleveland's size) experimented with subcontracting initial training, a great deal of their training was left to their respective fire suppression officers (similar to the "on-the-job" training provided in Cleveland prior to 1965), not the academy instructors. These cadets were less prepared, and their supervisors had to spend more time working with them, reducing efficiency. As a result, Akron has gone back to training their recruits at their own Fire Academy.

It is vital to the future of the Cleveland Division of Fire that we not repeat Akron's mistake. Cleveland should maintain the efficient, effective and valuable asset it has in the Cleveland Fire Training Academy.

EFFICIENCY

The City's assertion that it needs to subcontract cadet training to Tri-C due to accreditation issues is a falsehood. The City can partner with the State Fire Marshall for accreditation at no cost. As it pertains to current practices, as cited in the *Overall Benefit and Cost Comparison*, "Tri-C currently administers and manages the initial Cleveland FTA training, provides college educational credits and instructor courses at **no cost** to the City of Cleveland." (Emphasis added). In other words, currently accreditation issues are already adequately addressed or can be at no cost to the City.

Considering both of these factors, it defies logic that the City would want to advance a concept that would actually increase its costs by hundreds of thousands of dollars for something it is presently receiving gratis.

¹ Prior to 1965, CFD still trained its new cadet fire fighters by "on the job" training.

Accreditation aside, subcontracting training to Tri-C will dilute the pool of instructor candidates available, as electing to be an instructor will no longer be a decision made during the scope of a Cleveland Firefighter's employment, but as an ancillary, temporary "part time" opportunity.

Being part-time, the instructors will be unavailable on days when they are on shift, or selected for overtime, and this will naturally affect the continuity of the instruction. Put plainly: Would you enroll your child in a school where the teachers missed every third day? Additionally, much of the instruction will be done by members of suburban or other fire departments who will lack the practical and institutional knowledge of the Cleveland Fire Department.

Concerns regarding leadership are also arguments to keep the training in Cleveland, where the City controls and determines the selection of instructors from the widest array of well-qualified candidates. Tri-C will select their own leadership from a partial pool of candidates willing and available only on a part-time basis.

Assertions by the City that Cleveland Fire Fighter will constitute a significant portion of the instructors at the Tri-C Academy are without merit. There is no way to predict whether Cleveland Fire Fighters will seek employment as part-time instructors at Tri-C. And any attempt by the City to "detail" or "loan" Cleveland Fire Fighters to work as instructors for another public employer may not be legal under the City's own Charter, codified ordinances, and/or state law (especially considering public monies would be transferred from the City of Cleveland to Tri-C). Regardless of these issues and in any event, the Union submits it would not be allowable under the terms of the CBA.

EFFECTIVENESS

Tri-C and the City's proposals have a shorter curriculum², less classroom work and no physical training (PT). The PT at the FTA not only tests and proves the mettle of the candidates, but builds in habits and lessons to lengthen careers and minimize injuries, thereby saving the City in the long run.

The need for a 2-3 week "bridge/class academy" at the Cleveland FTA (after cadets supposedly "finish" the Tri-C academy) points out the folly of this proposal. Currently, Cadets leave the Cleveland FTA ready to go to work as Fire Fighters. Tri-C Fire Cadets will leave ready to go... to

² For example, standard *Cleveland FTA* cadet class includes "Hazardous Materials Technician" (HAZ-MAT- Tech) certification. The Tri-C proposal does not provide this training, as it is not part of the "standard" State of Ohio Fire Fighter I and II certification training which is only "HAZ-MAT Operations".

more training at the Cleveland FTA? Additionally, the estimated length of time for this “bridge” training is unrealistically low. For example, when Cleveland Police brought in trained and experienced police officers from other jurisdictions, their abbreviated “bridge academy” was eight (8) weeks long. Similar “Clevelandizing” on the Fire Department will lengthen the academy time and add to the expense of the Tri-C proposal.

Results are what matter in the Fire Service. The Cleveland FTA has had a 100% passing rate for the State Fire Exam for the last eight academies. The 2014 class had a first-time pass rate for the National EMT Registry Test of 90%--compared to a National Average of 72%. The training is intense and condensed, but the results speak for themselves.

VALUE

The Cleveland Fire Department operates its Fire Training Academy in the following manner. Continuing education and training is conducted for existing members when a cadet class is not in session. This instruction is provided by the regular FTA staff, who are assigned to the FTA full time on a “40-hour shift” (i.e., these instructors are not assigned to a fire suppression company). When an academy class is in session, the regular FTA staff is augmented by “detailing” fire fighters from fire suppression companies.

By the City’s figures, the total cost for the last class of 37 cadets at the FTA was **\$166,874.62 or \$4,510 per cadet** (redacting \$128,205 included for turnout gear, as that is the cost for any new firefighter, not a training-related cost.)³. However, the Union submits the true cost for a Cleveland Fire Training Academy class is actually lower.

Here’s why:

1. Part of the costs for textbooks(\$17,686) and video training supplements (\$2,500) are actually amortized to subsequent academy classes since many of these materials are used for the next cadet class (the Union does not believe these materials are discarded or become so outdated by the next cadet class that they are unusable).

³ See Attachment #1- Public Record request from City of Cleveland from June 23, 2014 identifying costs to City of Cleveland for the most recent 2014 Cadet Class. The turnout gear provided to Cadets at the Cleveland FTA is what they “hit the streets with” upon graduation. While Tri-C may provide gear for their academy class, ultimately the City of Cleveland will have to provide turnout gear to each cadet upon graduation.

2. As it pertains to the fire fighters “detailed” to the FTA to augment the instruction and training staff for a cadet class, the City has not provided documentary support for its claim that back-fill overtime was required for each detailed instructor’s position each shift⁴.
3. The City has included the costs for the regular FTA staff instructors (\$25,589) as part of the overall cost. As described above, these instructors would be receiving this pay *regardless* of the existence of a cadet class. It is undisputed there is no “back-fill overtime” for these fire fighters, as they are regularly assigned to the FTA as instructors on a full-time basis.

The true cost of a Cleveland FTA cadet class would allow for reasonable amortization of 33% for the training texts and videos (**-\$6,661.38**). This brings the true cost for these materials per class to roughly \$13,524.62 not the \$20,186 City cites. Additionally, since there is no “back-fill overtime” for regular FTA instructors since they are assigned to the FTA regardless of a cadet class being in session, this cost (**-\$25,589.48**) must be redacted from the true cost as well. Thus, even allowing for “back-fill overtime” for each and every shift for the “detailed” instructors (which the City has not proven and the Union disagrees with as indicated above) this brings the true cost for the most recent cadet class to **\$134,623.76, or \$3638.48 per cadet**.

By comparison, Tri-C cost for a class of that size would be \$229,400, or \$6,200 per cadet⁵. However, the true cost is actually *higher*, since this does not account for the 2-3 weeks of instruction the City has indicated the cadets will need after they “finish” the Tri-C Academy. This could push the total cost up by \$15,000 to \$22,500⁶ or an additional \$400-600 per cadet, bringing the true cost up to as high as **\$251,900 or \$6,800 per cadet**. As the facts plainly show, by any comparison the costs for Cleveland Fire Fighters to train cadets is substantially lower, while providing a higher level of training, than subcontracting this service to Tri-C.

Perhaps the most cost-prohibitive element of the Tri-C proposal is the continuing education components. Annual costs for Paramedic Con-Ed (\$50,000), Paramedic Recertification (\$150,000), EMT Con-Ed (\$150,000) and Firefighter, EMT and Paramedic On-line Con-Ed

⁴ The term back-fill overtime describes the process of filling the fire suppression positions of fire fighters detailed to the FTA to serve as instructors. While there is invariable some back fill overtime associated with details from fire suppression to the FTA, these costs are *only* incurred if and when the Division of Fire is below its daily staffing level. If the staffing level is at or above this threshold, no back-fill overtime costs are incurred.

⁵ See attachment #2 “Proposal submitted to City of Cleveland Fire Department” from Tri-C.

⁶ Total Cleveland FTA cost (\$134,623) divided by number of weeks of the Academy (18) = roughly \$7,500 per week

(\$150,000) adds up to \$500,000 before per year before you add in the cost of Division of EMS and Fire education staffs supervising, supplementing and supporting the training. At this cost level, these service can be easily provided by existing Cleveland Fire Department personnel, even if some overtime costs are incurred. Moreover, the continuing education curriculum could be tailored to the needs specific to Cleveland's neighborhoods while ensuring consistency in the instruction staff.

Conclusion

The unquantifiable benefits of The Cleveland FTA training new cadets are substantial. Instructors with the institutional knowledge of the City of Cleveland provide hands on training. The Cleveland Fire Department does not operate based on the standards of the non-existent "Tri-C Fire Department". Rather, it operates based on its own General Orders (GO's) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's). And it is undisputed, even by Tri-C, that **no one** possesses the familiarity, knowledge, and expertise on CFD's GO's and SOP's the way Cleveland Fire Fighters do.

By maintaining the Fire Training Academy, the City avoids the risk of handing such vital records and documentation off-site with a third party. Imagine when Tri-C proves ineffective or cost-prohibitive and the city, learning the lesson of Akron all over again, is forced to recreate the continuing education infrastructure from scratch. What a waste of taxpayer money on an idea that is clearly not the industry standard.

Tri-C has most likely come in at its lowest possible price point "to hook the fish". However, it is not unusual in the world of contracts for the price to go up once the customer is reliably on the line. An initial willingness of a low profit margin (despite the fact Tri-C's proposal is substantially costlier) might not continue in the future.

The Cleveland Fire Training Academy is an efficient, effective and valuable asset for both Cadet and Veteran Cleveland Fire Fighters. The City would be wise to invest in improving and maintaining the FTA for the betterment of the Division of Fire and the citizens of Cleveland.



Proposal Date: March 27, 2014

**Proposal
 Submitted to
 City of Cleveland
 Cleveland Fire Department**

OVERVIEW

The Fire Training Academy at Cuyahoga Community College was established in 1971 to provide firefighter initial training to regional communities. We currently administer 5 Firefighter II academies a year, as well as a High School EMT/Firefighter 2 Program for 3 school districts. The Fire Training Academy is certified to provide ProBoard skills testing which the Ohio Department of Public Safety has mandated for all academies after January 1, 2014. The Associate Degree in Fire Science has been revised to adhere to the FESHE (Federal Emergency Services Higher Education) standards. This allows our students upon completion of an Associate's Degree, a career pathway towards a Bachelors or Master's Degree in Emergency Management.

The City of Cleveland seeks to provide Firefighter II and EMT-Basic training to recently hired recruits for the position of Firefighter. This training should enable the participant to sit for and take the State of Ohio Firefighter 1 & 2, and National Registry EMT Basic exam.

CONTENT

Course Title	Contact Hours
Firefighter 1 & 2	335
EMT Basic	152

COURSE OUTCOMES (FF1 & 2 and EMT Basic Outcomes)

Firefighter 1 & 2

The Fire Training Academy curriculum meets and exceeds the certification requirements established in the Ohio Revised Code for career firefighters (Firefighter Level II), as well as the training and educational standards identified in NFPA 1001 of the current edition of Firefighter Professional Qualifications. Completion of Tri-C's 260-hour Fire Training Academy earns the Cadet the following: Certification in Hazardous Materials/WMD – **Awareness and Operations** levels, **13** college credits toward Tri-C's two-year Associate of Applied Science degree in Fire Technology, NIMS 100 and 700 certifications, and Emergency Vehicle Operation Certification. To successfully complete the program, cadets must complete 260-hours of coursework and Practical Skills Drills. Upon successful completion of all training, Cadets take the **Pro Board** Skills Certification tests mandated by the State of Ohio and then the State of Ohio Firefighter Level II Written Exam.



EMT Basic

This program is designed for individuals providing emergency medical service to the community. Certification is provided by the Ohio Dept. of Public Safety, Division of EMS. The graduate may function on the levels required by Ohio Law to provide basic and advanced life support under the direction of a physician, as well as to provide supervision of operations in an emergency service. Upon successful completion the student receives 7 college credits toward Tri-C's two-year Associate of Applied Science degree in Emergency Medical Technology. A criminal background check must be completed through a program approved source prior to participation in clinical or field experiences. State of Ohio EMS Accreditation number: 312.

PROPOSED DELIVERY

Courses will be taught during the dates/times specified below:

	Courses	Days	Date	Time	Location
1	Firefighter 1 & 2	Monday thru Friday	TBD	8 am -5 pm	TBD
2	EMT Basic	Monday thru Friday	TBD	8 am -5 pm	TBD
3					

This will be a physically demanding class and students must be in excellent physical condition. Course materials are included in training. A copy of the students physical will be required for entry into the program.

Cuyahoga Community College will provide course management, instructors, testing and study materials, classroom, firefighting equipment, and training ground scenarios. Cuyahoga Community College will provide live burn training, all ProBoard Firefighter and National Registry EMT Basic skill testing, and a facility to hold a 1-week orientation before class starts. An additional 75 hours above the 260 state requirements to include:

- Physical Training
- Personal Protective Equipment/SCBA
- Practical Evolutions
- Departmental SOP's and Policies and Procedures

Cuyahoga Community College will provide Personal Protective gear, Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus with spare bottles, and the required Firefighter and EMT textbooks. The City of Cleveland will also facilitate required Ride-Time with Cleveland EMS.



Proposal Date: November 22, 2013

**Proposal
 Submitted to
 City of Cleveland
 Cleveland Fire Department**

Addendum

The price change is based on request for smaller class increments and increase in Firefighter 1 & 2 training from 300 hours to 335 hours. All other training, equipment and credits are the same as listed in the original draft proposal dated November 15, 2013.

COST Per Person

COURSES	Class Cost (for 10 Participants)	Class Cost (for 15 Participants)	Class Cost (for 20 Participants)	Class Cost (for 25 Participants)
Firefighter 1 & 2 and EMT Basic standalone Cleveland personnel	\$11,000	\$8,700	\$7,200	\$6,200

COURSES	Class Cost (for 10 Participants)	Class Cost (for 15 Participants)	Class Cost (for 20 Participants)	Class Cost (for 25 Participants)
Firefighter 1 & 2 and EMT Basic and becoming part of open enrollment class	\$8,400	\$7,400	\$6,600	\$6,200

Accepted:

Date

FTA 2014 Class			Line Total
Backfill for Detailed Instructors			\$ 118,509.14
Instructor Overtime Costs			\$ 25,589.48
			\$ 144,098.62
Materials	Class Size	Unit Cost	Line Total
Turnout Clothing (w/ facepiece)	37	\$ 3,465.00	\$ 128,205.00
Texts and Workbooks	37	\$ 478.00	\$ 17,686.00
Video Training Supplements	1	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00
National Registry Testing Fee	37	\$ 70.00	\$ 2,590.00
			\$ 150,981.00
		Grand Total	\$ 295,079.62