


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 18, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 56 : COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT)

This memorandum is in response to Councilman Gaines' request for information on the costs associated with increasing the number of citizens trained in the Community Response Team (CERT) program to keep pace with citizen demand for CERT training.

Following the events of September 11, 2001, the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program was developed as a national program by the Department of Homeland Security to train citizens in disaster preparedness and disaster volunteer response. The curriculum educates citizens in the basic skills of fire safety, disaster medical operations, light search and rescue, disaster psychology, and terrorism. With CERT training, citizens can prepare their communities and help neighbors or workplace colleagues in the aftermath of a disaster.

The Alexandria CERT program is administered through the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), which falls under the auspices of the City's Fire Department. CERT classes are provided to residents and businesses and take approximately 30 hours to complete. "Citizen" CERT classes are conducted over a nine-week period, one evening each week. These evening classes accommodate up to 20 people. The Department plans six classes annually and spends approximately \$5,000 per class, or approximately \$250 per student. "Business" CERT classes are conducted during the day and can be completed in a shorter period of time, depending on the schedule established by City personnel and the particular business. The business classes are less costly to hold since less overtime is required to conduct the classes during the day. To date 165 "citizen" CERT members and 30 "business" CERT members have been trained.

There remains a number of citizens, civic associations and churches on the waiting list to take the class. However, staff is confident that the current six classes per year is enough to meet the demand. If it became necessary to increase the number of classes to meet additional demand, not only would additional funds be required, but other factors would come into play, including the number of available instructors and the amount of overtime required to staff each additional class.

The City was awarded a federal pass-through Citizens Corp Program (CCP) grant from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management in June 2004, in the amount of \$24,000, to fund approximately five CERT classes during this calendar year. Of these grant funded CERT classes and due to the relatively small size of each class to date, three have been completed to date at a cost of \$11,222, leaving a balance sufficient enough to fund two to three more classes depending on class size. After those grant monies are expended, no additional monies are budgeted for this program. OEM is in the process of seeking additional grant funds, approximately \$25,000, to hold six classes in CY 2006.

Assuming those funds materialize, the OEM program staff and previously trained CERT members plan to target neighborhoods not already well covered with trained citizens and advertise the program to get broader coverage throughout the City.