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**THE COUNCIL**

**COMMITTEE REPORT**

**OF THE GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS DIVISION**

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**COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

**Joseph C. Borelli, Chairman**

May 28, 2020

**Res. No. 1062-A** By Council Members Miller, Cumbo, Adams, Chin, Rosenthal, Borelli, Rodriguez, Moya, Kallos, Koo, Ayala, Brannan, Holden, Ampry-Samuel, Lander, Cabrera, Constantinides, Menchaca, Reynoso, Louis, King, Richards, Rose, Cornegy, Powers and Rivera

**Title:** A resolution calling for the salaries of New York City emergency medical service personnel to be comparable to New York City’s firefighters and police officers.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

On May 28, 2020 the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management, Chaired by Joseph C. Borelli, voted on Resolution Number 1062-A (“Res. No. 1062-A”), which calls for the salaries of New York City emergency medical service personnel to be comparable to New York City's firefighters and police officers. The vote was five affirmative, zero negative, and zero abstentions. The Committee previously held a hearing and received testimony on Resolution Number 1062 on January 28, 2020.

1. **BACKGROUND**

*New York City’s Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services*

The FDNY’s core responsibility and expertise has evolved from an exclusive emphasis on fighting traditional structural fires and providing pre-hospital care to an expanded role in handling all types of emergencies. These emergencies include hazardous materials incidents, building collapses, transportation accidents, utility-related emergencies, natural disasters, extensive medical responses and acts of terrorism, throughout the City.[[1]](#footnote-1) Currently, EMS is responsible for delivering ambulance and pre-hospital emergency medical services Citywide. According to the Department, since FDNY became responsible for EMS, the only ambulances routinely dispatched via the City’s Emergency 9-1-1 system (“9-1-1 system”) are municipal ambulances and voluntary hospital-based ambulances under contract with the City.[[2]](#footnote-2) Although community based volunteer ambulances respond to medical emergencies, they are not routinely dispatched via the 9-1-1 system.[[3]](#footnote-3) According to the most recent information published by FDNY, there are approximately 4,400 EMS personnel working for the Department. During Fiscal Year 2019, FDNY and EMS responded to more than 1.5 million medical emergencies including 567,757 life-threatening incidents.[[4]](#footnote-4)

*EMS Attrition**and Pay Inequality*

Despite responding to more that 80 percent of the City’s emergency call volume, EMS receives approximately 16 percent of FDNY’s total budget.[[5]](#footnote-5) As a result of budget constraints, EMS operations may be impacted by deficits in ambulance and station operations, and low salaries that may hinder recruitment and retention efforts.

Disparity in pay and benefits have prompted hundreds of EMS personnel to become firefighters in recent years.[[6]](#footnote-6) EMS personnel receive preferential treatment in hiring through the FDNY’s promotional exam for firefighters; and since 2013, 1,533 have gone on to become firefighters.[[7]](#footnote-7) As a result there are fewer and less-experienced emergency medical personnel: currently 60 percent of EMS staff has less than three years of experience.[[8]](#footnote-8) Additionally, as a result of low financial compensation, a significant number of EMS personnel choose to work long periods of overtime[[9]](#footnote-9) or take a second job, in order to earn a living wage.[[10]](#footnote-10) Overworked EMS personnel doing a highly stressful job, likely results in burnout and high rates of turnover. Furthermore, the City witnessed extreme duress placed on EMS workers during the COVID-19 outbreak. At the height of the outbreak as many as 7,000 emergency calls were placed in a single day, a level not seen since September 11, 2001; including the highest three-day call volume in FDNY history.[[11]](#footnote-11)

1. **ANALYSIS OF RESOLUTION NO. 1062-A**

Res. No. 1062-A calls for salaries of New York City emergency medical service personnel to be comparable to New York City’s firefighters and police officers. Res. No. 1062-A would explain that during the City’s 2018 Fiscal Year, there were approximately 4,400 EMS personnel on staff charged with responding to more than 1.5 million medical emergencies, which included nearly 569,000 life-threatening incidents. Further, Res. No.1062-A cites that approximately 30% of EMS’ staff are women and more than 50% are minorities, and that according to the FDNY, EMTs receive a starting salary of $35,254, which increases to only $50,604 after five years. Res. No. 1062-A notes that EMS Paramedics receive a starting salary of $48,237, which increases to only $65,226 after five years. And, that starting salaries of the City’s police officers and firefighters are nearly $8,000 more than that of EMS; while after five years of service, FDNY firefighters make approximately $110,000 including fringe benefits. Additionally, EMS members receive only 12 days of leave sick annually compared to unlimited sick leave for firefighters and due to exposure of COVID-19, one quarter of EMS members called out sick at the height of the pandemic, resulting in the deaths of four active duty EMS members.[[12]](#footnote-12) Res. No. 1062-A highlights that it is long overdue for the City to ensure that EMTs, Paramedics and EMS Officers are compensated fairly, and offered substantial wage increases so that they are paid similar to other first responders. By remedying this long-standing pay disparity, the City would help provide equality among EMS and other emergency medical personnel as well as boost moral for EMS personnel.

Res. No. 1062-A

..Title

Resolution calling for the salaries of New York City emergency medical service personnel to be comparable to New York City’s firefighters and police officers.

..Body

By Council Members Miller, Cumbo, Adams, Chin, Rosenthal, Borelli, Rodriguez, Moya, Kallos, Koo, Ayala, Brannan, Holden, Ampry-Samuel, Lander, Cabrera, Constantinides, Menchaca, Reynoso, Louis, King, Richards, Rose, Cornegy, Powers and Rivera

Whereas, The brave men and women who serve the Fire Department of New York’s (“FDNY”) Bureau of Emergency Medical Services (“EMS”) respond to life threatening injuries and medical emergencies, helping to ensure the well-being of the residents of New York City, as well as those who work in and visit the City; and

Whereas, EMS is one of the most diverse groups of first responders in the City’s workforce, comprised of approximately 30% women and more than 50% minorities; and

Whereas, During Fiscal Year 2018, there were approximately 4,400 EMS personnel on staff which were charged with responding to more than 1.5 million medical emergencies including nearly 569,000 life-threatening incidents; and

Whereas, EMS runs account for more than 80% of the FDNY’s annual emergency calls; and

Whereas, These emergency medical service personnel respond to every major life threatening emergency that occurs in the City; and

Whereas, These emergencies include hazardous materials incidents, building collapses, transportation accidents, utility-related emergencies, natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and extensive medical responses, throughout the City; and

Whereas, Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the bravery and dedication of the City’s EMS has been nationally highlighted; and

Whereas, The FDNY directed that only EMS would initially respond to calls in which COVID-19 symptoms were reported; and

Whereas, At the peak of the outbreak, as many as 7,000 emergency calls were placed in a single day, a level not seen since September 11, 2001; including the highest three-day call volume in FDNY history; and

Whereas, EMS members receive only 12 days of leave sick annually compared to unlimited sick leave for firefighters; and

Whereas, Due to exposure of COVID-19, one quarter of EMS members called out sick at the height of the pandemic, resulting in the deaths of four active duty EMS members; and

Whereas, Despite working what felt like endless shifts during the pandemic, beleaguered EMS workers continued to answer the call of New Yorkers in need; and

Whereas, The daily heroism of EMS workers continues to be underappreciated as they are not fairly compensated when compared to other City first responders; and

Whereas, In recognition of EMS workers’ valor and commitment to the people and visitors of our great City, New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson and Council Member I. Daneek Miller have publicly called for higher wages and increased benefits for our City’s Best; and

Whereas, According to the FDNY, EMS Emergency Medical Technicians (“EMT”) receive a starting salary of $35,254, which increases to only $50,604 after 5 years; and

Whereas, Additionally, EMS Paramedics receive a starting salary $48,237, which increases to only $65,226 after five years; and

Whereas, Starting salaries of the City’s police officers and firefighters are nearly $8,000 more than that of EMS; and

Whereas, After five years of service, FDNY firefighters make approximately $110,000 including fringe benefits; and

Whereas, It is long overdue for the City to ensure that EMTs, Paramedics and EMS Officers are compensated fairly and offered substantial wage increases to ensure they are paid similar to other first responders; and

Whereas, Remedying this long-standing pay disparity would help provide equality among EMS and other emergency medical personnel in the New York City as well as boost moral for our City’s Best; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls for the salaries of New York City emergency medical service personnel to be comparable to New York City’s firefighters and police officers.

WJH

5/27/20

LS 11553

1. FDNY Strategic Plan found at http://www.nyc.gov/html/fdny/pdf/pr/2004/strategic\_plan/responsibilities.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Letter from Caroline Kretz, Associate Commissioner Intergovernmental Affairs, N.Y. City Fire Dep’t, to Elizabeth S. Crowley, Chair, Comm. on Fire & Criminal Just. Servs., N.Y. City Council, Feb. 11, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. New York City Council Fire and Criminal Justice Services oversight hearing transcript- The FDNY and its Utilization of Neighborhood Volunteer Ambulances, Feb. 23, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 2019 Mayor’s Management Report at <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2018/fdny.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. FY20 Adopted Budget; testimony by Local 2507 at City Council Hearing. February 26, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Editorial Board, Emergency Medical Workers Deserve Pay Equity, September 21, 2019 New York Times. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Editorial Board, Emergency Medical Workers Deserve Pay Equity, September 21, 2019 New York Times. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Testimony by Local 2507 at City Council Hearing. February 26, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. EMS accounted for 1.2 million hours of overtime in 2018, an increase from 893,000 hours in 2008, despite the addition of 1,000 EMS personnel during that time period. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Editorial Board, Emergency Medical Workers Deserve Pay Equity, September 21, 2019 New York Times. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Johnson, C and Miller, I. Daneek, *Enough Talk, Time to Give FDNY EMS Their Due*, Gotham Gazette. May 27, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-12)