Mineola volunteers receive ambulance grant

RICHARD TEDESCO | Posted: Thursday, February 9, 2012 11:12 am

More than two years after being notified that a new ambulance was in the works through former state Sen. Craig Johnso n, the Mineola Volunteer Ambulance Corps has finally received a $100,000 grant to pay for it.

The payment was the latest made to a municipality through the intervention of state Sen. Jack Martins (R-Mineola) after $10 million in grants were rescinded by state Senate Democrats or simply left unfulfilled after Johnson lost to Martins in December 2010.

Martins, who was formerly mayor of Mineola, had successfully spearheaded an effort to recover $4.7 million of the unfulfilled Johnson loans at the end of the last legislative session that included $100,000 for the Mineola Volunteer Ambulance Corps.

Tom Devaney, secretary of the ambulance corps and former Democratic candidate for state Assembly, said the Mineola volunteers had initially received an $100,000 grant for the ambulance, which has a total price of $161,000. But he said the first grant could not be used until the ambulance corps received a second $100,000 grant.

"We appreciate the help we got from Sen. Martin's office in getting the other $100,000," Devaney said.

The ambulance corps had taken out a loan to purchase the ambulance as it awaited the money from the state, Devaney said. He said the ambulance corps had expected a quicker resolution of the grant process and had to work with the bank that made the loan to give them more time to make the payment. Devaney said the delay ultimately cost the ambulance corps $15,000 in interest.

"Our predicament was return the ambulance or get the grant," said Devaney, adding that the "shoestring budget" that the ambulance corps runs on made carrying the loan a hardship.

Before Martins interceded, there was a very real chance that the bank would call the ambulance corps' note and the ambulance would be lost, Devaney said.

"I was glad to work with the members of MVAC to clear up this issue. Newer equipment means better service for the people of the greater Mineola area," Martins said.

In July, Martins' office had received an assurance from the state Office of the Budget that it had approved a waiver needed to release of the funds from the Dormitory Authority of New York State. At the time, the loan on the ambulance was due for repayment at the end of that month.

Devaney said that after more red tape he received a call requesting bank account information and then two weeks ago he saw the money in the ambulance corps' account.
The $39,000 in grant money left over from the $100,000 grant will be used to purchases new mandatory radio equipment, Devaney said.

"They're making everybody switch to a different type of radio," Devaney said.

Devaney said the radio is scheduled to be installed in that fire department's headquarters by Dec. 12, 2012.

"We're grateful this money came through so we're able to do this," Devaney said.