COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Hazle Township Fire and Rescue Company, Inc. Firemen's Relief Association

Luzerne County, Pennsylvania

For the Period

January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2013

April 2015

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General

COUNCIL 90 AFSCME UNION LABEL

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EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Justin Zoshak, President
HAZLE TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'
RELIEF ASSOCIATION
Luzerne County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Hazle Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association pursuant to authority derived from Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Section 403 of The Fiscal Code, Act of April 9, 1929, (P.L. 343, No. 176), and mandated by the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act, as consolidated by the Act of November 23, 2010 (P.L. 1181, No. 118), at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7411 *et seq.*, for the period January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2013.

We conducted this compliance audit in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* applicable to performance audits, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our audit results and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our audit results and conclusions based on our audit objective.

The objective of the audit was to determine if the volunteer firefighters' relief association received state aid and expended state aid and accumulated relief funds in compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures. Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objective identified above.

Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the Hazle Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's administration of state aid and accumulated relief funds complies with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures including the safeguarding of assets. In conducting our audit, we obtained an understanding of the volunteer firefighters' relief association's internal controls as they relate to the association's compliance with those requirements and that we considered to be significant within the context of the audit objective, and assessed whether those significant controls were properly designed and implemented. Our audit procedures also included tests of documentary evidence supporting the Hazle Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's recorded financial transactions, tests of the physical existence of inventories, interviews of selected officials and direct confirmation of the Hazle Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's cash, investments, and certain other assets and liabilities as of December 31, 2013, with the custodians of the funds, debtors, creditors, and financial institutions to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objective. Additionally, we performed procedures to provide a reasonable assurance of detecting instances of violations of legal and regulatory requirements or violations of provisions of contracts that are significant within the context of the audit objective.

The results of our audit, for the period January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2013, found the Hazle Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association, in all significant respects, received state aid and expended state aid and accumulated relief funds in compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures. The results of our tests also indicated the Hazle Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the Accompanying Expenditure Information and, as of December 31, 2013, had a cash balance of $45,775 and an investment balance with a fair value of $11,574.

However, a scope limitation on our audit exists, as detailed in the Observation section of this report.

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the Hazle Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association. We would like to thank the relief association officials for the cooperation extended to us during the conduct of the audit.

March 17, 2015

EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE
Auditor General

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BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Section 403 of The Fiscal Code, Act of April 9, 1929, (P.L. 343, No. 176), and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act, as consolidated by the Act of November 23, 2010, (P.L. 1181, No. 118), at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7411 *et seq.*, the Department of the Auditor General's duty is to audit the accounts and records of every volunteer firefighters' relief association to determine that funds received under the Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution Law, Act of December 18, 1984, (P.L. 1005, No. 205), as amended, 53 P.S. § 895.701 *et seq.* (commonly referred to as Act 205), are properly expended.

The Hazle Township Fire & Rescue Company, Inc. Firemen's Relief Association, herein referred to as the Hazle Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association, is a charitable organization that was formed primarily to afford financial protection to volunteer firefighters and to encourage individuals to participate in volunteer fire service.

Act 118 governs the overall operation of the volunteer firefighters' relief association. The relief association's bylaws define the specific operational procedures by which the volunteer firefighters' relief association conducts business. To fulfill its primary purpose, Act 118 authorizes specific types of expenditures and prescribes appropriate volunteer firefighters' relief association investment options. Within the parameters established by Act 118, it is the responsibility of the volunteer firefighters' relief association to choose investments in a proper and prudent manner.

Volunteer firefighters' relief associations receive public tax monies, and the association officers therefore have a responsibility to the public to conduct the association's financial affairs in a businesslike manner and to maintain sufficient financial records to support the propriety of all association transactions. Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are also responsible for ensuring that the association operates in accordance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures.

Act 205 sets forth the computation of the Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution paid to each applicable municipality throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The amount of the distribution is based upon the population of each municipality and the market value of real estate within the municipality. Upon receipt of this distribution, the municipality must allocate the funds to the volunteer firefighters' relief association of the fire service organization or fire service organizations, which is or are recognized as providing the service to the municipality.

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

The Hazle Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipality:

Municipality	County	2011	2012	2013
Hazle Township	Luzerne	$104,184	$64,189	$77,840

The volunteer firefighters' relief association and the affiliated fire service organization are separate, legal entities. The Hazle Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association is affiliated with the following fire service organization:

Hazle Township Volunteer Fire & Rescue Company, Inc.

HAZLE TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
OBSERVATION

Observation – Scope Limitation

The Hazle Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association (VFRA) cash balance reported as $45,775, as of December 31, 2013, could not be confirmed. Request for an independent confirmation of the cash balance was made on November 12, 2014 to the bank from which the VFRA held this cash account. While the VFRA provided a December 31, 2013 bank statement, the bank failed to provide an independent confirmation of the cash balance.

Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418(a) states, in part, that the Office of Auditor General shall have the power and its duty shall be to audit the accounts and records of every volunteer firefighters' relief association . . . as far as may be necessary to satisfy the Auditor General that the money received was or is being expended for no purpose other than that authorized by this subchapter. Copies of all audits shall be furnished to the Governor.

Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS) Section No. 6.56 states, "Auditors must obtain sufficient appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for their findings and conclusions." GAGAS Section No. 6.61(f) states, "Evidence obtained from a knowledgeable, credible, and unbiased third party is generally more reliable than evidence from management of the audited entity or others who have a direct interest in the audited entity."

Even though we made the request, a confirmation of the VFRA's cash balance was not provided by the bank.

Our inability to confirm the VFRA's total cash balance constitutes a scope limitation on our audit, as this scope limitation prevented us from confirming the VFRA's reported cash balance of $45,775, as of December 31, 2013.

HAZLE TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2011 TO DECEMBER 31, 2013

Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7412 states: a volunteer firefighters' relief association is an organization formed primarily for the purpose of affording financial protection to volunteer firefighters against the consequences of misfortune suffered as a result of their participation in the fire service. The organization may contain within its membership the members of one or more fire companies and may serve secondary purposes, as set forth in this subchapter, but only if adequate provisions have been first made to serve the primary purpose.

Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7416 authorizes the investment of relief association funds and outlines the types of benefits and services that can be provided with volunteer firefighters' relief association funds.

Furthermore, all expenditures must be properly authorized as prescribed in the volunteer firefighters' relief association bylaws and approved at an association meeting.

USES OF FUNDS:

Benefit Services:		
Insurance premiums	$	14,737
Death benefits		2,000
Relief benefits		3,883
Total Benefit Services	$	20,620
Fire Services:		
Equipment purchased	$	118,007
Equipment maintenance		30,584
Training expenses		15,947
Total Fire Services	$	164,538
Administrative Services:		
Other administrative expenses	$	3,772
Other Expenditures:		
Principal payments on loan	$	76,505
Interest payments on loan		4,247
Interest payments on lease-financing		14,015
Total Other Expenditures	$	94,767

HAZLE TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom W. Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Hazle Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Justin Zoshak	President
Mr. Robert Segeria	Vice President
Mr. Charles Krone	Secretary
Mr. Scott G. Kostician	Treasurer

A report was also distributed to the following municipality, which allocated foreign fire insurance tax monies to this relief association:

Mr. Francis E. Boyarski Hazle Township	Secretary

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at www.PaAuditor.gov. Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 231 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: news@PaAuditor.gov.