

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Swoyersville Volunteer Fire Department No. 2 Relief Association of Swoyersville, PA Luzerne County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2016

January 2018



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Eric Ostrowski, President
Swoyersville Volunteer Fire Department
No. 2 Relief Association of
Swoyersville, PA
Luzerne County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Swoyersville Volunteer Fire Department No. 2 Relief Association of Swoyersville, PA (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, 2015 to December 31, 2016.

The objectives of the audit were:

1. To determine if the relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the findings contained in our prior audit report.
2. To determine if the relief association complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds.

Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objectives identified above and was not required to be and was not conducted in accordance with Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

Relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the 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. Relief association officers are responsible for complying with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures. It is our responsibility to perform procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objectives. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, for the period January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2016:

- The relief association did not take appropriate corrective action to address the findings contained in our prior audit report, as detailed below and discussed in the Status of Prior Findings section of this report.
- The relief association, in all significant respects, complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds, except as noted in the findings listed below and discussed later in this report.

Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure To Maintain Minutes Of Meetings

Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

Finding No. 3 – Inappropriate Presigning Of Blank Checks

Both of the prior audit findings contained in this report cite conditions that existed in the operation of the relief association and were communicated as findings during the current audit period. We are concerned by the number of findings noted and strongly encourage timely implementation of the recommendations noted in this audit report.

The supplementary financial information contained in this report is presented for purposes of additional disclosure and analysis. We performed only limited procedures on the supplementary financial information and, accordingly, express no form of assurance on it.

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the relief association and, where appropriate, their responses have been included in the report. We would like to thank the relief association officials for the cooperation extended to us during the conduct of the audit.

December 29, 2017



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 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 volunteer firefighters' relief associations. Relief association bylaws define the specific operational procedures by which relief associations conduct 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 relief associations 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 that is or are recognized as providing the service to the municipality.

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

The relief association was allocated state aid from the following municipality:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Swoyersville Borough	Luzerne	\$12,961	\$12,909

The volunteer firefighters' relief association and the affiliated fire service organization are separate, legal entities. The relief association is affiliated with the following fire service organization:

Swoyersville Hose Company No. 2

SWOYERSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT NO. 2 RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF
SWOYERSVILLE, PA
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The relief association has not complied with the following prior audit findings. These findings are noted below and discussed in detail in the Findings and Recommendations section of this report:

- Failure To Maintain Minutes Of Meetings
- Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

We are concerned by the relief association's failure to correct those previously reported audit findings. The association management should strive to implement the recommendations and corrective actions noted in this audit report.

SWOYERSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT NO. 2 RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF
SWOYERSVILLE, PA
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure To Maintain Minutes Of Meetings

Condition: The relief association did not maintain minutes of all meetings as required by Act 118 and the relief association bylaws. During the current audit period, the relief association only provided minutes of meetings for six of the twenty-four monthly meetings.

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(a) states, in part, that the relief association:

. . . must provide for taking and preserving minutes of all meetings and maintenance of such books of account as may be necessary and appropriate to afford a permanent record of its fiscal affairs.

In addition, the relief association bylaws at Article VII, Section 2, states:

The regular meetings of the association shall be held each month following the meeting of the Swoyersville Volunteer Fire Department #2 of Swoyersville, Pa., with at least a total of four (4) meetings per year.

Furthermore, the relief association bylaws at Article VI, Section 3 states, in part:

Secretary: He shall have charge of and keep a full and correct record of all the proceedings of all meetings of the association, give proper notices of all meetings of the association...

Cause: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials again neglected to maintain minutes in accordance with Act 118 and the relief association bylaws.

Effect: Without detailed minutes of meetings, evidence that relief association business was presented before the membership for approval does not exist.

Recommendation: We again recommend that the relief association officials maintain a permanent record of all relief association meetings as required by Act 118 and the relief association bylaws. The minutes should include an adequate record of all financial-related business conducted by the relief association. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

SWOYERSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT NO. 2 RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF
SWOYERSVILLE, PA
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – (Continued)

Management's Response: Relief association management agreed with the finding as presented at the audit exit conference and indicated they will take action to comply with the recommendation.

Auditor's Conclusion: We are concerned by the relief association's failure to correct this previously reported audit finding and strongly encourage timely implementation of the recommendation noted in this audit report.

Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

Condition: The relief association failed to maintain a complete and accurate roster of equipment owned by the relief association. Although a listing of relief association owned equipment was provided during the current audit period, it was incomplete because it did not contain the names of suppliers (vendors), dates of purchase, cost of equipment and serial numbers to accurately identify equipment owned by the relief association. As such, it was impossible to determine if all equipment purchased during the audit period in the amount of \$4,061 was recorded. In addition, there was no indication that a physical inventory of equipment was conducted on an annual basis to account for the equipment owned by the relief association.

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

Criteria: Prudent business practice dictates that the relief association should establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure the maintenance of a cumulative equipment roster of all items purchased by the relief association in order to provide an effective accounting control over the relief association's equipment. A cumulative equipment roster of all relief association equipment should include all of the following:

- Types of equipment purchased
- Dates of purchase
- Unit costs
- Names of suppliers
- Serial numbers, if applicable
- Current locations of items
- Final dispositions of sold or damaged equipment
- Evidence of the performance and results of an annual physical inventory

SWOYERSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT NO. 2 RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF
SWOYERSVILLE, PA
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 2 – (Continued)

Cause: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials again failed to establish adequate internal control procedures over equipment by requiring the maintenance of a cumulative equipment roster and the performance of an annual physical inventory of equipment.

Effect: The continued failure to properly record equipment purchases in a detailed equipment roster prevents officials from effectively monitoring the relief association's equipment purchases. In addition, the failure to maintain a detailed equipment roster and perform an annual physical inventory of equipment prevents adequate accountability for, and safeguarding of, relief association equipment.

Recommendation: We again recommend that the relief association officials maintain a cumulative equipment roster of all equipment owned by the relief association. Furthermore, the relief association should ensure it performs an annual physical inventory of all operable equipment and that the completion of the inventory be sufficiently documented. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

Management's Response: Relief association management agreed with the finding as presented at the audit exit conference and indicated they will take action to comply with the recommendation.

Auditor's Conclusion: We are concerned by the relief association's failure to correct this previously reported audit finding and strongly encourage timely implementation of the recommendation noted in this audit report.

Finding No. 3 – Inappropriate Presigning Of Blank Checks

Condition: A review of the relief association's checkbook, at the time of the audit engagement, revealed that four blank checks were presigned by one of the two relief association officers who are authorized to sign checks. The presigning of blank checks negates the relief association's internal control over the disbursement process.

Criteria: Prudent business practice dictates that the relief association has sufficient internal control procedures in place to prohibit the presigning of blank checks. Adequate internal control procedures require that checks be signed only after the propriety of the expenditure has been determined and the payee, date, and amount to be paid has been confirmed. Additionally, responsible relief association officers should compare this information with supporting documentation, such as invoices, contracts, etc., prior to signing the checks.

SWOYERSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT NO. 2 RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF
SWOYERSVILLE, PA
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 3 – (Continued)

Cause: Relief association officials indicated that they were aware of the necessity for two signatures, but did not realize that applying the first signature prior to evaluating the propriety of the expenditure negated the relief association's internal controls over the disbursement process.

Effect: As a result of one of the two authorized relief association officers presigning the blank checks, assets were placed at greater risk of misappropriation since the officer who presigned the blank checks did not have the opportunity to verify the propriety of the expenditures.

Recommendation: We recommend that the practice of presigning blank checks be immediately discontinued. We also recommend that all of the relief association officers ensure that checks are signed and co-signed only after the propriety of the expenditures have been determined and the payees, dates, and amounts to be paid have been confirmed. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

Management's Response: Relief association management agreed with the finding as presented at the audit exit conference and indicated they will take action to comply with the recommendation.

Auditor's Conclusion: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

SWOYERSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT NO. 2 RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF
SWOYERSVILLE, PA
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION
CASH AND INVESTMENT BALANCES
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2016

Cash	\$ 35,701
Fair Value of Investments	<u>41,484</u>
Total Cash and Investments	<u>\$ 77,185</u>

SWOYERSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT NO. 2 RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF
SWOYERSVILLE, PA
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION
SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES
FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2015 TO DECEMBER 31, 2016

Expenditures:

Benefit Services:

Insurance premiums	\$ 3,427
Death benefits	500
Total Benefit Services	<u>\$ 3,927</u>

Fire Services:

Equipment purchased	\$ 4,061
Equipment maintenance	6,514
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 10,575</u>

Administrative Services:

Officer compensation	\$ 200
Other administrative expenses	1,374
Bond premiums	200
Total Administrative Services	<u>\$ 1,774</u>

Total Investments Purchased	<u>\$ 16,000</u>
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Total Expenditures	<u><u>\$ 32,276</u></u>
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SWOYERSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT NO. 2 RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF
SWOYERSVILLE, PA
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom W. Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Swoyersville Volunteer Fire Department No. 2 Relief Association of Swoyersville, PA
Governing Body:

Mr. Eric Ostrowski
President

Mr. Tom Yankay
Secretary

Mr. George Tomshaw
Treasurer

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

Mr. Gene Breznay
Secretary
Swoyersville Borough

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, 229 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: news@PaAuditor.gov.