



**THE PEN ARGYL FIREMEN'S RELIEF
ASSOCIATION**

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT

FOR THE PERIOD

JANUARY 1, 2010 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE - AUDITOR GENERAL

DEPARTMENT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. James Davey, President
PEN ARGYL VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'
RELIEF ASSOCIATION
Northampton County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Pen Argyl 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, 2010 to December 31, 2012.

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 Pen Argyl 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 Pen Argyl Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's recorded financial transactions, tests of the physical existence of inventories, interviews of selected officials and direct confirmation of the Pen Argyl Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's cash, investments, and certain other assets and liabilities as of December 31, 2012, 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, 2010 to December 31, 2012, found the Pen Argyl 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, except as noted in the finding listed below and discussed later in this report.

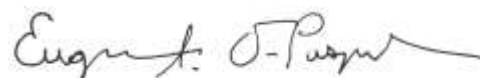
Finding – Failure To Adhere To Relief Association Bylaws

The results of our tests also indicated the Pen Argyl Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the Accompanying Expenditure Information and, as of December 31, 2012, had a cash balance of \$15,946 and an investment balance with a fair value of \$79,668.

Furthermore, 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 Pen Argyl Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association.

June 6, 2014



EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE
Auditor General

CONTENTS

| | <u>Page</u> |
|---|-------------|
| Background..... | 1 |
| Finding and Recommendation: | |
| Finding – Failure To Adhere To Relief Association Bylaws..... | 3 |
| Observation: | |
| Observation – Scope Limitation..... | 4 |
| Accompanying Expenditure Information | 5 |
| Report Distribution List | 6 |

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 Pen Argyl Firemen's Relief Association, herein referred to as the Pen Argyl 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 Pen Argyl Volunteer Firefighters’ Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipality:

| <u>Municipality</u> | <u>County</u> | <u>2010</u> | <u>2011</u> | <u>2012</u> |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Pen Argyl Borough | Northampton | \$22,512 | \$34,690 | \$19,709 |

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

Lookout Fire Company No. 1

PEN ARGYL VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – Failure To Adhere To Relief Association Bylaws

Condition: The relief association did not adhere to a provision in the association's bylaws regarding the organizational structure of the relief association, although the number of vice presidents currently prescribed in the relief association's current bylaws appears to be excessive given the size and nature of the organizational structure of similar relief associations. There were no vice-presidents in place as of December 31, 2012.

Criteria: The relief association's bylaws stipulate the following:

Article III, Section 1 – The Officers of the Association shall consist of a president, treasurer, secretary, and eight vice presidents. The officers shall be responsible for the management of association business upon direction received by the membership at association meetings.

Furthermore, prudent business practices dictate that the relief association should adhere to all provisions stipulated in the relief association's bylaws to ensure that the relief association conducts its affairs with proper authorization.

Cause: Relief association officials failed to establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure complete adherence to the bylaw provisions established by the relief association.

Effect: As a result of the relief association not following the mandatory provisions stipulated in the bylaws, the relief association may have conducted its affairs without proper authorization.

Recommendation: We recommend that relief association officials review the bylaws governing their organization **determine the proper structure for the office of vice-president** and establish guidelines and procedures to meet the provisions contained in the bylaws in order to assure that the association conducts its affairs with proper authorization. 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.

PEN ARGYL VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
OBSERVATION

Observation – Scope Limitation

During the year 2012, the Pen Argyl Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association (VFRA) stopped maintaining canceled or imaged fronts and backs of checks. Without copies of canceled or imaged checks, we could not determine whether two VFRA officers authorized and signed the checks, and if the checks were endorsed by the person or firm to whom it was written. While the VFRA provided bank statements, the VFRA failed to provide copies of canceled or imaged checks.

Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(c)(3) requires that the signatures of at least two officers, one of whom shall be the disbursing officer, shall be required to bind the association by formal contract or to issue a negotiable instrument.

Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418(a) provides that the Department 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."

Our inability to review canceled checks or imaged checks constitutes a scope limitation on our audit.

PEN ARGYL VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
 ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2010 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

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 | \$ 39,431 |
| Relief benefits | 655 |
| Tokens of sympathy and goodwill | 284 |
| Total Benefit Services | \$ 40,370 |
| | |
| Fire Services: | |
| Equipment purchased | \$ 16,515 |
| Training expenses | 1,072 |
| Total Fire Services | \$ 17,587 |
| | |
| Administrative Services: | |
| Officer compensation | \$ 2,250 |
| Other administrative expenses | 127 |
| Total Administrative Services | \$ 2,377 |
| | |
| Total Investments Purchased | \$ 22,000 |

PEN ARGYL VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom Corbett
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Pen Argyl Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

| | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Mr. James Davey | President |
| Mr. Matthew Vanage | Secretary |
| Mr. Dennis Miller | Treasurer |

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

Ms. Dolores B. Savitz, Secretary
Pen Argyl Borough

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at www.auditorgen.state.pa.us. 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@auditorgen.state.pa.us.