

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Lingohocken Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association Bucks County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2013

October 2014



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Duane Smith, President
LINGOHOCKEN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'
RELIEF ASSOCIATION
Bucks County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Lingohocken 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, 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 objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our audit results and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The objectives of the audit were:

1. To determine if the volunteer firefighters' relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the finding contained in our prior audit report; and
2. 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 objectives identified above.

Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the Lingohocken 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 objectives, and assessed whether those significant controls were properly designed and implemented. Our audit procedures also included tests of documentary evidence supporting the Lingohocken Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's recorded financial transactions, tests of the physical existence of inventories, interviews of selected officials and direct confirmation of the Lingohocken 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 objectives. 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 objectives.

The results of our audit, for the period January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2013, found the Lingohocken Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association did not take appropriate corrective action to address the finding contained in our prior audit report, as detailed below and discussed in the Status of Prior Finding section of this report. In addition, the results of our audit found the Lingohocken 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.

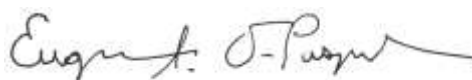
Finding – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation - Insufficient
Officer's Bond Coverage

The results of our tests also indicated the Lingohocken Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association expended funds as presented in the Accompanying Expenditure Information and, as of December 31, 2013, had a cash balance of \$469,434 and no investments.

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 Lingohocken Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association and, where appropriate, their response has 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.

October 10, 2014



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

| <u>Municipality</u> | <u>County</u> | <u>2010</u> | <u>2011</u> | <u>2012</u> | <u>2013</u> |
|----------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Buckingham Township | Bucks | \$ 47,233 | \$ 72,989 | \$ 43,967 | \$ 49,918 |
| Wrightstown Township | Bucks | \$ 51,706 | \$ 78,780 | \$ 41,454 | \$ 47,038 |

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

Lingohocken Fire Company

LINGOHOCKEN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDING

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

The Lingohocken Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association has not complied with the following prior audit finding. This finding is noted below and discussed in detail in the Finding and Recommendation section of this report:

- Insufficient Surety (Fidelity) Bond Coverage

We are concerned by the relief association's failure to correct this previously reported audit finding. The association management should strive to implement the recommendation and corrective action noted in this audit report.

LINGOHOCKEN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Insufficient Surety (Fidelity) Bond Coverage

Condition: As cited in our prior audit report, the relief association did not maintain a Surety (Fidelity) bond in a sufficient amount to cover the relief association's authorized disbursing officer. The relief association's Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage amount was \$450,000; however, as of December 31, 2013, the relief association's cash assets totaled \$469,434.

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(c)(4) states, in part, that:

. . . the disbursing officer, whether designated treasurer, comptroller, financial secretary or otherwise, shall be bonded by corporate surety for faithful performance of duty. The amount of the bond shall be at least as great as the maximum cash balance in current funds of the association at any time during the fiscal year, and the premium on the bond shall be a proper charge against the funds of the association.

Cause: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials again, neglected to monitor the relief association's cash balance to ensure that the Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage on the relief association's authorized disbursing officer was in compliance with Act 118 provisions.

Effect: As a result of the authorized disbursing officer of the relief association being insufficiently bonded, the relief association's cash assets were not adequately safeguarded.

Recommendation: We again recommend that the relief association officials ensure that its Surety (Fidelity) bond sufficiently covers the relief association's authorized disbursing officer, as required by Act 118. This requirement may be accomplished by increasing the Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage on the relief association's authorized disbursing officer to an amount greater than the expected maximum balance of the relief association's cash assets, or by decreasing the relief association's cash assets to an amount anticipated to remain below the policy coverage amount. In addition, relief association officials should monitor the relief association's cash balance to ensure that unexpected events affecting the relief association's current funds do not again result in insufficient Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage on the relief association's authorized disbursing officer. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

LINGOHOCKEN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – (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. As a result of our audit, the relief association's insurance agent made a request to increase the bond coverage to \$650,000.

Auditor's Conclusion: It appears that the relief association intends to comply with our finding recommendation. Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

LINGOHOCKEN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
OBSERVATION

Observation – Scope Limitation

A portion of the Lingohocken Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's (VFRA) cash balance amounting to \$17,985 of the total reported cash balance of \$469,434, as of December 31, 2013, could not be confirmed due to the bank policy of submitting confirmation requests to a processing center which requires membership. While requests for an independent confirmation of the cash balance were made on August 25, 2014 and September 10, 2014 and the VFRA provided December 31, 2013 bank statements, the bank failed to provide an independent confirmation of the cash balance.

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." Statement of Auditing Standards (SAS) No. 106 requires auditors to request independent confirmations of investment balances directly from the financial institution from which the VFRA purchased the investment.

Even though we made several requests, 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 determining the fair value of the VFRA's reported cash balance of \$17,985 of the total reported cash balance of \$469,434, as of December 31, 2013.

LINGOHOCKEN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
 ACCOMPANYING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2010 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 | \$ 68,475 |
| Relief benefits | 18,363 |
| Total Benefit Services | \$ 86,838 |
| | |
| Fire Services: | |
| Equipment purchased | \$ 155,027 |
| Equipment maintenance | 59,834 |
| Training expenses | 6,926 |
| Fire prevention materials | 8,226 |
| Total Fire Services | \$ 230,013 |
| | |
| Administrative Services: | |
| Other administrative expenses | \$ 6,873 |
| Loan to the fire company* | \$ 60,000 |

* On December 21, 2010, the relief association made a loan to the Lingohocken Fire Company in the amount of \$60,000. The loan has a three percent interest rate and a six month amortization period. As of December 31, 2013, this loan has been liquidated.

LINGOHOCKEN VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom Corbett
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Lingohocken Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

| | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Mr. Duane Smith | President |
| Mr. Stephen Kraiss | Secretary |
| Mr. Karl Bromm | Treasurer |

The following municipalities allocated foreign fire insurance tax monies to this relief association and received a copy of this report:

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Ms. Dana S. Cozza, Esq Buckingham Township | Secretary |
| Mr. Joseph F. Pantano Wrightstown Township | Secretary |

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.