

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Stroud Township
Volunteer Fire Department
Relief Association
Monroe County, Pennsylvania
For the Period
January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2013

November 2014



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Darren Hahn, President
STROUD TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS'
RELIEF ASSOCIATION
Monroe County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Stroud 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 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 findings 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.

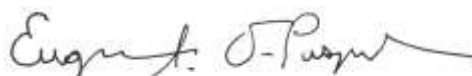
Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the Stroud Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's administration of state aid and accumulated relief funds complies with 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 objectives, and assessed whether those significant controls were properly designed and implemented. Our audit procedures also included tests of documentary evidence supporting the Stroud 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 Stroud 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 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, 2011 to December 31, 2013, found the Stroud Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association took appropriate corrective action to address the findings contained in our prior audit report and, 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 Stroud 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 \$660,474 and an investment balance with a fair value of \$734,007.

However, scope limitations on our audit exist, as detailed in the Observations section of this report.

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the Stroud 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.

October 17, 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 Stroud Township Volunteer Fire Department Relief Association, herein referred to as the Stroud 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 Stroud Township Volunteer Firefighters’ Relief Association was allocated state aid from the following municipality:

| <u>Municipality</u> | <u>County</u> | <u>2011</u> | <u>2012</u> | <u>2013</u> |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Stroud Township | Monroe | \$248,256 | \$141,792 | \$156,892 |

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

Stroud Township Volunteer Fire Department

STROUD TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Stroud Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association has complied with the prior audit findings and recommendations, as follows:

- Unauthorized Expenditures

By receiving reimbursement from Stroud Township Volunteer Fire Department in the amount of \$15,080 for the unauthorized expenditures made in the prior audit period;

- Insufficient Officer's Bond Coverage

By increasing the officer's bond coverage to an amount greater than the balance of the relief association's cash assets; and

- Failure To Maintain a Complete and Accurate Equipment Roster

By maintaining a cumulative inventory roster of all relief association owned equipment.

We commend the relief association management for its efforts in complying with the findings and recommendations contained in the prior audit report. The association management should strive to remain in compliance with all applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws and administrative procedures.

STROUD TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
OBSERVATIONS

Observation No. 1 – Scope Limitation

The Stroud Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association (VFRA) does not maintain canceled or imaged checks. While the VFRA provided bank statements, the VFRA failed to provide copies of canceled or imaged checks. Without copies of canceled or imaged checks, we could not determine whether two VFRA officers authorized and signed the 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.

STROUD TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
OBSERVATIONS

Observation No. 2 – Scope Limitation

A portion of the Stroud Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association's (VFRA) investment balance amounting to \$20,000 of the total reported investment balance of \$734,007, as of December 31, 2013, could not be confirmed. Although we received confirmation of a \$714,007 investment account balance, the remaining balance of \$20,000 was not confirmed by the other financial institution. A request for an independent confirmation of this account balance was made on March 26, 2014 to the financial institution from which the VFRA held this investment account. While the VFRA provided a December 31, 2013, account statement detailing this investment account balance, the financial institution failed to provide an independent confirmation of the account balance. This financial institution indicated that they will no longer confirm an account with paper confirmations; and instead, instructed independent agencies to use a website to obtain a confirmation.

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 a request, a confirmation of the balance of this investment account balance was not provided by the respective financial institution. Our inability to confirm the VFRA's total investment balance constitutes a scope limitation on our audit, as this scope limitation prevented us from determining the total fair value of the VFRA's reported investment balance of \$734,007, as of December 31, 2013.

STROUD 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 | \$ 80,136 |
| Death benefits | 18,000 |
| Relief benefits | 4,393 |
| Tokens of sympathy and goodwill | 296 |
| Total Benefit Services | <u>\$ 102,825</u> |
| Fire Services: | |
| Equipment purchased | \$ 425,417 |
| Equipment maintenance | 9,700 |
| Training expenses | 2,771 |
| Total Fire Services | <u>\$ 437,888</u> |
| Administrative Services: | |
| Officer compensation | \$ 10,075 |
| Other administrative expenses | 12,351 |
| Total Administrative Services | <u>\$ 22,426</u> |

STROUD TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom Corbett
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Stroud Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

| | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Mr. Darren Hahn | President |
| Ms. Randi Strunk | Vice President |
| Mr. William Bentzoni | Secretary |
| Mr. Brian McCartney | Treasurer |

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

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Mr. Daryl A. Eppley Stroud 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.