

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Clintonville Volunteer Fire Department Foreign Fire Association Venango County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2022

January 2024



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Jim Uber, President
Clintonville Volunteer Fire Department
Foreign Fire Association
Venango County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Clintonville Volunteer Fire Department Foreign Fire Association (relief association) for the period January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2022. The audit was conducted pursuant to authority derived from Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; Section 403 of The Fiscal Code, 72 P.S. § 403; and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act ("VFRA Act"), see 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418.

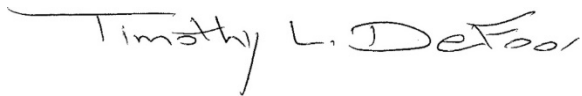
The objective of the audit was to determine if the relief association complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds. Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objective identified above and was not, nor was it required to be, 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 association 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 objective. 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, 2021, to December 31, 2022, 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 finding listed below and discussed later in this report.

Finding – Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy L. DeFoor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
January 24, 2024

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BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Section 403 of The Fiscal Code¹, and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act² ("VFRA Act"), 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 Law³ (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.

The VFRA Act 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, the VFRA Act authorizes specific types of expenditures and prescribes appropriate volunteer firefighters' relief association investment options. Within the parameters established by the VFRA Act, 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 relief association officers therefore have a responsibility to the public to conduct the relief association's financial affairs in a businesslike manner and to maintain sufficient financial records to support the propriety of all relief association transactions. Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are also responsible for ensuring that the relief 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.

¹ 72 P.S. § 403 (as last amended by Act 44 of 2017).

² 35 Pa.C.S. § 7411 *et seq.* See specifically, 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418 (amended by Act 91 of 2020).

³ 53 P.S. § 895.701 *et seq.* (Act 205 of 1984, as amended by Act 119 of 1990).

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

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

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
Barkeyville Borough	Venango	\$1,009	\$1,288
Clinton Township	Venango	\$4,462	\$5,783
Clintonville Borough	Venango	\$1,815	\$1,990
Irwin Township	Venango	\$6,491	\$7,511
Scrubgrass Township	Venango	\$2,503	\$3,087
Victory Township	Venango	\$2,045	\$2,414

Based on the relief association's records, its total cash and investments as of December 31, 2022, were \$56,096, as illustrated below:

Cash	\$ 33,671
Fair Value of Investments	<u>22,425</u>
Total Cash and Investments	<u><u>\$ 56,096</u></u>

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

Based on the relief association's records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2022, were \$65,709, as noted below. The accuracy of these expenditures was evaluated as part of the Department's audit to conclude on the relief association's compliance 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.⁴ **The scope of the Department's audit does not include the issuance of an opinion on the accuracy of these amounts.**

Expenditures:

Benefit Services:

Insurance premiums	\$ 7,988
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Fire Services:

Equipment purchased	\$ 54,913
Equipment maintenance	1,556
Training expenses	798

Total Fire Services	\$ 57,267
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Administrative Services:

Bond premiums	\$ 200
Other administrative expenses	86

Total Administrative Services	\$ 286
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Other Expenditures:

Unauthorized payments of sales tax *	\$ 168
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Total Expenditures	\$ 65,709
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* During calendar year 2022, the relief association made disbursements in the amounts of \$143 and \$25, respectively, for the unauthorized payment of sales tax on purchases that were authorized under the VFRA Act. We disclosed this issue to relief association officials on November 20, 2023, but we did not include a finding in this report due to the relatively low dollar amount.

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:

Clintonville Vol. Fire Dept.

⁴ Accuracy was evaluated for a selection of transactions based on dollar amount, category, and/or random selection.

CLINTONVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT FOREIGN FIRE ASSOCIATION
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

Condition: The relief association did not 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, this listing was incomplete and did not accurately identify all of the equipment owned by the relief association since it only included items that were purchased from 2020 through 2022 and was not cumulative. In addition, there was no documentation to support that a physical inventory of equipment was conducted on an annual basis, nor whether such inventory accounted for all equipment owned by the relief association.

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 and perform and document an annual physical inventory of all operable equipment 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

Cause: The relief association officials indicated that the previous inventory rosters were kept on a thumb drive which was given to a relief association member for a check list and the individual lost the thumb drive. Relief association officials did not provide any further reason for why the equipment roster deficiencies occurred.

Effect: The 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 to document the performance of an annual physical inventory of equipment prevents adequate accountability for, and safeguarding of, relief association equipment.

CLINTONVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT FOREIGN FIRE ASSOCIATION
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – (Continued)

Recommendation: We 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: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

CLINTONVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT FOREIGN FIRE ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Clintonville Volunteer Fire Department Foreign Fire Association Governing Body:

Mr. Jim Uber
President

Mr. John Sauer
Vice President

Ms. Lacie Rea
Secretary

Mr. Earl Moore
Treasurer

CLINTONVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT FOREIGN FIRE ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

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

Ms. Cynthia K. McFeaters
Secretary
Barkeyville Borough

Ms. Rita Porter
Secretary
Clinton Township

Ms. Judith A. Stoops
Secretary

Ms. Barbara L. Sopher
Secretary
Irwin Township

Ms. Wilda R. Chutz
Secretary
Scrubgrass Township

Ms. Renee Kistler
Secretary
Victory Township

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.