

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Forks Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Northampton County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2018

February 2020



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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**EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Charles Chapman, President
Forks Township Volunteer Firefighters'
Relief Association
Northampton County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Forks Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association (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, 2017 to December 31, 2018.

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.

We were not able to obtain independent confirmations of the investment balance directly from the financial institutions. Therefore, while the relief association provided investment statements that indicated that, as of December 31, 2018, the relief association had an investment balance with a fair value of \$559,040, we were not able to verify this investment balance.

We were also not able to obtain copies of canceled or imaged checks from the relief association. While the relief association provided bank statements, the relief association failed to provide copies of canceled or imaged checks for 2018. Without copies of canceled or imaged checks, we were not able to determine whether two relief association officers authorized and signed the checks as required by Act 118.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, except for the effects, if any, of the matters described in the two preceding paragraphs, for the period January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2018:

- The relief association took appropriate corrective action to address one of the three findings contained in our prior audit report. However, the relief association failed to take appropriate corrective action to address the two remaining findings contained in our prior audit report, as listed 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.

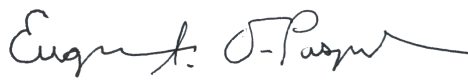
Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –
Inadequate Minutes Of Meetings

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

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.

January 29, 2020


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 municipalities:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>
Forks Township	Northampton	\$104,712	\$95,681
Stockertown Borough	Northampton	\$ 6,259	\$ 5,377

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:

Forks Township Fire Department

FORKS TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

The relief association has complied with one of the three prior audit findings and recommendations, as follows:

- Unauthorized Expenditure

By receiving reimbursement of \$7,449 from the affiliated fire company for the unauthorized expenditure made in the prior audit period.

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Inadequate 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.

FORKS TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Inadequate Minutes
Of Meetings**

Condition: The relief association failed to maintain detailed minutes of meetings as required by Act 118. Specifically, the relief association's minutes did not address all of the financial-related transactions that occurred during the audit period.

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

Criteria: Section 7415(a) of Act 118 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.

Cause: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials again neglected to maintain detailed minutes of meetings as required by Act 118.

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 detailed minutes of meetings, evidencing the discussion and approval 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.

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.

FORKS TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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, this listing was incomplete and did not accurately identify all of the equipment owned by the relief association. The relief association purchased \$29,317 of equipment during the current audit period, but the equipment for \$1,084 of those purchases were not properly accounted for on the relief association's equipment roster. In addition, the relief association failed to document the cost of the remaining equipment purchases on the relief association's equipment roster. Furthermore, 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

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.

FORKS TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 2 – (Continued)

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.

FORKS TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION
CASH AND INVESTMENT BALANCES
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2018

Cash	\$ 249,861
Fair Value of Investments	<u>559,040</u>
Total Cash and Investments	<u><u>\$ 808,901</u></u>

FORKS TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION
SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES
FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2017 TO DECEMBER 31, 2018

Expenditures:

Benefit Services:	
Insurance premiums	\$ 91,264
Relief benefits	<u>20,514</u>
Total Benefit Services	<u>\$ 111,778</u>
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 29,317
Training expenses	<u>22,295</u>
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 51,612</u>
Administrative Services:	
Bond premiums	<u>\$ 634</u>
Total Expenditures	<u><u>\$ 164,024</u></u>

FORKS TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom W. Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Forks Township Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Charles Chapman
President

Mr. Alex Hazuda
Vice President

Mr. Robert Nieves
Secretary

Mr. Bryan C. Weis
Treasurer

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

Mr. Erik Chuss
Secretary
Forks Township

Ms. Anita M. Caughy
Secretary
Stockertown 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.