

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Forty Fort Firemen's Relief Association of Forty Fort, Pennsylvania Luzerne County For the Period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019

June 2020



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Joseph Kozich, President
Forty Fort Firemen's Relief Association
of Forty Fort, Pennsylvania
Luzerne County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Forty Fort Firemen's Relief Association of Forty Fort, Pennsylvania (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, 2018 to December 31, 2019.

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 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 objective. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

We were not able to obtain an independent confirmation of a portion of the investment balance directly from one financial institution. Therefore, while the relief association provided investment statements that indicated that, as of December 31, 2019, the relief association had an investment balance with a fair value of \$582,232, we were not able to verify a portion of this investment balance.

In addition, due to a stay at home order issued by the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania during the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to observe any of the relief association's equipment to verify its existence.

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, 2018 to December 31, 2019, 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 – Undocumented Expenditures

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 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.

June 8, 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 municipality:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
Forty Fort Borough	Luzerne	\$15,729*	\$17,593

* Although Forty Fort Borough prepared and returned a Certification Form AG 385 for 2018, the date the borough distributed the 2018 state aid to the relief association could not be determined because the borough failed to submit a Receipt And Distribution Of Foreign Fire Insurance Premium Tax Form 706-B to this department as required by the instructions accompanying Form 706-B and the 2018 state aid allocation received by the borough disclosing this information.

Forty Fort Borough is still required to submit a 2018 Receipt and Distribution of Foreign Fire Insurance Premium Tax Form 706-B to this Department as soon as possible.

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:

Forty Fort Volunteer Fire Company

FORTY FORT FIREMEN’S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF FORTY FORT, PENNSYLVANIA
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – Undocumented Expenditures

Condition: The relief association was unable to provide adequate supporting documentation for the following expenditures made during the current audit period:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Check No.</u>	<u>Payee Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
01/30/2018	291	Training package	\$ 1,333
02/08/2019	307	Training package	<u>1,334</u>
		Total	<u><u>\$ 2,667</u></u>

If it is determined that any paid firefighters have received training through the training packages, the paid firefighter portion will be considered unauthorized and will need to be reimbursed to the relief association.

Criteria: Section 7418(a) of Act 118 states:

The Office of Auditor General shall have the power and its duty shall be to audit the accounts and records of every volunteer firefighters’ relief association receiving money under Chapter 7 of the Act of December 18, 1984 (P.L. 1005, No. 205), known as the Municipal Pension Plan Funding Standard and Recovery Act, 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.

Without adequate supporting documentation, such as invoices, training certificates and rosters, and/or itemized receipts, this department is unable to determine whether relief association funds were expended for purposes authorized by Act 118. Furthermore, prudent business practice dictates that supporting documentation be maintained to evidence the propriety of all financial transactions.

Cause: Relief association officials failed to establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure supporting documentation is maintained for all expenditures.

Effect: Lack of supporting documentation, such as invoices, training certificates and rosters, itemized receipts and detailed minutes of meetings, made it impossible to determine if the expenditures were made in accordance with Section 7416(f) of Act 118. In addition, the failure to maintain adequate supporting documentation for relief association expenditures can lead to an increased risk of errors occurring and funds being misappropriated.

FORTY FORT FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF FORTY FORT, PENNSYLVANIA
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – (Continued)

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association officials provide this department with adequate supporting documentation, such as invoices, training certificates and rosters, and/or itemized receipts, to ensure the propriety of the expenditures or that the relief association be reimbursed \$2,667 for the undocumented expenditures. We also recommend that the relief association officials maintain supporting documentation for all future expenditures. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

Management's Response: Relief association management did not agree with the finding as presented and stated that Act 118 allows firefighters that are paid to take training.

Auditor's Conclusion: Act 118 of 2010 authorizes state aid expenditures for purposes of providing safeguards for life, health and safety for volunteer firefighters to ensure their availability to participate in the fire service. Although we did receive a 2019 roster for the training package, we did not receive the 2018 roster or any training certificates for either year to determine who took the training courses or what training courses were provided to determine whether relief association funds were expended for purposes authorized by Act 118. Therefore, the finding remains as stated. We continue to recommend that the relief association officials provide this department with adequate supporting documentation, such as training certificates and rosters to ensure the propriety of the expenditures or that the relief association be reimbursed \$2,667 for the undocumented expenditures.

FORTY FORT FIREMEN’S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF FORTY FORT, PENNSYLVANIA
SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION
CASH AND INVESTMENT BALANCES
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2019

Cash	\$ 38,262
Fair Value of Investments	<u>582,232</u>
Total Cash and Investments	<u><u>\$ 620,494</u></u>

FORTY FORT FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF FORTY FORT, PENNSYLVANIA
 SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION
 SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES
 FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2018 TO DECEMBER 31, 2019

Expenditures:

Benefit Services:	
Death benefits	\$ 5,000
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 100,709
Equipment maintenance	2,202
Training expenses	93
Total Fire Services	\$ 103,004
Administrative Services:	
Officer compensation	\$ 2,000
Other administrative expenses	3,200
Bond premiums	778
Total Administrative Services	\$ 5,978
Other Expenditures:	
Undocumented expenditures	\$ 2,667
Total Expenditures	\$ 116,649

FORTY FORT FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF FORTY FORT, PENNSYLVANIA
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom W. Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Forty Fort Firemen's Relief Association of Forty Fort, Pennsylvania Governing Body:

Mr. Joseph Kozich
President

Mr. William L. Bookwalter
Vice President

Mr. Raymond Elias
Secretary

Mr. Robert P. Smith
Treasurer

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

Ms. Michele Pascarella
Secretary
Forty Fort 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.