

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Library Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association

Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

For the Period

January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2023

June 2024



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. John Price, President
Library Volunteer Firemen's
Relief Association
Allegheny County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Library Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association (relief association) for the period January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2023. 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 objectives of the audit were:

1. To determine if the relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the finding 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, 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.

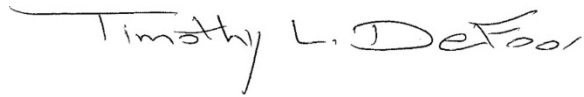
Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, for the period January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2023:

- The relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the finding contained in our prior audit 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 – Inappropriate Commingling Of Funds

Finding No. 2 – Relief Association Checking Account Inappropriately
Registered Under Affiliated Fire Service Organization's Federal
Tax Identification Number

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.



Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
June 11, 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.

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

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
South Park Township	Allegheny	\$31,174	\$39,286	\$39,902

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)

Based on the relief association's records, its total cash as of December 31, 2023, was \$110,285, as illustrated below:

Cash	<u>\$ 110,285</u>
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Based on the relief association's records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2023, were \$168,296, 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	<u>\$ 29,491</u>
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Fire Services:

Equipment purchased	\$ 126,857
Equipment maintenance	1,607
Training expenses	<u>3,990</u>
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 132,454</u>

Administrative Services:

Bond premiums	\$ 1,314
Other administrative expenses	<u>37</u>
Total Administrative Services	<u>\$ 1,351</u>

Other Expenditures:

Miscellaneous – See Finding No. 1	<u>\$ 5,000</u>
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Total Expenditures	<u><u>\$ 168,296</u></u>
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⁴ Accuracy was evaluated for a selection of transactions based on dollar amount, category, and/or random selection.

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

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:

Library Volunteer Fire Company

LIBRARY VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDING

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

The relief association has complied with the prior audit finding and recommendation, as follows:

- Insufficient Surety (Fidelity) Bond Coverage

By increasing the Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage to an amount greater than the balance of the relief association's cash assets.

LIBRARY VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – Inappropriate Commingling Of Funds

Condition: The relief association inappropriately transferred funds totaling \$5,000 from its checking account to the fire company's investment account for the purpose of maintaining a Length of Service Award Program. Although a Length of Service Award Program is an authorized relief association expenditure, these expenditures should be paid directly from the relief association's checking account.

Criteria: Relief association funds should not be commingled with any other organization's funds in order to maintain effective control of its assets.

Cause: The relief association transferred funds from its checking account to the fire company's investment account and stated there was a misunderstanding of the rules.

Effect: The practice of depositing funds into the fire company's investment account reduces the relief association's control over custody of assets. Thus, the relief association could be adversely affected due to its bills not being paid or being paid on an untimely basis.

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association officials discontinue the current practice of paying relief association expenses through the fire company and pay all expenses directly from a relief association account. 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, as a result of our audit, the affiliated fire company reimbursed the relief association \$5,000 for the inappropriately commingled funds on April 1, 2024.

Auditor's Conclusion: We reviewed documentation verifying that the reimbursement of \$5,000 was received. Compliance for inappropriately commingled funds made during the next audit period will be subject to verification through our next audit.

Finding No. 2 – Relief Association Checking Account Inappropriately Registered Under Affiliated Fire Service Organization's Federal Tax Identification Number

Condition: As of December 31, 2023, the relief association held a checking account, with a total balance of \$110,285 which was inappropriately registered under the fire company's federal tax identification number rather than the relief association's identification number. This checking account represents 100 percent of the relief association's cash assets.

LIBRARY VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 2 – (Continued)

Criteria: Prudent business practice dictates that the relief association maintain ownership of all investments as a means of safeguarding its assets from unauthorized use or disposition.

Cause: The relief association officials did not provide a reason why this occurred.

Effect: As a result of the investments being inappropriately registered under another entity's federal tax identification number, these relief association assets were not properly safeguarded.

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association officials secure ownership rights to all monetary assets. This requirement can be accomplished by ensuring that all investments are registered under the relief association's federal tax identification number. 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.

LIBRARY VOLUNTEER FIREMEN’S RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Library Volunteer Firemen’s Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. John Price
President

Mr. Eli Ruffing
Vice President

Ms. Cydni L. West
Secretary

Mr. Steven F. West
Treasurer

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

Ms. Karen F. Fosbaugh
Secretary
South Park 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.