

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Firemen's Relief Association of Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 15683 Westmoreland County For the Period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019

November 2020



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0018
Facebook: Pennsylvania Auditor General
Twitter: @PAAuditorGen
www.PaAuditor.gov

EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Nathan Savanick, President
Firemen's Relief Association
of Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 15683
Westmoreland County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Firemen's Relief Association of Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 15683 (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, 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 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, 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 – Unauthorized Expenditure

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.

October 13, 2020



EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE
Auditor General

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Background	1
Finding and Recommendation	
Finding – Unauthorized Expenditure	4
Report Distribution List	6

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>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
Upper Tyrone Township	Fayette	\$ 2,864	\$ 3,186
Scottdale Borough	Westmoreland	\$17,562	\$19,164

Based on the relief association's records, its total cash and investments as of December 31, 2019 were \$235,841, as illustrated below:

Cash	\$ 65,841
Fair Value of Investments	<u>170,000</u>
Total Cash and Investments	<u><u>\$ 235,841</u></u>

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

Based on the relief association’s records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019 were \$94,603, 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.¹ **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	\$	7,174
Death benefits		5,000
Tokens of sympathy and goodwill		122
Total Benefit Services	\$	<u>12,296</u>

Fire Services:

Equipment purchased	\$	16,111
Equipment maintenance		4,824
Training expenses		8,588
Total Fire Services	\$	<u>29,523</u>

Administrative Services:

Officer compensation	\$	110
Other administrative expenses		678
Bond premiums		375
Total Administrative Services	\$	<u>1,163</u>

Total Investments Purchased	\$	<u>50,000</u>
-----------------------------	----	---------------

Other Expenditures:

Unauthorized expenditure	\$	<u>1,621</u>
--------------------------	----	--------------

Total Expenditures	\$	<u><u>94,603</u></u>
--------------------	----	----------------------

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:

Scottdale Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.

¹ Accuracy was evaluated for a selection of transactions based on dollar amount, category, and/or random selection.

FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF SCOTTTDALE, PENNSYLVANIA, 15683
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – Unauthorized Expenditure

Condition: The relief association expended \$1,621 for flags and grave markers during the current audit period that is not authorized by Act 118.

Criteria: Section 7416(f) of Act 118 states:

The funds of any volunteer firefighters' relief association may be spent:

- (1) To pay for such normal and reasonable running expenses as may be appropriate to the businesslike conduct of the affairs of the association, including legal fees, rental or purchase of offices, payment of reasonable compensation of employees and purchase of office equipment and supplies.
- (3) To maintain a beneficiary or death benefit fund and to pay a sum certain from that fund to the beneficiary of a participant in that fund upon death. If a beneficiary is not designated or a designated one has predeceased the participant, the sum certain shall be paid to the estate of the participant.
- (5) To pay the cost of procuring and forwarding tokens of sympathy and goodwill to a volunteer firefighter who may be ill or hospitalized as a result of participation in the fire service or who may die or who may be seriously ill for any reason.
- (6) To make cash payments to families in distressed circumstances by reason of age, infirmity or other disability suffered by one of the family members in the course of participation in the fire service as a volunteer firefighter.
- (11) To purchase safeguards for preserving life, health and safety of volunteer firefighters to ensure their availability to participate in the volunteer fire service.

Costs associated with the purchase of flags and grave markers do not qualify as an authorized volunteer firefighters' relief association expenditure; consequently, this disbursement is not authorized under Act 118.

Cause: Relief association officials indicated that they were unaware that the expenditure for the flag and grave markers was not authorized by Act 118.

Effect: As a result of this improper expenditure, relief association funds were not available for investment purposes or to pay for expenditures authorized by Act 118.

FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF SCOTTTDALE, PENNSYLVANIA, 15683
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – (Continued)

Recommendation: We recommend that the relief association be reimbursed \$1,621 for the unauthorized expenditure and that relief association officials become familiar with Section 7416(f) of Act 118 to aid them in determining the propriety of 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 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 \$1,621 for the unauthorized expenditure on September 5, 2020.

Auditor's Conclusion: We reviewed documentation verifying that the reimbursement of \$1,621 was received. Compliance for expenditures made during the next audit period will be subject to verification through our next audit.

FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF SCOTTDALE, PENNSYLVANIA, 15683
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom W. Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Firemen's Relief Association of Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 15683 Governing Body:

Mr. Nathan Savanick
President

Mr. Caden P. Coppetti
Vice President

Mr. David A. Moore
Treasurer

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

Ms. Lori Henry
Secretary
Upper Tyrone Township

Mr. Angelo Pallone
Secretary
Scottdale 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.