

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

The Alum Bank Community Firefighter's Relief Association Bedford County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2019, to December 31, 2022

May 2023



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Travis Blackburn, President
The Alum Bank Community
Firefighter's Relief Association
Bedford County

We have conducted a compliance audit of The Alum Bank Community Firefighter's Relief Association (relief association) for the period January 1, 2019, 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 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, 2019, 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.

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the relief association. 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 style with a long horizontal line extending to the left of the first letter.

Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
May 3, 2023

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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 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.

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>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
East St Clair Township	Bedford	\$5,765	\$ 5,999	\$5,559	\$ 7,559
Lincoln Township	Bedford	\$1,220	\$ 1,241	\$1,103	\$ 1,291
Napier Township	Bedford	\$4,103	\$ 4,143	\$3,698	\$ 4,372
New Paris Borough	Bedford	\$ 368	\$ 376	\$ 332	\$ 414*
Pleasantville Borough	Bedford	\$ 888	\$ 901	\$ 805	\$ 961
West Saint Clair Township	Bedford	\$9,866	\$10,020	\$8,987	\$10,797

* Although New Paris Borough prepared and returned a Certification Form AG 385 for 2022, the borough failed to complete the 2022 Receipt And Distribution Of Foreign Fire Insurance Premium Tax Form 706-B online as required by the instructions accompanying Form 706-B and the instructions accompanying the 2022 state aid allocation received by the borough disclosing this information.

New Paris Borough is still required to complete a 2022 Receipt And Distribution Of Foreign Fire Insurance Premium Tax Form 706-B online with the Department of Community & Economic Development’s Municipal Statistics website (MunStats) immediately.

Based on the relief association’s records, its total cash as of December 31, 2022, was \$25,741, as illustrated below:

Cash	\$ 25,741
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BACKGROUND – (Continued)

Based on the relief association’s records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2019, to December 31, 2022, were \$88,383, 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>\$ 30,512</u>
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Fire Services:

Equipment purchased	\$ 34,399
Equipment maintenance	14,040
Training expenses	6,929
Fire prevention materials	<u>1,160</u>
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 56,528</u>

Administrative Services:

Bond Premium	\$ 343
Other administrative expenses	<u>1,000</u>
Total Administrative Services	<u>\$ 1,343</u>

Total Expenditures	<u><u>\$ 88,383</u></u>
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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:

Alum Bank Community Fire Company

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

THE ALUM BANK COMMUNITY FIREFIGHTER'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

The Alum Bank Community Firefighter's Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Travis Blackburn
President

Mr. Gerald Leppert
Vice President

Mr. Anthony Tirpak
Secretary

Mr. Kelly Davis
Treasurer

THE ALUM BANK COMMUNITY FIREFIGHTER'S RELIEF 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. Bonnie Cornell
Secretary
East St Clair Township

Ms. Barbara Hammer
Secretary
Lincoln Township

Ms. Lesley Kennedy
Secretary
Napier Township

Ms. Christa Morton
Secretary
New Paris Borough

Ms. Cindy J. Byers
Secretary
Pleasantville Borough

Ms. Barbara Hammer
Secretary
West Saint Clair 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.