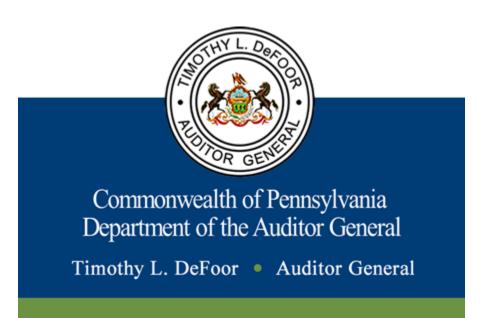
COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Winburne Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association at Winburne, Clearfield County, Pennsylvania

For the Period January 1, 2019, to December 31, 2022

August 2023





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TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR AUDITOR GENERAL

Ms. Katelynn Mulhall, President Winburne Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association at Winburne, Clearfield County, Pennsylvania

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Winburne Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association at Winburne, Clearfield County, Pennsylvania (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 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, 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 objectives. 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 took appropriate corrective action to address two of the six findings contained in our prior audit report. However, the relief association failed to take appropriate corrective action to address the four 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 Undocumented Expenditures
 - Finding No. 2 Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation Unauthorized Expenditures
 - Finding No. 3 Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation Inadequate Financial Record-Keeping System
 - Finding No. 4 Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation Inadequate Minutes Of Meetings
 - Finding No. 5 Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

Four of the five audit findings contained in this report cite conditions that existed in the operation of the relief association during the prior audit period and were not corrected during the current audit period. We are concerned by the number of findings noted and strongly encourage timely implementation of the recommendations noted in this audit report.

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

Timothy L. Detool

August 15, 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.

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

Municipality	County	2019	2020	2021	2022
Cooper Township	Clearfield	\$6,142	\$6,239	\$5,603	\$6,671
Graham Township	Clearfield	\$ 841	\$ 426	\$ 376	\$ 450

³ 53 P.S. § 895.701 et seq. (Act 205 of 1984, as amended by Act 119 of 1990).

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).

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

Based on the relief association's records, its total cash as of December 31, 2022, was \$23,685, as illustrated below:

Cash \$ 23,685

Based on the relief association's records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2019, to December 31, 2022, were \$39,111, 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. 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	\$ 6,546
Death benefits	 200
Total Benefit Services	\$ 6,746
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 20,716
Equipment maintenance	6,871
Training expenses	 1,319
Total Fire Services	\$ 28,906
Administrative Services:	
Bond premiums	\$ 300
Other administrative expenses	24
Total Administrative Services	\$ 324
Other Expenditures:	
Undocumented expenditures	 3,135
Total Expenditures	\$ 39,111

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:

Winburne Volunteer Fire Company #1

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

WINBURNE VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION AT WINBURNE, CLEARFIELD COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Questionable Transfers Of Funds

By receiving a \$21,000 reimbursement from the relief association's bonding company and \$995 from the affiliated fire company for the questionable transfer of funds.

• Relief Association Checking Account Inappropriately Registered Under Affiliated Fire Service Organization's Federal Tax Identification Number

By ensuring that all investments are registered under the relief association's federal tax identification number.

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

• Undocumented Expenditures

Although the relief association received reimbursement of \$1,184 from the affiliated fire company and provided adequate documentation to support \$4,533 of the remaining undocumented expenditures that were made in the prior audit period, the relief association again failed to provide adequate documentation to support all expenditures in the current audit period as further disclosed in Finding No. 1 of this report.

- Unauthorized Expenditures
- Inadequate Financial Record-Keeping System
- Inadequate Minutes Of Meetings

We are concerned by the relief association's failure to correct those previously reported audit findings. The relief association management should strive to implement the recommendations and corrective actions noted in this audit report.

<u>Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Undocumented Expenditures</u>

<u>Condition</u>: Although the relief association received reimbursement from the affiliated fire company and provided adequate documentation to support the remaining undocumented expenditures that were made in the prior audit period, the relief association was unable to provide adequate supporting documentation for the following expenditures made during the current audit period:

Date	Check No.	Payee Description		 Amount
12/23/2018*	198	Training vendor		\$ 550
01/03/2019	EFT	Training vendor		225
01/30/2019	200	Reimbursement to a relief member		9
02/26/2019	201	Equipment vendor		291
02/24/2019	202	Reimbursement to a relief member		85
02/27/2019	203	Reimbursement to a relief member		90
02/27/2019	204	Reimbursement to a relief member		140
04/02/2019	205	Training vendor		500
04/09/2019	206	Training vendor		280
09/24/2019	209	Training vendor		800
02/25/2020	215	Volunteer fire company		35
10/27/2020	228	Reimbursement to a relief member		20
10/27/2020	229	Reimbursement to a relief member		20
09/28/2021	240	Equipment vendor		 90
			Total	\$ 3,135

^{*} This expenditure was not included as an expenditure in the prior audit period; therefore, it was included in the table above.

Criteria: Section 7418(a) of the VFRA Act 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.

Finding No. 1 – (Continued)

Prudent business practice dictates that supporting documentation be maintained to evidence the propriety of all financial transactions.

<u>Cause</u>: Relief association officials indicated that previous officials had not maintained accurate records.

<u>Effect</u>: Lack of supporting documentation, such as invoices, itemized receipts, and detailed minutes of meetings, made it impossible to determine if the expenditures were made in accordance with Section 7416(f) of the VFRA Act. 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.

Recommendation: We again recommend that the relief association officials provide this department with adequate supporting documentation, such as invoices and/or itemized receipts, to ensure the propriety of the expenditures or that the relief association be reimbursed \$3,135 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.

<u>Management's Response</u>: 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.

<u>Auditor's Conclusion</u>: 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.

<u>Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Unauthorized Expenditures</u>

<u>Condition</u>: During the two prior audit periods, the relief association expended \$313 of unauthorized expenditures, and the relief association officials did not take corrective action to address the unauthorized expenditures prior to the end of the current audit period ending December 31, 2022.

Finding No. 2 – (Continued)

Criteria: Section 7416(f) of the VFRA Act 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.
- (11) To purchase safeguards for preserving life, health and safety of volunteer firefighters to ensure their availability to participate in the volunteer fire service, including necessary training.

In addition, Section 7418(b) of the VFRA Act states:

(b) Findings – If the Auditor General finds that money received by a volunteer firefighters' relief association has been expended for a purpose other than one authorized by this subchapter, the commissioner, upon receiving notice of the finding from the auditor general, shall decline to approve payment to the volunteer firefighters' relief association until the improperly expended amount has been reimbursed to the relief association fund.

Costs associated with the purchase of food and the payment of sales tax on purchases made do not qualify as authorized volunteer firefighters' relief association expenditures; consequently, these disbursements are not authorized under the VFRA Act.

<u>Cause</u>: The relief association officials indicated that they did not maintain good records of what trainings the food items were purchased for, and no reason was provided for why sales tax was paid on purchases.

<u>Effect</u>: As a result of these improper expenditures, relief association funds were not available for investment purposes, or to pay for expenditures authorized by the VFRA Act.

<u>Recommendation</u>: We again recommend that the relief association be reimbursed \$313 for the unauthorized expenditures and that relief association officials become familiar with Section 7416(f) of the VFRA Act 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.

Finding No. 2 – (Continued)

<u>Management's Response</u>: 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.

<u>Auditor's Conclusion</u>: 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.

<u>Finding No. 3 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Inadequate Financial Record-Keeping System</u>

<u>Condition</u>: The relief association's financial record-keeping system did not establish adequate accounting procedures to allow the membership to effectively monitor the relief association's financial operations. The following are the noted deficiencies:

- There were two deposits totaling \$5,200 into the relief association checking account for which documentation of the source of the funds were not documented and relief association officials were not able to identify the source of the funds.
- An adequate journal was not maintained to record the receipts and disbursements of the relief association.
- Ledgers were not utilized to record the transactions of the relief association accounts.
- Documentation to support various expenditures was not available for examination at the time of the audit.

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

Criteria: Section 7415(a) of the VFRA Act states:

A volunteer firefighters' relief association may be a body corporate, governed by a charter and bylaws or an unincorporated association of individuals governed by bylaws and a constitution. In either case, it 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.

In addition, an adequate system of accounting and record-keeping is a prerequisite for sound administration of relief association assets.

Finding No. 3 – (Continued)

<u>Cause</u>: The relief association officials indicated that the prior record-keeping system was dysfunctional.

<u>Effect</u>: The continued failure of relief association officials to maintain adequate records prohibits the membership from effectively monitoring the relief association's financial operations.

<u>Recommendation</u>: We again recommend that the relief association officials establish and maintain a financial record-keeping system that allows the membership to effectively monitor the relief association's financial operations. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

<u>Management's Response</u>: 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.

<u>Auditor's Conclusion</u>: 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.

<u>Finding No. 4 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Inadequate Minutes</u> <u>Of Meetings</u>

<u>Condition</u>: The relief association failed to maintain detailed minutes of meetings as required by the VFRA Act and the relief association's bylaws. Specifically, the relief association's minutes did not address all of the financial-related transactions that occurred during the audit period and the meeting minutes were not signed and dated by the recording officer.

Finding No. 4 – (Continued)

In addition, the relief association officials did not adhere to the quarterly meeting requirements of March, June, September, and December, as stipulated in the relief association's bylaws. Ten meetings were held during calendar year 2019, five meetings were held during calendar year 2020, only two meetings were held during calendar year 2021, and four meetings were held during calendar year 2022 even though the relief association's bylaws require quarterly meetings in March, June, September, and December, as shown below:

Documented Relief Association Meetings Held During The Audit Period

Month	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	1	None	None	None
February	2	1	1	None
March	1	1	1	1
April	1	None	None	None
May	2	1	None	None
June	None	None	None	None
July	None	None	None	None
Amount	N T	- 1	3.7	4
August	None	1	None	1
September	None 1	1 1	None None	None
C		1 1 None	1,0110	1 None 1
September	1	•	None	None 1 None

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

<u>Criteria</u>: Section 7415(a) of the VFRA Act 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.

The relief association's bylaws at Article IV, Section 1 states:

The stated meetings of the Organization shall be held on the second Tuesday during the months of March, June, September, and December.

Finding No. 4 – (Continued)

In addition, the relief association's bylaws at Article VII, Section 1 states:

The Secretary shall keep correct minutes of all meetings.

Furthermore, the relief association's bylaws at Article VIII (Duties of the Treasurer), Section 3, states:

He/she shall pay out no money except as approved by the Organization.

<u>Cause</u>: The relief association officials indicated that regular meetings were not held which resulted in not holding the proper number of meetings.

<u>Effect</u>: Without holding regular meetings and maintaining detailed minutes of meetings that are signed and dated, evidence that relief association business was presented before the membership for approval does not exist. As a result of the relief association not following the mandatory provisions stipulated in the bylaws, the relief association may have conducted its affairs without proper authorization.

<u>Recommendation</u>: We again recommend that the relief association officials hold all required meetings and maintain detailed minutes of meetings as required by the VFRA Act and the relief association's bylaws, evidencing the discussion and approval of all financial-related business conducted by the relief association. We also recommend that the relief association officials ensure that all meeting minutes are signed and dated by the Secretary of the Relief Association to ensure the validity of the meeting minutes. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

<u>Management's Response</u>: 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.

<u>Auditor's Conclusion</u>: 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.

Finding No. 5 - Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

Condition: As cited as a verbal observation during the prior audit, 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, this listing only included items that were purchased in 2017, 2018, and 2019 and was incomplete and did not accurately identify all of the equipment owned by the relief association that was purchased prior to and subsequent to those years. The relief association purchased \$20,716 of equipment during the current audit period, but the equipment for those purchases was not properly accounted for on the relief association's equipment roster. In addition, 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.

<u>Criteria</u>: 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 and perform and document an annual physical inventory of all operable equipment 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

<u>Cause</u>: The relief association officials did not provide a reason why this occurred.

<u>Effect</u>: The failure to properly record equipment purchases in a detailed equipment roster prevents officials from effectively monitoring the relief association's equipment. 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.

Finding No. 5 – (Continued)

<u>Recommendation</u>: We 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.

<u>Management's Response</u>: Relief association management agreed with the finding as presented and indicated they will take action to comply with the recommendation.

Auditor's Conclusion: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

WINBURNE VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION AT WINBURNE, CLEARFIELD COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro

Governor Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Winburne Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association at Winburne, Clearfield County, Pennsylvania Governing Body:

Ms. Katelynn Mulhall
President

Mr. Branden EvansTreasurer

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

Ms. Bernice Yedlosky
Secretary
Cooper Township

Ms. Cathy S. Youcheff
Secretary
Graham 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.