

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Big Beaver Borough Police Pension Plan Beaver County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2020

May 2022



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL**

The Honorable Mayor and Borough Council
Big Beaver Borough
Beaver County
Darlington, PA 16115

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Big Beaver Borough Police Pension Plan for the period January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2020. We also evaluated compliance with some requirements subsequent to that period when possible. The audit was conducted pursuant to authority derived from the Municipal Pension Plan Funding Standard and Recovery Act (Act 205 of 1984, as amended, 53 P.S. § 895.402(j)), which requires the Auditor General, as deemed necessary, to audit every municipality which receives general municipal pension system state aid and every municipal pension plan and fund in which general municipal pension system state aid is deposited. The audit was not conducted, nor was it required to be, in accordance with Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. We planned and performed the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

The objective of the audit was to determine if the pension plan was administered in compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, administrative procedures, and local ordinances and policies.

Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objective identified above. To determine whether the pension plan was administered in compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, administrative procedures, and local ordinances and policies, our methodology included the following:

- We determined whether state aid was properly determined and deposited in accordance with Act 205 requirements by verifying the annual deposit date of state aid and determining whether deposits were made within 30 days of receipt for all years within the period under audit.

- We determined whether annual employer contributions were calculated and deposited in accordance with the plan's governing document and applicable laws and regulations by examining the municipality's calculation of the plan's annual financial requirements and minimum municipal obligation (MMO) and comparing these calculated amounts to amounts actually budgeted and deposited into the pension plan as evidenced by supporting documentation.
- We determined that there were no employee contributions required by the plan's governing document and applicable laws and regulations for the years covered by our audit period.
- We determined that there were no benefit calculations prepared for the years covered by our audit period.
- We determined whether the January 1, 2017 and January 1, 2019 actuarial valuation reports were prepared and submitted by March 31, 2018 and 2020, respectively, in accordance with Act 205 and whether selected information provided on these reports is accurate, complete, and in accordance with plan provisions to ensure compliance for participation in the state aid program by comparing selected information to supporting source documentation.

The Big Beaver Borough Police Pension Plan participates in the Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement System (PMRS), which is an agent multiple-employer public employee retirement system that acts as a common investment and administrative agent for participating municipal pension plans. PMRS issues a separate Annual Comprehensive Financial Report, copies of which are available from the PMRS accounting office. PMRS's financial statements were not audited by us and, accordingly, we express no opinion or other form of assurance on them.

Borough officials are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the Big Beaver Borough Police Pension Plan is administered in compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, administrative procedures, and local ordinances and policies. As previously described, we tested transactions, interviewed selected officials and performed procedures to the extent necessary to provide reasonable assurance of detecting instances of noncompliance with legal and regulatory requirements or noncompliance with provisions of contracts, administrative procedures, and local ordinances and policies that are significant within the context of the audit objective.

The results of our procedures indicated that, in all significant respects, the Big Beaver Borough Police Pension Plan was administered in compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, administrative procedures, and local ordinances and policies, except as noted in the following findings further discussed later in this report:

Finding No. 1 – Return Of Unused Monies To The Commonwealth

Finding No. 2 – Inadequate Accounting/Reporting Over Activity Of The Pension Plan

The accompanying supplementary information is presented for purposes of additional analysis. We did not audit the information or conclude on it and, accordingly, express no form of assurance on it

The contents of this report were discussed with officials of Big Beaver Borough and, where appropriate, their responses have been included in the report. We would like to thank borough 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
April 15, 2022

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BACKGROUND

On December 18, 1984, the Pennsylvania Legislature adopted the Municipal Pension Plan Funding Standard and Recovery Act (P.L. 1005, No. 205, as amended, 53 P.S. § 895.101 et seq.). The Act established mandatory actuarial reporting and funding requirements and a uniform basis for the distribution of state aid to Pennsylvania's public pension plans.

Annual state aid allocations are provided from a 2 percent foreign (out-of-state) casualty insurance premium tax, a portion of the foreign (out-of-state) fire insurance tax designated for paid firefighters and any investment income earned on the collection of these taxes. Generally, municipal pension plans established prior to December 18, 1984, are eligible for state aid. For municipal pension plans established after that date, the sponsoring municipality must fund the plan for three plan years before it becomes eligible for state aid. In accordance with Act 205, a municipality's annual state aid allocation cannot exceed its actual pension costs.

In addition to Act 205, the Big Beaver Borough Police Pension Plan is also governed by implementing regulations published at Title 16, Part IV of the Pennsylvania Code and applicable provisions of various other state statutes including, but not limited to, the following:

Act 15 - Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement Law, Act of February 1, 1974
(P.L. 34, No. 15), as amended, 53 P.S. § 881.101 et seq.

The Big Beaver Borough Police Pension Plan is a single-employer defined benefit pension plan locally controlled by the provisions of Ordinance No. 224, and a separately executed plan agreement with the plan custodian, effective April 1, 2020, adopted pursuant to Act 15. Prior to April 1, 2020, the plan was locally controlled by the provisions of Ordinance No. 147 along with a plan agreement adopted pursuant to Act 15.

As previously disclosed in prior reports, effective December 31, 1999, the Big Beaver Borough Council adopted Ordinance No. 162 that effectively dissolved the Big Beaver Borough Police Department. As of December 31, 2020, the plan had no active members, no terminated members eligible for vested benefits in the future, and one retiree receiving pension benefits from assets previously transferred to the retiree reserve maintained by the plan custodian.

BIG BEAVER BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – Return Of Unused Monies To The Commonwealth

Condition: Big Beaver Borough has not employed a full-time paid police officer since 1999. In addition, there are no terminated members eligible for vested benefits in the future and the lone retiree is receiving pension benefits from assets previously transferred to the reserve fund covering all subsequent retirement benefit payments due the individual. Furthermore, although cost of living adjustments are available under the plan document, these increases are offered only upon allocation of excess interest in equal dollar amounts per eligible employee, not from existing municipal reserves maintained by the borough. However, as of December 31, 2019, the borough has retained assets in its police pension plan amounting to \$137,040 (*The balance of the police pension plan assets as of the end of the audit period, December 31, 2020, was not available as disclosed in Finding No. 2 of this report*), which includes unused state aid allocated under Act 205 intended for pension purposes.

Criteria: Act 205, at Section 402(g), directs that:

Any general municipal pension system State aid received by a municipality shall, only be used to defray the cost of the pension plan or pension plans maintained in the municipality...

Furthermore, Section 402(j) authorizes the Auditor General to administer the General Municipal Pension State Aid Program. This administrative power necessarily extends to ensuring that state aid is both allocated and used in accordance with the act. It has been the consistent practice of this department that municipalities that have received state aid under this program, and which do not employ at least one full-time paid police officer, must return unused funds not used for the purposes set forth herein within two years after receipt thereof, to the Commonwealth for distribution.

Cause: Current plan officials were unsure of the proper disposition of the unused funds maintained in the borough's pension plan or their responsibility to return any unused state aid allocation under Act 205 intended for pension purposes pursuant to the aforementioned criteria, to the Commonwealth.

Effect: Funds distributed under the General Municipality Pension System State Aid Program were not used for their intended statutory purpose or returned to the Commonwealth for redistribution to defray other eligible municipalities' pension costs under the program.

BIG BEAVER BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – (Continued)

Recommendation: We recommend that borough officials, with the assistance of their solicitor and the plan’s actuary, identify any outstanding liabilities that need to be satisfied from the pension plan assets. We also recommend that borough officials account for any municipal contributions previously made to fund the pension plan and transfer such unused municipal contributions to the borough’s general fund.

After accounting for any remaining liabilities and municipal contributions, the remaining police pension plan assets should be returned to the Commonwealth. A check, along with any applicable calculations used in determining the amount reimbursed, should be made payable to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and submitted to: Department of the Auditor General, Municipal Pensions & Fire Relief Programs Unit, 321 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120.

Management’s Response: Municipal officials agreed with the finding without exception.

Auditor’s Conclusion: The borough’s compliance with the finding recommendation will be monitored subsequent to the release of the audit report and through our next audit of the pension plan.

Finding No. 2 – Inadequate Accounting/Reporting Over Activity Of The Pension Plan

Condition: The municipality’s accounting/reporting system did not provide effective control over the transactional activity of the pension plan during the year 2020. Municipal officials were unable to furnish annual financial statements or custodial account statements summarizing the financial activity of its pension plan.

Criteria: An adequate system of accounting and record keeping is a prerequisite for sound administration of pension plans. In addition, assets held in a custodial account for the purpose of plan management are to be governed by the terms and provisions of the account contract, provided that the terms and provisions of the contract are within the parameters of all prevailing pension legislation. Although the municipality may contract with a trustee to administer the financial management of the plan, the fiduciary responsibility for the plan remains with the municipality.

BIG BEAVER BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 2 – (Continued)

Cause: Municipal officials did not maintain a separate detailed accounting of pension plan transactions which, among other things, helps assure the production of proper financial statements to effectively monitor the annual activity of the pension plan. Additionally, municipal officials indicated that the plan’s custodian failed to provide copies of the custodial account transaction statements summarizing activity of the pension plan account for the year 2020.

Effect: Although we were able to obtain alternate documentation from the municipality to evidence the propriety of individual transactions tested during performance of the audit, the failure to maintain annual financial and/or account transaction statements prohibits municipal officials from effectively monitoring the plan’s financial operations and could lead to undetected errors or improprieties in account transactions.

Recommendation: We recommend that municipal officials establish and maintain a financial accounting and reporting system that allows the municipality to effectively monitor the plan’s financial operations, even in the absence of statements from the plan custodian. Municipal officials should refer to the Auditor General’s Bulletin No. 2-88 entitled “Preparation, Maintenance and Auditability of Financial Records,” for further guidance in establishing adequate accounting and record-keeping procedures. In addition, we recommend that municipal officials contact the plan custodian and obtain annual financial statements of the custodial account for its pension plan for the year 2020 to ensure the accuracy and propriety of the transaction activity.

Management’s Response: Municipal officials agreed with the finding without exception.

Auditor’s Conclusion: It was noted that the plan custodian recently went through a substantial upgrade to the plan administration software and implemented a new accounting system. The modernization process, along with the COVID-19 pandemic, resulted in unforeseen delays in the year-end reporting process for financial statements and GASB 68 reports. In addition, the custodian has taken active measures to resolve these issues and anticipates distribution of the 2020 reports and statements for their plans beginning the last week of March and completion of the 2020 financial reporting this summer. Moreover, the custodian expects 2021 financial reports to be distributed before the end of 2022. Compliance with the finding recommendation will be evaluated during our next audit of the plan.

BIG BEAVER BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
 SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
 (UNAUDITED)

SCHEDULE OF FUNDING PROGRESS

Historical trend information about the plan is presented herewith as supplementary information. It is intended to help users assess the plan's funding status on a going-concern basis, assess progress made in accumulating assets to pay benefits when due, and make comparisons with other state and local government retirement systems.

The actuarial information is required by Act 205 biennially. The historical information, beginning as of January 1, 2015, is as follows:

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Actuarial Valuation Date	Actuarial Value of Assets (a)	Actuarial Accrued Liability (AAL) - Entry Age (b)	Unfunded (Assets in Excess of) Actuarial Accrued Liability (b) - (a)	Funded Ratio (a)/(b)
01-01-15	\$ 194,811	\$ 93,622	\$ (101,189)	208.1%
01-01-17	207,758	90,162	(117,596)	230.4%
01-01-19	218,899	88,675	(130,224)	246.9%

BIG BEAVER BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
(UNAUDITED)

The comparability of trend information is affected by changes in actuarial assumptions, benefit provisions, actuarial funding methods, accounting policies, and other changes. Those changes usually affect trends in contribution requirements and in ratios that use the actuarial accrued liability as a factor.

Analysis of the dollar amount of the actuarial value of assets, actuarial accrued liability, and unfunded (assets in excess of) actuarial accrued liability in isolation can be misleading. Expressing the actuarial value of assets as a percentage of the actuarial accrued liability (Column 4) provides one indication of the plan's funding status on a going-concern basis. Analysis of this percentage, over time, indicates whether the system is becoming financially stronger or weaker. Generally, the greater this percentage, the stronger the plan.

BIG BEAVER BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
 SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
 (UNAUDITED)

SCHEDULE OF CONTRIBUTIONS

<u>Year Ended December 31</u>	<u>Actuarially Determined Contribution</u>	<u>Actual Contributions</u>	<u>Contribution Deficiency (Excess)</u>	<u>Covered- Employee Payroll</u>	<u>Contributions as a Percentage of Covered- Employee Payroll</u>
2014	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	N/A
2015	-	-	-	-	N/A
2016	-	-	-	-	N/A
2017	-	-	-	-	N/A
2018	-	-	-	-	N/A
2019	-	-	-	-	N/A
2020	-	-	-	-	N/A

As noted in the Background section of this report, the borough dissolved its police department and has not had an active police officer since December 31, 1999.

BIG BEAVER BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
 SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
 NOTES TO SUPPLEMENTARY SCHEDULES
 (UNAUDITED)

The information presented in the supplementary schedules was determined as part of the actuarial valuation at the date indicated. Additional information as of the latest actuarial valuation date follows:

Actuarial valuation date	January 1, 2019
Actuarial cost method	Entry age normal
Amortization method	Level dollar for plan bases and an average for Aggregate Gain/Loss, 10% of surplus is credited against aggregate cost where applicable.
Remaining amortization period	N/A
Asset valuation method	The Actuarial Value of Assets equal the sum of all audited reserve funds as of the valuation date, including Member, Municipal, Retired, Disability, and DROP Reserves, when applicable, and a one-year administration expense reserve, plus the portion of any additional investment income to be distributed as excess interest, based on PMRS Policy Statement 05-2. This asset valuation is based on the unique legislative structure of PMRS and the administrative rules adopted by the PMRS Board in conjunction with Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement Law. ¹

Actuarial assumptions:

Investment rate of return *	5.25%, compounded annually, net of investment and administration expenses.
Projected salary increases *	2.8%-7.05%
* Includes inflation at	2.8%
Cost-of-living adjustments	2.8% per year, subject to plan limitations.

¹ The administrative rules adopted by the PMRS Board, which are not subject to comply with Actuarial Standards of Practice (ASOP), when defining the Actuarial Value of Assets (AVA), does not necessarily meet the requirement of ASOP 44 Selection and Use of Asset Valuation Methods for Pension Valuations. The AVA provided within this report follow the Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement Law and the PMRS policy statement.

BIG BEAVER BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom W. Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

The Honorable Jamie Marshall
Mayor

Ms. Michelle Joy
Council President

Ms. Jennifer Gasser
Secretary

Ms. Anne Mako
Treasurer

Mr. Richard Cardamone, CPA, CGMA
Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement System

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