

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

City of Allentown Officers' and Employees' - PMRS Pension Plan Lehigh County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2020

February 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 City Council
City of Allentown
Lehigh County
Allentown, PA 18101

We have conducted a compliance audit of the City of Allentown Officers' and Employees' - PMRS Pension Plan for the period January 1, 2019 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 objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The objectives of the audit were:

1. To determine if municipal officials took appropriate corrective action to address the findings contained in our prior report; and
2. 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 objectives identified above. To determine if municipal officials took appropriate corrective action to address the findings contained in our prior report, we inquired of plan officials and evaluated supporting documentation provided by officials evidencing that the suggested corrective action has been appropriately taken. 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 whether annual employee contributions were calculated, deducted, and deposited into the pension plan in accordance with the plan's governing document and applicable laws and regulations by testing total members' contributions on an annual basis using the rates obtained from the plan's governing document in effect for all years within the period under audit and examining documents evidencing the deposit of these employee contributions into the pension plan.
- We determined whether retirement benefits calculated for plan members who retired or elected to vest during the current audit period, and through the completion of our fieldwork procedures, represent payments to all (and only) those entitled to receive them and were properly determined and disbursed in accordance with the plan's governing document, applicable laws, and regulations by recalculating the amount of the pension benefits due to the retired individuals and comparing these amounts to supporting documentation evidencing amounts determined and actually paid or payable to the recipients.
- 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 City of Allentown contracted with an independent certified public accounting firm for an audit of its basic financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2019, which are available at the city's offices. Those financial statements were not audited by us and, accordingly, we express no opinion or other form of assurance on them.

The City of Allentown Officers' and Employees' - PMRS 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.

City officials are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the City of Allentown Officers' and Employees' - PMRS 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 objectives.

The results of our procedures indicated that, in all significant respects, the City of Allentown Officers' and Employees' – PMRS 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:

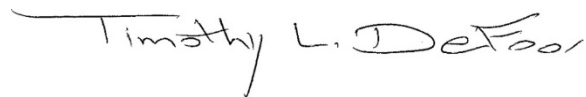
Finding No. 1 – Partial Compliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Incorrect Data On Certification Form AG 385 Resulting In A Net Underpayment Of State Aid

Finding No. 2 – Failure To Maintain An Adequate Record-Keeping System To Effectively Monitor Activity Of The Pension Plan

Finding No. 1 contained in this audit report repeats a condition that was cited in our previous report that has not been corrected by city officials. We are concerned by the city's failure to correct this previously reported finding and strongly encourage timely implementation of the recommendations noted in this audit report.

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 the City of Allentown and, where appropriate, their responses have been included in the report.



Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
January 6, 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 City of Allentown Officers' and Employees' - PMRS 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 City of Allentown Officers' and Employees' - PMRS Pension Plan is a single-employer defined benefit pension plan locally controlled by the provisions of Article 142 of the city's codified ordinances, adopted pursuant to Act 15. The plan is also affected by the provisions of collective bargaining agreements between the city and its non-uniformed employees. The plan was established August 5, 1981. Active members are required to contribute 7.5 percent of compensation to the plan. As of December 31, 2020, the plan had 415 active members, 14 terminated members eligible for vested benefits in the future, and 468 retirees receiving benefits funded through annuities purchased with plan assets.

CITY OF ALLENTOWN OFFICERS' AND EMPLOYEES' – PMRS PENSION PLAN
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

Compliance With Prior Audit Recommendation

The City of Allentown has complied with the prior recommendation concerning the following:

- Failure To Implement Mandatory Provisions Of Act 205

The city passed Resolution No. 30349 on December 1, 2021, adopting procedures to govern the procurement of professional services contracts regarding the city's pension plans.

Partial Compliance With Prior Audit Recommendation

The City of Allentown has partially complied with the prior recommendation concerning the following:

- Incorrect Data On Certification Form AG 385 Resulting In A Net Overpayment Of State Aid

In November 2021, the city reimbursed \$33,505 to the Commonwealth for the overpayment of state aid received in 2018 and 2019; however, plan officials again failed to comply with the instructions that accompany Certification Form AG 385 to assist them in accurately reporting the required pension data in the years 2020 and 2021, as further discussed in Finding No. 1 in the Findings and Recommendations section of this report.

CITY OF ALLENTOWN OFFICERS' AND EMPLOYEES' - PMRS PENSION PLAN
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – Partial Compliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Incorrect Data On Certification Form AG 385 Resulting In A Net Underpayment Of State Aid

Condition: As disclosed in the Status of Prior Findings section of this report, although the city reimbursed the Commonwealth for the overpayment of state aid received in 2018 and 2019, plan officials again failed to comply with the instructions that accompany Certification Form AG 385 to assist them in accurately reporting the required pension data in the years 2020 and 2021.

The city failed to certify 2 eligible police employees (4 units) and certified 1 ineligible non-uniformed employee (1 unit) on the Certification Form AG 385 filed in 2020. In addition, subsequent to the current audit period, the city failed to certify 3 eligible non-uniformed employees (3 units) on the Certification Form AG 385 filed in 2021. The data contained on these certification forms is based on prior calendar year information.

Criteria: Pursuant to Act 205, at Section 402(e)(2), in order to be eligible for certification, an employee must have been employed on a full-time basis for at least six consecutive months and must have been participating in a pension plan during the certification year.

Cause: Plan officials failed to establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure the accuracy of the data certified. As a result, errors occurred due to oversights by the city given the large population size of the city's active employees.

Effect: The data submitted on these certification forms is used, in part, to calculate the state aid due to the municipality for distribution to its pension plans. Because the city's state aid allocations were based on unit value, the incorrect certification of pension data affected the city's state aid allocations, as identified below:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Type of Plan</u>	<u>Units Overstated (Understated)</u>	<u>Unit Value</u>	<u>State Aid Overpayment (Underpayment)</u>
2020	Police	(4)	\$ 4,924	\$ (19,696)
	O&E - PMRS	1	4,924	4,924
			Total	<u>(14,772)</u>
2021	O&E - PMRS	(3)	\$ 4,797	<u>(14,391)</u>
			Net Underpayment of State Aid	<u>\$ (29,163)</u>

CITY OF ALLENTOWN OFFICERS' AND EMPLOYEES' - PMRS PENSION PLAN
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – (Continued)

Although the additional state aid will be allocated to the city, the full amount of the 2020 and 2021 state aid allocations were not available to be deposited timely and therefore were not available to pay operating expenses or for investment.

Recommendation: We again recommend that in the future, plan officials establish adequate internal control procedures, such as having at least two people review the data certified, to ensure compliance with the instructions that accompany Certification Form AG 385 to assist them in accurately reporting the required pension data.

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

Auditor's Conclusion: Compliance will be evaluated during our next audit of the plan.

Finding No. 2 – Failure To Maintain An Adequate Record-Keeping System To Effectively Monitor Activity Of The Pension Plan

Condition: The city's record-keeping system did not provide effective control over the transactional activity of the officers' and employees' pension plan during 2020. Municipal officials were unable to furnish annual financial statements or custodial account transaction statements for the officers' and employees' pension plan. These annual financial and account statements have historically been provided by the plan's custodian, PMRS. However, as of the date of this report, annual financial and accounting statements summarizing the pension account activity have not been provided for the year 2020.

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.

Cause: Municipal officials indicated that the plan's custodian, PMRS, failed to provide copies of the custodial account transaction statements summarizing activity of the pension plan account for the year 2020. In addition, 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.

CITY OF ALLENTOWN OFFICERS' AND EMPLOYEES' - PMRS PENSION PLAN
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 2 – (Continued)

Effect: Although we were able to obtain alternate documentation from the municipality to evidence the propriety of the individual transactions tested during performance of the audit for the year 2020, the failure to maintain annual financial and/or account transaction statements prohibits municipal officials from effectively monitoring the plan's financial operations. Additionally, inadequate monitoring of the pension plan account could lead to undetected errors or improprieties in account transactions as well as deficiencies in authorizing and implementing pension plan policies and procedures.

Recommendation: We recommend that municipal officials contact the plan custodian and obtain annual financial statements of the custodial account of the officers' and employees' pension plan for the year 2020 to ensure the accuracy and propriety of the transaction activity. In addition, we recommend that municipal officials establish and maintain a financial record-keeping 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.

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

Auditor's Conclusion: It was noted that PMRS 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. PMRS officials have taken active measures to resolve these issues and were to begin providing 2020 Year-End Financial Activity Reports and Annual Member Statements for their plans in the fall of 2021. However, PMRS has not provided these statements to the municipality as of the date of this report. Compliance with the finding recommendation will be evaluated during our next audit of the plan.

CITY OF ALLENTOWN OFFICERS' AND EMPLOYEES' – PMRS 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	\$144,191,417	\$ 155,224,953	\$11,033,536	92.9%
01-01-17	153,749,151	169,326,609	15,577,458	90.8%
01-01-19	162,496,303	176,284,810	13,788,507	92.2%

CITY OF ALLENTOWN OFFICERS' AND EMPLOYEES' – PMRS 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.

CITY OF ALLENTOWN OFFICERS' AND EMPLOYEES' – PMRS PENSION PLAN
 SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
 (UNAUDITED)

SCHEDULE OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Year Ended December 31	Actuarially Determined Contribution	Actual Contributions	Contribution Deficiency (Excess)	Covered- Employee Payroll	Contributions as a Percentage of Covered- Employee Payroll
2011	\$ 1,367,093	\$ 1,367,093	\$ -		
2012	1,299,757	1,299,757	-		
2013	1,612,483	1,612,483	-	\$22,740,178	7.09%
2014	1,557,908	1,558,888	(980)	23,067,602	6.76%
2015	2,229,106	2,230,827	(1,721)	23,169,719	9.63%
2016	2,239,534	2,240,743	(1,209)	23,651,715	9.47%
2017	2,629,868	2,630,992	(1,124)	24,535,775	10.72%
2018	2,647,644	2,648,140	(496)	24,083,542	11.00%
2019	3,252,315	3,252,315	-	24,357,471	13.35%
2020	3,257,977	3,257,977	-	*	

* This schedule is presented pursuant to the implementation of GASB Statement No. 67, *Financial Reporting for Pension Plans* by reporting entities responsible for administering the pension plan to improve financial reporting by state and local governmental pension plans. Due to the statement being implemented only recently, the amount of Covered-Employee Payroll was not provided for years prior to 2013. In addition, due to the timing of this audit, covered-employee payroll for 2020 was not provided in this schedule.

CITY OF ALLENTOWN OFFICERS' AND EMPLOYEES' – PMRS 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	10 years
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.

CITY OF ALLENTOWN OFFICERS' AND EMPLOYEES' – PMRS PENSION PLAN
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

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Mr. Michael Hanlon
City Clerk

Ms. Cynthia Cranmer, CPA
Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement System

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