

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Richland Township Police Pension Plan Bucks County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2020

February 2022



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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

**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Board of Township Supervisors
Richland Township
Bucks County
Quakertown, PA 18951

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Richland Township 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 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 and the plan member who 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 monthly pension benefits due to the retired individuals and comparing these amounts to supporting documentation evidencing amounts determined and actually paid and 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.
- We determined whether provisions of the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) were in accordance with the provisions of Act 205 by examining provisions stated in the plan's governing documents.

The Richland Township 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.

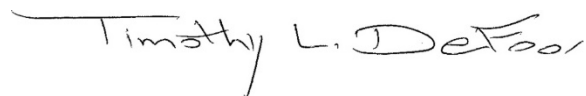
Township officials are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the Richland Township Police Pension Plan is administered in compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, administrative procedures, and local ordinances 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 Richland Township 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 – Incorrect Data On Certification Form AG 385 Resulting In An Overpayment Of State Aid
- Finding No. 2 – Failure To Maintain An Adequate Record-Keeping System To Effectively Monitor Activity Of The Pension Plan
- Finding No. 3 – Ordinance Improperly Amended By Resolution

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 Richland Township and, where appropriate, their responses have been included in the report. We would like to thank township officials for the cooperation extended to us during the conduct of the audit.



Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
January 26, 2022

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Background.....	1
Findings and Recommendations:	
Finding No. 1 – Incorrect Data On Certification Form AG 385 Resulting In An Overpayment Of State Aid.....	2
Finding No. 2 – Failure To Maintain An Adequate Record-Keeping System To Effectively Monitor Activity Of The Pension Plan	4
Finding No. 3 – Ordinance Improperly Amended By Resolution	5
Potential Withhold of State Aid.....	7
Supplementary Information	8
Report Distribution List	12

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 Richland Township 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 Richland Township Police Pension Plan is a single-employer defined benefit pension plan locally controlled by the provisions of Resolution No. 20-18 and a separately executed plan agreement with the Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement System (PMRS), 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. 266 and a separately executed plan agreement with PMRS, adopted pursuant to Act 15. The plan is also affected by the provisions of collective bargaining agreements between the township and its police officers. The plan was established October 1, 1998. Active members were required to contribute 3 percent of compensation to the plan during the audit period. As of December 31, 2020, the plan had 16 active members, 2 terminated members eligible for vested benefits in the future, and 2 retirees receiving pension benefits from the plan.

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP POLICE PENSION PLAN
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – Incorrect Data On Certification Form AG 385 Resulting In An Overpayment Of State Aid

Condition: The township certified 2 ineligible non-uniformed employees (2 units) and overstated payroll by \$24,175 on the Certification Form AG 385 filed in 2018, certified 1 ineligible non-uniformed employee (1 unit) and overstated payroll by \$23,988 on the Certification Form AG 385 filed in 2020, and certified 2 ineligible police officers (4 units) and overstated payroll by \$63,243 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: The incorrectly certified employees were either hired or terminated during the respective certification years and did not meet the six month criteria to be eligible for certification. The township lacked adequate internal control procedures, such as having another individual review the data certified to ensure compliance with the instructions that accompanied Certification Form AG 385 prior to submission.

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 township’s state aid allocations were based on unit value, the incorrect certification of pension data affected the township’s state aid allocations, as identified below:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Type of Plan</u>	<u>Units Overstated</u>	<u>Unit Value</u>	<u>State Aid Overpayment</u>
2018	Non-Uniformed Employees	1	\$ 4,684	\$ 4,684
2018	Non-Uniformed Cash Balance	1	\$ 4,684	\$ 4,684
2020	Non-Uniformed Cash Balance	1	\$ 4,924	\$ 4,924
2021	Police	4	\$ 4,797	<u>\$ 19,188</u>
Total Overpayment of State Aid				<u>\$ 33,480</u>

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP POLICE PENSION PLAN
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – (Continued)

In addition, the township used the overpayments of state aid to pay the minimum municipal obligations (MMOs) due to the police pension plan; therefore, if the reimbursement to the Commonwealth is made from the pension plan, the plan's MMOs will not be fully paid.

Furthermore, the township's future state aid allocations may be withheld until the finding recommendation is complied.

Recommendation: We recommend that the total excess state aid, in the amount of \$33,480, plus interest, be returned to the Commonwealth. A check in this amount, with interest compounded annually from date of receipt to date of repayment, at a rate earned by the pension plan, should be made payable to: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and mailed to: Department of the Auditor General, Municipal Pension & Fire Relief Programs Unit, 321 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120. A copy of the interest calculation must be submitted along with the check.

We also 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. In addition, if the reimbursement to the Commonwealth is made from police pension plan funds, we recommend that any resulting MMO deficiencies be paid to the pension plan with interest, at a rate earned by the pension plan.

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

Auditor's Conclusion: Compliance will be monitored subsequent to the release of the audit report and through our next audit of the pension plan.

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP POLICE PENSION PLAN
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Condition: The township’s record-keeping system did not provide effective control over the transactional activity of the police pension plan during 2020. Municipal officials were unable to furnish annual financial statements or custodial account transaction statements for the police 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.

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 police 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.

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP POLICE PENSION PLAN
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 2 – (Continued)

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 anticipate distribution of the 2020 reports and statements for their plans the last week of March and anticipate completing 2020 financial reporting this summer. Compliance with the finding recommendation will be evaluated during our next audit of the plan.

Finding No. 3 – Ordinance Improperly Amended By Resolution

Condition: The pension plan governing document, Ordinance No. 266, which adopted a plan agreement effective January 1, 2016, was restated in its entirety by Resolution No. 20-18, which adopted a plan agreement effective April 1, 2020.

Criteria: In Wynne v. Lower Merion Township, 181 Pa. Superior Ct., 524, the Pennsylvania Superior Court held that an ordinance may be amended only by another ordinance and not by a resolution.

Cause: Municipal officials acted on the advice of the plan custodian in adopting the new plan agreement by resolution.

Effect: The failure to properly adopt the restated plan document could result in inconsistent or improper benefit calculations and incorrect benefit payments from the pension plan.

Recommendation: We recommend that the township amend the plan’s governing document with a properly executed ordinance.

Management’s Response: Municipal officials disagreed with the finding. A township supervisor supplied e-mail correspondence between the former township manager and PMRS’s Assistant Counsel on this subject and provided the following response:

It is clearly stated from the Counsel of the PMRS that a resolution would be sufficient for making changes to the Township’s plans. I’m of the opinion that Richland Township went above and beyond to find the correct answer to the question regarding whether an ordinance or resolution was needed. Unfortunately, this incorrect advice from the PMRS has now led to a negative finding in our audit. Is once again, my reasoning for disagreeing with your negative finding on this particular matter.

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP POLICE PENSION PLAN
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 3 – (Continued)

Auditor's Conclusion: While we acknowledge that the township acted on advice from the plan custodian, based on the criteria cited above, the finding and recommendation remain as stated. Compliance will be evaluated during our next audit of the plan.

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP POLICE PENSION PLAN
POTENTIAL WITHHOLD OF STATE AID

Finding No. 1 contained in this audit report cites an overpayment of state aid to the township in the amount of \$33,480, plus interest. A condition of this nature may lead to a total withholding of state aid in the future unless that finding is corrected. A check in this amount with interest, at a rate earned by the pension plan, should be made payable to: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and mailed to: Department of the Auditor General, Municipal Pension & Fire Relief Programs Unit, 321 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120.

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP 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	\$ 2,743,845	\$ 3,131,766	\$ 387,921	87.6%
01-01-17	3,520,088	3,890,795	370,707	90.5%
01-01-19	4,427,591	4,671,968	244,377	94.8%

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP 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.

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP 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	\$ 161,415	\$ 161,415	\$ -	\$1,031,008	15.66%
2015	215,363	215,383	(20)	1,120,457	19.22%
2016	219,346	219,366	(20)	1,130,923	19.40%
2017	210,771	210,771	-	1,204,294	17.50%
2018	225,045	225,105	(60)	1,358,837	16.57%
2019	211,727	211,727	-	1,435,422	14.75%
2020	221,803	221,803	-		

* Due to the timing of this audit, covered-employee payroll for 2020 was not provided in this schedule.

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP 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	8 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.

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP POLICE PENSION PLAN
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Tom W. Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Ms. Kathie Doyle
Chairperson, Board of Township Supervisors

Mr. Timothy Arnold
Vice Chairman, Board of Township Supervisors

Mr. Timothy Ritter
Township Supervisor

Ms. Cynthia Cranmer, CPA
Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement System

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.