

ATTESTATION ENGAGEMENT

Township of La Plume
Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania
35-211

Liquid Fuels Tax Fund
For the Period
January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020

November 2021



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
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TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL

Independent Auditor's Report

The Honorable Yassmin Gramian, P.E.
Secretary
Department of Transportation
Harrisburg, PA 17120

We examined the accompanying Form MS-965 With Adjustments for the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund of the Township of La Plume, Lackawanna County, for the period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. The municipality's management is responsible for presenting the Form MS-965 in accordance with the criteria described in the Background section of this report and the Department of Transportation's *Publication 9*. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the Form MS-965 With Adjustments based on our examination.

Our examination was conducted in accordance with attestation standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the standards applicable to attestation engagements contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the examination to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the Form MS-965 is presented in accordance with the criteria described above, in all material respects. An examination involves performing procedures to obtain evidence about the Form MS-965. The nature, timing and extent of the procedures selected depend on our judgement, including an assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the Form MS-965, whether due to fraud or error. We believe that the evidence we obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

We are mandated by Section 403 of *The Fiscal Code*, 72 P.S. § 403, to audit each municipality's Liquid Fuels Tax Fund to ensure that funds received are expended in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States include attestation engagements as a separate type of audit. An attestation engagement performed pursuant to *Government Auditing Standards* involves additional standards that exceed the standards provided by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Accordingly, this attestation engagement complies with both *Government Auditing Standards* and Section 403 of *The Fiscal Code*.

Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)

As discussed in the Finding And Recommendations section of this report, the municipality expended \$16,650.00 for paving over one inch without obtaining project approval and failing to maintain documentation for price quotations.

In our opinion, except for the matters discussed in the paragraph above, the Form MS-965 With Adjustments presents, in all material respects, the information required by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation for the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund of the Township of La Plume, Lackawanna County, for the period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020, in accordance with the criteria described in the Background section of this report and the Department of Transportation's *Publication 9*.

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we are required to report all deficiencies that are considered to be significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal control; fraud and noncompliance with provisions of laws or regulations that have a material effect on the Form MS-965; and any other instances that warrant the attention of those charged with governance; noncompliance with provisions of contracts or grant agreements, and abuse that has a material effect on the Form MS-965. We are also required to obtain and report the views of responsible officials concerning the findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as well as any planned corrective actions. We performed our examination to express an opinion on whether the Form MS-965 is presented in accordance with the criteria described above and not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on internal control over reporting on the Form MS-965 or on compliance and other matters; accordingly, we express no such opinions.

A *deficiency in internal control* exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, misstatements on a timely basis. A *material weakness* is a deficiency, or combination of deficiencies, in internal control such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the Form MS-965 will not be prevented, or detected and corrected, on a timely basis. A *significant deficiency* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

Our consideration of internal control over reporting on the Form MS-965 was for the limited purpose of expressing an opinion on whether the Form MS-965 is presented in accordance with the criteria described above and would not necessarily identify all deficiencies in internal control that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. Given these limitations, during our engagement we did not identify any deficiencies in internal control that we consider to be material weaknesses. However, material weaknesses may exist that have not been identified.

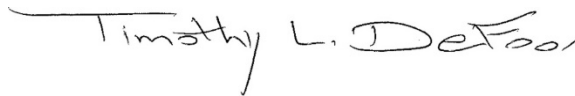
Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the Form MS-965 is free from material misstatement, we performed tests of the Township of La Plume, Lackawanna County's compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of amounts on the Form MS-965. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our engagement, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed the following instance of noncompliance that is required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

- Failure To Obtain Project Approval And Documentation For Price Quotations Was Not Available For Examination.

The purpose of this report is to determine whether the municipality's Liquid Fuels Tax Fund money is spent in accordance with the laws and regulations identified in the Background section of this report and the Department of Transportation's *Publication 9*. This report is not suitable for any other purpose.

We appreciate the courtesy extended by the Township of La Plume, Lackawanna County, to us during the course of our examination. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Bureau of County Audits at 717-787-1363.



October 20, 2021

Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General

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TOWNSHIP OF LA PLUME
LACKAWANNA COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
BACKGROUND
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2020

Background

The Liquid Fuels Tax Municipal Allocation Law, Act 655 of 1956, as amended, (72 P.S. § 2615.5 et seq.), provides municipalities other than counties (townships, boroughs, cities, towns, home rule, and optional plan governments) with an annual allocation of liquid fuels taxes from the state's Motor License Fund to be used for the maintenance and repair of streets, roads, and bridges for which the municipality is responsible. The allocation of these funds to municipalities is based: (1) 50 percent on the municipality's proportion of local road mileage to the total local road mileage in the state, and (2) 50 percent on the proportion of a municipality's population to the total population in the state.

The Vehicle Code, Title 75 P.S. § 9511, provides municipalities with annual maintenance payments to be received from the Motor License Fund for functionally local highways that were transferred to a municipality from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Each municipality must deposit the allocation of Liquid Fuels Tax funds and annual maintenance payments that it receives into a special fund called either the Municipal Liquid Fuels Tax Fund or State Fund. A municipality may not deposit any other monies into this fund except when the municipality does not have enough money in the special fund to meet the payments called for by its current annual budget for road and bridge purposes. In such a case, the municipality may borrow money or transfer money from its General Fund to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund.

The Department of Transportation has been given the regulatory authority for the administration of these funds. Department of Transportation's *Publication 9* includes the policies and procedures for the administration of Act 655, as amended, and the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund money. However, if there is a difference between *Publication 9* and any legislation, the legislation shall govern.

To qualify for the annual allocation of Liquid Fuels Tax funds, *Publication 9* indicates that each municipality shall:

1. Submit annual reports (MS-965, Actual Use Report, MS-965P, Project and Miscellaneous Receipts, and MS-965S, Record of Checks).
2. Make deposits and payments or expenditures in compliance with Act 655 of 1956, as amended. Failure to do so may result in not receiving allocations from PennDOT until all discrepancies are resolved. *Publication 9*, Section 2.6, includes information about investing Liquid Fuels Tax monies, using loan or bond proceeds, and types of receipts into the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund.

TOWNSHIP OF LA PLUME
LACKAWANNA COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
BACKGROUND
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2020

Background (Continued)

3. Submit the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's (DCED) Report of Elected and Appointed Officials by January 31st and the Survey of Financial Condition By March 15th.
4. Ensure resolution of all Contractor Responsibility Program (CRP) holds and blocks imposed by the Department of Revenue and the Department of Labor and Industry.
5. Ensure resolution of all reimbursements required as a result of audits performed by the Department of the Auditor General or monitoring reviews performed by the Department of Transportation's Financial Consultants.

Criteria

The criteria for the Form MS-965 With Adjustment are described below.

Section 1 of Form MS-965 With Adjustments provides a summary of Liquid Fuels Tax Fund expenditures by category. Categories requiring explanation include:

- Major equipment purchases are purchases of road machinery and road equipment with varying yearly costs in excess of the amounts indicated below:

<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
<u>\$10,700.00</u>	<u>\$10,900.00</u>	<u>\$11,100.00</u>	<u>\$11,300.00</u>

- Minor equipment purchases are purchases of road machinery and road equipment with varying yearly costs that are less than or equal to the amounts indicated below:

<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>
<u>\$10,700.00</u>	<u>\$10,900.00</u>	<u>\$11,100.00</u>	<u>\$11,300.00</u>

- Agility projects are exchanges of services with the Department of Transportation.

TOWNSHIP OF LA PLUME
LACKAWANNA COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
BACKGROUND
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2020

Background (Continued)

Section 2 of Form MS-965 With Adjustments provides information on the fund balance. Categories requiring explanation include:

- The state allocation is available from the Department of Transportation in March of each year. The amount the municipality receives is based half on its population and half on its road mileage.
- Municipalities that transferred roads from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to the municipality through the Highway Transfer Program receive annual turnback allocations in March of each year from the Department of Transportation. Turnback allocations are based on the mileage of the roads transferred.
- Expenditures include the total transferred from Section 1.

Section 3 of Form MS-965 With Adjustments determines if the municipality expended Liquid Fuels Tax Fund money in excess of the permissible amount for equipment and the balance that the municipality may carry forward for the purchase of equipment to the subsequent year.

Department of Transportation *Publication 9* requires that the amount expended for equipment purchases in a given year not exceed the sum of the equipment balance carried forward from the previous year and 20 percent of the current year's Liquid Fuels Tax Fund allocation and, if applicable, 20 percent of the turnback allocation plus other Department of Transportation approved adjustments.

If the municipality spent in excess of the amount listed on Line 4, the excess must be reimbursed to the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund.

The equipment balance to be carried forward for the subsequent year is the lesser of the amount on Line 6 or the ending fund balance on Line 6 of Section 2, but not less than zero.

TOWNSHIP OF LA PLUME
LACKAWANNA COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
BACKGROUND
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2020

Background (Continued)

Basis of Presentation

The financial activities of the municipality are accounted for in separate funds. The Liquid Fuels Tax Fund is used to account for state aid revenues from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation used primarily for building and improving local roads and bridges. The Form MS-965 has been prepared in accordance with reporting requirements prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation as a result of the Fuels Tax Act 655, dated 1956 and as amended, which does not constitute a complete presentation of the entity's assets, liabilities, expenses, and fund balance. Accordingly, the presentation of Form MS-965 With Adjustments is restricted to the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund, which represents a segment of the entity.

Basis Of Accounting

The accompanying Form MS-965 With Adjustments is prepared in accordance with reporting requirements prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. Under this method, revenues are recognized when received and expenditures are recorded when paid.

General Fixed Assets

General fixed assets are recognized as expenditures at the time of purchase. No depreciation has been provided on the heavy equipment used to maintain and repair roads and bridges.

TOWNSHIP OF LA PLUME
LACKAWANNA COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
2020 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 1
WITH ADJUSTMENTS

<u>Expenditure Summary</u>	<u>Reported</u>	<u>Adjustments</u>	<u>Adjusted Amount</u>
Minor equipment purchases	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Computer/Computer related training	-	-	-
Major equipment purchases	3,902.00	-	3,902.00
Agility projects	-	-	-
Cleaning streets and gutters	2,800.00	-	2,800.00
Winter maintenance services	5,358.15	-	5,358.15
Traffic control devices	743.50	-	743.50
Street lighting	-	-	-
Storm sewers and drains	-	-	-
Repairs of tools and machinery	-	-	-
Maintenance and repair of roads and bridges	22,615.00	-	22,615.00
Highway construction and rebuilding projects	-	-	-
Miscellaneous	-	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total (To Section 2, Line 5)	<u>\$ 35,418.65</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 35,418.65</u>

TOWNSHIP OF LA PLUME
LACKAWANNA COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
2020 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 2
WITH ADJUSTMENTS

<u>Fund Balance</u>	<u>Reported</u>	<u>Adjustments</u>	<u>Adjusted Amount</u>
1. Balance, January 1, 2020	\$ 43,149.01	\$ -	\$ 43,149.01
Receipts:			
2. State allocation	23,931.93	-	23,931.93
2a. Turnback allocation	1,200.00	-	1,200.00
2b. Interest on investments	232.56	-	232.56
2c. Miscellaneous	-	-	-
3. Total receipts	<u>25,364.49</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>25,364.49</u>
4. Total funds available	<u>68,513.50</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>68,513.50</u>
5. Expenditures (Section 1)	<u>35,418.65</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>35,418.65</u>
6. Balance, December 31, 2020	<u>\$ 33,094.85</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 33,094.85</u>

TOWNSHIP OF LA PLUME
LACKAWANNA COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
2020 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 3
WITH ADJUSTMENTS

<u>Equipment Balance</u>	<u>Reported</u>	<u>Adjustments</u>	<u>Adjusted Amount</u>
1. Prior year equipment balance	\$ 24,420.30	\$ -	\$ 24,420.30
2. Add: Current year equipment allocation (20% of Lines 2 + 2a, Section 2)	5,026.39	-	5,026.39
3. PENNDOT approved adjustments	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
4. Total funds available for equipment acquisition	29,446.69	-	29,446.69
5. Less: Major equipment expenditures	<u>3,902.00</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,902.00</u>
6. Remainder	<u>25,544.69</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>25,544.69</u>
7. Equipment balance available for subsequent year (Lesser of Line 6 or Section 2 balance, but not less than zero)	<u>\$ 25,544.69</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 25,544.69</u>

TOWNSHIP OF LA PLUME
LACKAWANNA COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2020

**Finding - Failure To Obtain Project Approval And Documentation For Price Quotations
Was Not Available For Examination**

Our examination disclosed that the township expended \$16,650.00 during 2020 from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund for paving over one inch without obtaining the approval of the Department of Transportation. Before paving of one inch in thickness or greater is done, the township must obtain the approval of the Department of Transportation. However, the township did not file an application with the Department of Transportation for the project and also failed to submit specifications for approval. Additionally, the township was required to obtain three written or telephonic price quotations for the expenditures. However, documentation for price quotations was not available for examination.

The Department of Transportation's *Publication 9* contains the policies and procedures for the administration of the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund. *Publication 9*, Chapter Two, Section 2.7.2, states that nonpermissible expenditures include "Construction and reconstruction projects without prior PENNDOT approval."

Additionally, *Publication 9*, Chapter Two, Section 2.8, states in part:

The following criteria is used to determine when a project is required for work on local roads utilizing Liquid Fuels Tax Funds, when construction, reconstruction and/or resurfacing work exceeds one inch or more in depth as well as other activities including:

Bituminous Surface: One Inch thickness or greater

TOWNSHIP OF LA PLUME
LACKAWANNA COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2020

**Finding - Failure To Obtain Project Approval And Documentation For Price Quotations
Was Not Available For Examination (Continued)**

Additionally, the above expenditure was not made in compliance with the contract requirements of *The Second Class Township Code*, 53 P.S. § 68102(b), (also found at § 3102(b) of *The Second Class Township Code* as published by the Local Government Commission), which states, in part:

Written or telephonic price quotations from at least three qualified and responsible contractors shall be requested for all contracts [during 2012] that exceed ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) but are less than the amount [in excess of \$18,500.00] requiring advertisement and competitive bidding or, in lieu of price quotations, a memorandum shall be kept on file showing that fewer than three qualified contractors exist in the market area within which it is practicable to obtain quotations. A written record of telephonic price quotations shall be made and shall contain at least the date of the quotation, the name of the contractor and the contractor's representative, the construction, reconstruction, repair, maintenance or work which was the subject of the quotation and the price. Written price quotations, written records of telephonic price quotations and memoranda shall be retained for a period of three years.

The thresholds for obtaining price quotations increased to purchases between \$11,300.00 and \$21,000.00 for 2020 and \$11,500.00 and \$21,300.00 for 2021.

These conditions occurred because this was a small project and the township officials did not know who to call.

The failure to comply with the Department of Transportation's Publication 9 and *The Second Class Township Code* could result in the township having to reimburse \$16,650.00 to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund.

Recommendations

We recommend that the township reimburse \$16,650.00 to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund upon official notification by the Department of Transportation.

We also recommend that before the township expends money on a project, it applies for and obtains approval for the project, and when the project is completed it obtains approval of the completed work.

TOWNSHIP OF LA PLUME
LACKAWANNA COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2020

**Finding - Failure To Obtain Project Approval And Documentation For Price Quotations
Was Not Available For Examination (Continued)**

Recommendations (Continued)

We further recommend that, in the future, the township complies with *The Second Class Township Code* as noted in this finding regarding price quotations.

Management's Response

The Secretary/Treasurer stated:

It is difficult at best to get anyone to be interested in our little projects. Were unable to find anyone and we didn't know who to inform regarding this issue.

Auditor's Conclusion

The township officials should contact the Department of Transportation for approval before paving of one inch or greater is done. Additionally, the township officials should contact at least three contractors to obtain quotations any work done within the range requiring price quotations cited above or, in lieu of price quotations, a memorandum shall be kept on file showing that fewer than three qualified contractors exist in the market area within which it is practicable to obtain quotations. During our next examination, we will determine if the township complied with our recommendations.

TOWNSHIP OF LA PLUME
LACKAWANNA COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
SUMMARY OF EXIT CONFERENCE
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2020

An exit conference was held June 22, 2021. Those participating were:

TOWNSHIP OF LA PLUME

Ms. Shirley Lewis, Secretary/Treasurer

DEPARTMENT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

Ms. Eileen Rosen, Auditor

The results of the examination were presented and discussed in their entirety.

TOWNSHIP OF LA PLUME
LACKAWANNA COUNTY
LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND
REPORT DISTRIBUTION
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2020

This report was initially distributed to:

The Honorable Yassmin Gramian, P.E.

Secretary
Department of Transportation

Township of La Plume

Lackawanna County
2080 Hickory Ridge Road
Factoryville, PA 18419

The Honorable Lisa Huffsmith

Chairwoman of the Board of Supervisors

Ms. Shirley Lewis

Secretary/Treasurer

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.