

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## West Elizabeth Volunteer Fire Relief Association

Allegheny County, Pennsylvania  
For the Period  
January 1, 2020, to February 22, 2022

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March 2023



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General  
Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR  
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Thomas Wolfgang, Vice President  
West Elizabeth Volunteer Fire  
Relief Association  
Allegheny County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the former West Elizabeth Volunteer Fire Relief Association for the period January 1, 2020, to February 22, 2022. The audit was conducted pursuant to authority derived from Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; Section 403 of The Fiscal Code, 72 P.S. § 403; and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act ("VFRA Act"), see 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418.

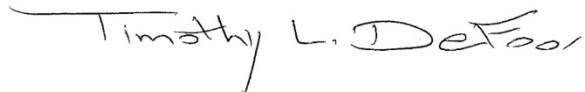
The objective of the audit was to determine if the former relief association complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds. Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objective identified above and was not, nor was it required to be, conducted in accordance with Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

Relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the relief association's administration of state aid and accumulated relief funds complies with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures, including the safeguarding of assets. Relief association officers are responsible for complying with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures. It is our responsibility to perform procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objectives. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, for the period January 1, 2020, to February 22, 2022, the former relief association, in all significant respects, complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds.

In addition, as of February 22, 2022, the former relief association completed the process of dissolution and merged with Elizabeth Borough Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association. Consequently, all remaining monetary assets and equipment were transferred to the Elizabeth Borough Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association.

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the former relief association. We would like to thank former relief association 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 horizontal line above the first few letters.

Timothy L. DeFoor  
Auditor General  
January 31, 2023

## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Background .....	1
Report Distribution List .....	4

## BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Section 403 of The Fiscal Code<sup>1</sup>, and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act<sup>2</sup> ("VFRA Act"), the Department of the Auditor General's duty is to audit the accounts and records of every volunteer firefighters' relief association to determine that funds received under the Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution Law<sup>3</sup> (commonly referred to as Act 205) are properly expended.

The former relief association was a charitable organization that was formed primarily to afford financial protection to volunteer firefighters and to encourage individuals to participate in volunteer fire service.

The VFRA Act governs the overall operation of volunteer firefighters' relief associations. Relief association bylaws define the specific operational procedures by which relief associations conduct business. To fulfill its primary purpose, the VFRA Act authorizes specific types of expenditures and prescribes appropriate volunteer firefighters' relief association investment options. Within the parameters established by the VFRA Act, it is the responsibility of relief associations to choose investments in a proper and prudent manner.

Volunteer firefighters' relief associations receive public tax monies, and the association officers therefore have a responsibility to the public to conduct the association's financial affairs in a businesslike manner and to maintain sufficient financial records to support the propriety of all association transactions. Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are also responsible for ensuring that the association operates in accordance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures.

Act 205 sets forth the computation of the Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution paid to each applicable municipality throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The amount of the distribution is based upon the population of each municipality and the market value of real estate within the municipality. Upon receipt of this distribution, the municipality must allocate the funds to the volunteer firefighters' relief association of the fire service organization or fire service organizations that is or are recognized as providing the service to the municipality.

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<sup>1</sup> 72 P.S. § 403 (as last amended by Act 44 of 2017).

<sup>2</sup> 35 Pa.C.S. § 7411 *et seq.* See specifically, 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418 (amended by Act 91 of 2020).

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

**BACKGROUND – (Continued)**

The former relief association was allocated state aid from the following municipality:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>
West Elizabeth Borough	Allegheny	\$2,150	\$1,891	*

\* As of February 22, 2022, the former relief association dissolved its organization. Thereafter, it did not receive any further state aid allocations.

Based on the relief association’s records, its total cash as of February 22, 2022, was zero, as illustrated below:

Cash	<u>\$</u>	<u>-</u>
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## BACKGROUND – (Continued)

Based on the relief association’s records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2020, to February 22, 2022, were \$29,923, as noted below. The accuracy of these expenditures was evaluated as part of the Department’s audit to conclude on the relief association’s compliance with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds.<sup>1</sup> **The scope of the Department’s audit does not include the issuance of an opinion on the accuracy of these amounts.**

### Expenditures:

Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 19,500
Training expenses	886
Total Fire Services	<u>\$ 20,386</u>
Administrative Services:	
Bond premiums	\$ 500
Other administrative expenses	75
Total Administrative Services	<u>\$ 575</u>
Other Expenditures:	
Transfer of monetary assets *	<u>\$ 8,962</u>
Total Expenditures	<u><u>\$ 29,923</u></u>

\* Transfer of Monetary Assets/Dissolution of Relief Association.

As of February 22, 2022, the former relief association completed the process of dissolution and merged with Elizabeth Borough Volunteer Fireman’s Relief Association. Consequently, all remaining monetary assets and equipment were transferred to the Elizabeth Borough Volunteer Fireman’s Relief Association. Due to the dissolution of the former relief association, we are providing officials of Elizabeth Borough Volunteer Fireman’s Relief Association copies of this report.

The volunteer firefighters’ relief association and the affiliated fire service organization are separate, legal entities. The former relief association was affiliated with the following fire service organization:

West Elizabeth Volunteer Fire Department

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<sup>1</sup> Accuracy was evaluated for a selection of transactions based on dollar amount, category, and/or random selection.

WEST ELIZABETH VOLUNTEER FIRE RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

**The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro**  
Governor  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

West Elizabeth Volunteer Fire Relief Association Governing Body:

**Mr. Thomas Wolfgang**  
Vice President

**Mr. Robert Welty**  
Treasurer

Elizabeth Borough Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association Governing Body

**Mr. Jeremy Rager**  
President

**Mr. Kevin Tennant**  
Vice President

**Mr. Nick Tobin**  
Secretary

**Mr. Charles Smith, Jr.**  
Treasurer



WEST ELIZABETH VOLUNTEER FIRE RELIEF ASSOCIATION  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

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

**Ms. Robin Schmidt**  
Secretary  
West Elizabeth Borough

**Mr. Scott Craighead**  
Secretary  
Elizabeth Borough

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at [www.PaAuditor.gov](http://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](mailto:news@PaAuditor.gov).