

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Sharpsburg Fireman's Relief Association Allegheny County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2023, to October 25, 2023

August 2024



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Dennis Lane, President
Sharpsburg Fireman's Relief Association
Allegheny County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the former Sharpsburg Fireman's Relief Association (relief association) for the period January 1, 2023, to October 25, 2023. 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.

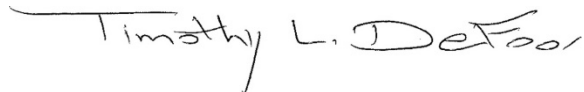
The objective of the audit was to determine if the former relief association complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds. Our audit was limited to the areas related to 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 association 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, 2023, to October 25, 2023, 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 October 25, 2023, the former relief association completed the process of dissolution and merged with Aspinwall Volunteer Fire Department to form Southern Allegheny Valley Emergency Services. Consequently, all remaining monetary assets and equipment were transferred to the Southern Allegheny Valley Emergency Services.

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 long horizontal line extending to the left of the first letter.

Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
July 22, 2024

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BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Section 403 of The Fiscal Code¹, and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act² ("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 Law³ (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 relief association officers therefore have a responsibility to the public to conduct the relief association's financial affairs in a businesslike manner and to maintain sufficient financial records to support the propriety of all relief association transactions. Volunteer firefighters' relief association officers are also responsible for ensuring that the relief 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.

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

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2023</u>
Sharpsburg Borough	Allegheny	\$16,097

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

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

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

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

As of October 25, 2023, 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 October 25, 2023, was zero, as illustrated below:

Cash	<u>\$ -</u>
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Based on the relief association’s records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2023, to October 25, 2023, were \$51,258, 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.⁴ **The scope of the Department’s audit does not include the issuance of an opinion on the accuracy of these amounts.**

Expenditures:

Benefit Services:	
Insurance premiums	<u>\$ 7,165</u>
Fire Services:	
Training expenses	<u>\$ 323</u>
Administrative Services:	
Other administrative expenses	<u>\$ 5</u>
Other Expenditures:	
Transfer of monetary assets *	<u>\$ 43,765</u>
Total Expenditures	<u>\$ 51,258</u>

* Transfer of Monetary Assets/Dissolution of Relief Association.

As of October 25, 2023, the former relief association completed the process of dissolution and merged with Aspinwall Volunteer Fire Department to form Southern Allegheny Valley Emergency Services. Consequently, all remaining monetary assets and equipment were transferred to the Southern Allegheny Valley Emergency Services. Due to the dissolution of the former relief association, we are providing officials of Southern Allegheny Valley Emergency Services copies of this report.

⁴ Accuracy was evaluated for a selection of transactions based on dollar amount, category, and/or random selection.

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

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:

Sharpsburg Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.

SHARPSBURG FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Sharpsburg Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Dennis Lane
President

Mr. Michael Daniher
Vice President

Mr. Taylor Pecze
Secretary

Ms. Kathleen Mercer
Treasurer

Southern Allegheny Valley Emergency Services Governing Body:

Mr. David May
President

Mr. Nick Scheid
Vice President

Mr. Patrick Glen Rockhill
Secretary

Ms. Kathy Mercer
Treasurer

SHARPSBURG FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

A report was also distributed to the following municipality, which allocated foreign fire insurance tax monies to the former relief association:

Ms. Christine DeRunk
Manager/Chief Administrator
Sharpsburg Borough

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.