

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

The Paxtang Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association

Dauphin County, Pennsylvania

For the Period

January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2023

September 2024



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Gavin Ford, President
The Paxtang Volunteer Fireman's
Relief Association
Dauphin County

We have conducted a compliance audit of The Paxtang Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association (relief association) for the period January 1, 2021, to December 31, 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 objectives of the audit were:

1. To determine if the relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the findings contained in our prior audit report.
2. To determine if the 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 objectives 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.

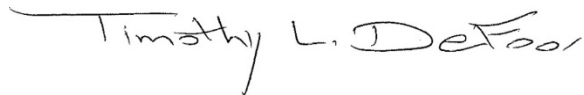
Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, for the period January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2023:

- The relief association took appropriate corrective action to address two of the four findings contained in our prior audit report. However, the relief association failed to take appropriate corrective action to address the two remaining findings contained in our prior audit report, as listed below, and discussed in the Status of Prior Findings section of this report.
- The 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, except as noted in the findings listed below and discussed later in this report.

Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Inadequate Minutes Of Meetings

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the relief association and, where appropriate, their responses have been included in the report. We would like to thank the relief association officials for the cooperation extended to us during the conduct of the audit.



Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
July 25, 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 relief association is 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.

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)

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

Municipality	County	2021	2022	2023
Paxtang Borough	Dauphin	\$7,040	*	*

* During the current audit period, the relief association did not receive an allocation of state aid from Paxtang Borough in 2022 and 2023. Municipalities have sole discretion to distribute their annual allocation of state aid received to any relief association providing fire service to the municipality. The affiliated fire company was decertified as of July 31, 2022, and will no longer be the duly authorized fire service for Paxtang Borough.

Based on the relief association’s records, its total cash as of December 31, 2023, was \$7,688, as illustrated below:

Cash	\$ 7,688
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Based on the relief association’s records, its total expenditures for the period January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2023, were \$8,300, 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	\$ 7,930
Administrative Services:	
Bond premiums	\$ 370
Total Expenditures	\$ 8,300

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

Paxtang Fire Company Number 1

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

THE PAXTANG VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

The relief association has complied with two of the four prior audit findings and recommendations, as follows:

- Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Membership Roster

By maintaining a comprehensive listing of the relief association's membership.

- Undocumented Expenditures

By receiving reimbursement of \$430 from the affiliated fire company for the undocumented expenditures that were made in the prior audit period.

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The relief association has not complied with two of the four prior audit findings. These findings are noted below and discussed in detail in the Findings and Recommendations section of this report:

- Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster
- Failure To Maintain Minutes Of Meetings

Although the relief association partially complied with the prior audit finding by maintaining minutes of all relief association meetings held during the audit period, the relief association failed to maintain detailed minutes of meetings as required by the VFRA Act and the relief association's bylaws as noted in Finding No. 2 of this report.

We are concerned by the relief association's failure to correct those previously reported audit findings. The relief association management should strive to implement the recommendations and corrective actions noted in this audit report.

THE PAXTANG VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure To Maintain
A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster**

Condition: The relief association did not maintain a complete and accurate roster of equipment owned by the relief association. In addition, there was no indication that a physical inventory of equipment was conducted on an annual basis, nor whether such inventory accounted for all equipment owned by the relief association.

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

Criteria: Prudent business practice dictates that the relief association should establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure the maintenance of a cumulative equipment roster of all items purchased by the relief association and perform and document an annual physical inventory of all operable equipment in order to provide an effective accounting control over the relief association's equipment. A cumulative equipment roster of all relief association equipment should include all the following:

- Types of equipment purchased
- Dates of purchase
- Unit costs
- Names of suppliers
- Serial numbers, if applicable
- Current locations of items
- Final dispositions of sold or damaged equipment
- Evidence of the performance and results of an annual physical inventory

Cause: The relief association officials stated that they were not able to locate the cumulative equipment roster to maintain and conduct the annual physical inventory checks.

Effect: The continued failure to maintain a detailed equipment roster and perform an annual physical inventory of equipment prevents adequate accountability for, and safeguarding of, relief association equipment.

Recommendation: We again recommend that the relief association officials maintain a cumulative equipment roster of all equipment owned by the relief association. Furthermore, the relief association should ensure it performs an annual physical inventory of all operable equipment and that the completion of the inventory be sufficiently documented. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

THE PAXTANG VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – (Continued)

Management's Response: Relief association management agreed with the finding as presented at the audit exit conference and indicated they will take action to comply with the recommendation.

Auditor's Conclusion: We are concerned by the relief association's failure to correct this previously reported audit finding and strongly encourage timely implementation of the recommendation noted in this audit report.

Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Inadequate Minutes Of Meetings

Condition: Although the relief association partially complied with the prior audit finding by maintaining minutes of all relief association meetings held during the audit period, the relief association failed to maintain detailed minutes of meetings as required by the VFRA Act and the relief association's bylaws. Specifically, the relief association's minutes did not address all financial-related transactions that occurred during the audit period. Furthermore, the meeting minutes were not signed and dated by the recording officer.

Criteria: Section 7415(a) of the VFRA Act states, in part, that the relief association:

. . . must provide for taking and preserving minutes of all meetings and maintenance of such books of account as may be necessary and appropriate to afford a permanent record of its fiscal affairs.

The relief association's bylaws at Article III, Section 3 states, in part:

The Secretary shall keep a true record of the proceedings of every meeting in the minutes. The minutes shall note authorization by the membership of all Association financial transactions and all other pertinent business discussed at meetings...

In addition, prudent business practice dictates that the relief association officials should ensure that meeting minutes are signed and dated.

Cause: The relief association officials were unaware of the criteria for the relief association meeting minutes.

Effect: Without detailed minutes of meetings that are signed and dated, evidence that relief association business was presented before the membership for approval does not exist.

THE PAXTANG VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 2 – (Continued)

Recommendation: We again recommend that the relief association officials maintain detailed minutes of meetings as required by the VFRA Act and the relief association's bylaws, evidencing the discussion and approval of all financial-related business conducted by the relief association. We also recommend that the relief association officials ensure that all meeting minutes are signed and dated by the Secretary of the Relief Association to ensure the validity of the meeting minutes. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

Management's Response: Relief association management agreed with the finding as presented at the audit exit conference and indicated they will take action to comply with the recommendation.

Auditor's Conclusion: We are concerned by the relief association's failure to correct this previously reported audit finding and strongly encourage timely implementation of the recommendation noted in this audit report.

THE PAXTANG VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

The Paxtang Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association Governing Body:

Mr. Gavin Ford
President

Mr. Terry Bastian
Vice President

Mr. Stephen Roth
Treasurer

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

Ms. Faye A. Clark
Secretary
Paxtang 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.