# **COMPLIANCE AUDIT**

# Keystone Valley Firefighters' Relief Association

Chester County, Pennsylvania
For the Period
January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2017

July 2018



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General





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EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Douglas T. Delestienne, President Keystone Valley Firefighters' Relief Association Chester County

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Keystone Valley Firefighters' Relief Association (relief association) pursuant to authority derived from Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Section 403 of The Fiscal Code, Act of April 9, 1929, (P.L. 343, No. 176), and mandated by the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act, as consolidated by the Act of November 23, 2010 (P.L. 1181, No. 118), at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7411 *et seq.*, for the period January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2017.

#### 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 required to be and was not 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, 2016 to December 31, 2017:

- The relief association took appropriate corrective action to address three of the seven findings contained in our prior audit report. However, the relief association failed to take appropriate corrective action to address the four 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 Inadequate Signatory Authority For The Disbursement Of Funds
  - Finding No. 2 Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation Failure To Maintain Surety (Fidelity) Bond Coverage
  - Finding No. 3 Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation Inadequate Relief Association Bylaws
  - Finding No. 4 Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation Inadequate Minutes Of Meetings
  - Finding No. 5 Failure To Deposit Proportionate Proceeds From Sale Of Jointly Purchased Vehicle
  - Finding No. 6 Related Party Situation
  - Finding No. 7 Failure To Obtain A Pennsylvania State Sales Tax Exemption Number

Four of the seven audit findings contained in this report cite conditions that existed in the operation of the relief association during the prior audit period and were not corrected during the current audit period. We are concerned by the number of findings noted and strongly encourage timely implementation of the recommendations noted in this audit report.

The supplementary financial information contained in this report is presented for purposes of additional disclosure and analysis. We performed only limited procedures on the supplementary financial information and, accordingly, express no form of assurance on it.

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.

July 17, 2018

EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE

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**Auditor General** 

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#### **BACKGROUND**

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Section 403 of The Fiscal Code, Act of April 9, 1929, (P.L. 343, No. 176), and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act, as consolidated by the Act of November 23, 2010, (P.L. 1181, No. 118), at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7411 *et seq.*, 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, Act of December 18, 1984, (P.L. 1005, No. 205), as amended, 53 P.S. § 895.701 *et seq.* (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.

Act 118 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, Act 118 authorizes specific types of expenditures and prescribes appropriate volunteer firefighters' relief association investment options. Within the parameters established by Act 118, 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.

#### **BACKGROUND** – (Continued)

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

Municipality	County	2016	2017
Highland Township	Chester	\$ 6,441	\$ 6,936
Parkesburg Borough	Chester	\$20,518	\$18,532
Sadsbury Township	Chester	*	\$ 4,700
West Sadsbury Township	Chester	\$20,713	\$18,873

<sup>\*</sup> During the current audit period, the relief association did not receive an allocation of state aid from Sadsbury Township in 2016. Municipalities have sole discretion to distribute their annual allocation of state aid received to any relief association providing fire service to the municipality.

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:

Keystone Valley Fire Department

### KEYSTONE VALLEY FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

#### COMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

#### • Undocumented Expenditures

By receiving reimbursement of \$40,557 from the affiliated fire company for the undocumented expenditures that were made in the prior audit period.

#### • Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

By maintaining a cumulative inventory roster of all relief association owned equipment.

#### • <u>Inappropriate Ownership Of Rescue Vehicle</u>

By ensuring the title of the rescue vehicle was transferred to the relief association.

#### NONCOMPLIANCE WITH PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Inadequate Signatory Authority For The Disbursement Of Funds
- Failure To Maintain Surety (Fidelity) Bond Coverage
- Inadequate Relief Association Bylaws
- Inadequate Minutes Of Meetings

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

# <u>Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Inadequate Signatory</u> <u>Authority For The Disbursement Of Funds</u>

<u>Condition</u>: During the current audit period, the relief association failed to elect an authorized disbursing officer for the relief association and, although all of the checks drawn on the relief association's checking accounts during the current audit period contained the signatures of two officers of the relief association, neither of these officers was the disbursing officer, even though the disbursing officer's signature is required by Act 118 and the relief association's bylaws.

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(c)(3) states, in part:

The bylaws shall require that the signatures of at least two officers, one of whom shall be the disbursing officer, shall be required to bind the association by formal contract or to issue a negotiable instrument.

In addition, Article VII, Sections 7.1 and 7.2 of the relief association's bylaws, state:

The signatures of the Treasurer and one Board of Director shall be required for the issuance of Relief Association checks, withdrawal from the Association savings account, redemption of any Relief Association investment, or on any other negotiable instrument issued by the Association.

The Association shall maintain an officer's bond on the treasurer. The amount of the bond shall be at least as great as the maximum cash balance in current funds of the association at any time during the fiscal year.

Furthermore, prudent business practice dictates that the relief association has sufficient internal control procedures in place to ensure the signatures of at least two relief association officials are included on all negotiable instruments. Adequate internal control procedures require that checks be signed only after the propriety of the expenditure has been determined and the payee, date, and amount to be paid has been confirmed. Additionally, responsible relief association officers should compare this information with supporting documentation, such as invoices, contracts, etc., prior to approving the checks. As disclosed above, although all of the checks executed during the current period contained two signatures as suggested, neither represented the signature of the disbursing officer as prescribed by Act 118.

#### Finding No. 1 – (Continued)

<u>Cause</u>: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials again neglected to establish adequate internal control procedures that require the signatures of at least two officers, one of whom shall be the disbursing officer, on all negotiable instruments. Instead, the relief association appointed an outside entity to hold the position of treasurer of the relief association as authorized in Article III, Section 3.2 of the relief association's bylaws and allowed the use of signatures of two other relief association officers on all negotiable instruments.

Article III, Section 3.2 of the relief association's bylaws state, in part:

The Association's Board of Directors shall be responsible for appointing, hiring, or contracting a qualified individual or group to act in the capacity as Treasurer for the Keystone Valley Firefighters Relief Association...

<u>Effect</u>: Although appointing a qualified individual or group to act in the capacity of treasurer is authorized in Section 3 of the relief association's bylaws, issuing checks without the disbursing officer's signature negates the relief association's internal control over the disbursement process and is contrary to Act 118 and Section 7 of the relief association's bylaws. In addition, issuing checks without the signature of the disbursing officer places relief association assets at greater risk as expenditures are being made without the signature of the disbursing officer who is required to be adequately bonded according to Act 118 (refer to Finding No. 2).

Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(c)(4) states, in part, that:

. . . the disbursing officer, whether designated treasurer, comptroller, financial secretary or otherwise, shall be bonded by corporate surety for faithful performance of duty. The amount of the bond shall be at least as great as the maximum cash balance in current funds of the association at any time during the fiscal year, and the premium on the bond shall be a proper charge against the funds of the association.

#### Finding No. 1 – (Continued)

Recommendation: We again recommend that the relief association elect a relief association member to serve as treasurer and authorized disbursing officer of the relief association. Although the relief association may contract with an outside entity to perform certain financial accounting and other record-keeping functions for the relief association, the ultimate responsibility for the financial management and fiscal authority over the financial transactions of the organization remains with the relief association. We also recommend that the relief association amend the relief association bylaws accordingly to reflect this fiduciary responsibility. Finally, we recommend that the relief association follow established internal control procedures to ensure that the signatures of at least two officers, one of whom shall be the disbursing officer, are included on all future relief association negotiable instruments as defined by Act 118. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

<u>Management's Response</u>: 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.

<u>Auditor's Conclusion</u>: 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.

# <u>Finding No. 2 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Failure To Maintain Surety (Fidelity) Bond Coverage</u>

<u>Condition</u>: The relief association failed to maintain Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage on an authorized disbursing officer, as required by Act 118.

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(c)(4) states, in part, that:

. . . the disbursing officer, whether designated treasurer, comptroller, financial secretary or otherwise, shall be bonded by corporate surety for faithful performance of duty. The amount of the bond shall be at least as great as the maximum cash balance in current funds of the association at any time during the fiscal year, and the premium on the bond shall be a proper charge against the funds of the association.

#### Finding No. 2 – (Continued)

<u>Cause</u>: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials again neglected to comply with the Act 118 provisions requiring the maintenance of Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage on the relief association's authorized disbursing officer.

<u>Effect</u>: As a result of an authorized disbursing officer of the relief association not being bonded, the relief association's cash assets were not adequately safeguarded.

<u>Recommendation</u>: We again recommend that the relief association officials obtain Surety (Fidelity) bond coverage on an authorized disbursing officer in an amount greater than the relief association's maximum cash balance, as required by Act 118. 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, as a result of our audit, on May 1, 2018, the relief association obtained a Surety (Fidelity) bond policy in an amount greater than the relief association's maximum cash balance.

Auditor's Conclusion: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

# <u>Finding No. 3 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Inadequate Relief Association Bylaws</u>

<u>Condition</u>: The existing bylaws of the relief association do not contain all of the provisions required by Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(c). Specifically, the bylaws do not address how the board members are elected.

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

<u>Criteria</u>: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(c)(5) states, that the relief association's bylaws shall:

(5) State the procedure to be followed in nominating and in electing officers, trustees, directors, and members of the executive committee, according to the provisions which have been made for establishment of those positions.

<u>Cause</u>: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials again neglected to amend the relief association bylaws to meet the bylaw provisions required by Act 118.

#### Finding No. 3 – (Continued)

<u>Effect</u>: As a result of the mandatory provision not being included in the bylaws, the relief association may have conducted its affairs without proper authorization.

<u>Recommendation</u>: We again recommend that the relief association officials review and update the bylaws governing their organization so that the bylaws meet the requirements set forth in Act 118 and properly authorize the operating procedures of the relief association. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

<u>Management's Response</u>: 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.

<u>Auditor's Conclusion</u>: 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.

# <u>Finding No. 4 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation – Inadequate Minutes</u> <u>Of Meetings</u>

<u>Condition</u>: The relief association failed to maintain detailed minutes of meetings as required by Act 118 and the relief association's bylaws. Specifically, the relief association's minutes did not address all of the financial-related transactions that occurred during the audit period.

A similar condition was noted in our prior audit report.

<u>Criteria</u>: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7415(a) 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.

In addition, the relief association's bylaws at Article III, Section 3.3 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.

#### Finding No. 4 – (Continued)

<u>Cause</u>: Even though notified of this condition during our prior audit, relief association officials again neglected to maintain detailed minutes of meetings as required by Act 118 and the relief association's bylaws.

<u>Effect</u>: Without detailed minutes of meetings, evidence that relief association business was presented before the membership for approval does not exist.

<u>Recommendation</u>: We again recommend that the relief association officials maintain detailed minutes of meetings, evidencing the discussion and approval of all financial-related business conducted by the relief association. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

<u>Management's Response</u>: 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.

<u>Auditor's Conclusion</u>: 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.

# <u>Finding No. 5 – Failure To Deposit Proportionate Proceeds From Sale of Jointly Owned Vehicle</u>

<u>Condition</u>: In June 2017, proceeds in the amount of \$4,800 from the sale of a jointly owned vehicle were erroneously deposited into the affiliated fire company's bank account.

<u>Criteria</u>: Prudent business practice dictates that the relief association should make sure all proportionate proceeds are received and timely deposited into a relief association account.

<u>Cause</u>: Relief association officials failed to establish internal control procedures to ensure that all proceeds are timely deposited into a relief association account.

<u>Effect</u>: The failure to deposit all relief association sale proceeds in a timely manner can lead to a greater risk that funds could be lost or misappropriated. As a result of the proceeds from the sale of a jointly owned vehicle being deposited into a fire company account, the relief association was unable to use the funds to purchase replacement equipment, for general operating expenses, or for investment purposes.

#### Finding No. 5 – (Continued)

<u>Recommendation</u>: We recommend that the relief association be reimbursed \$4,800 for the erroneous deposit. We also recommend the relief association officials establish accounting and internal control procedures to ensure that all proceeds are timely deposited in a relief association account. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

<u>Management's Response</u>: 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: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

#### Finding No. 6 – Failure To Disclose Related Party Transaction

<u>Condition</u>: Relief association officials failed to disclose a related party transaction to the relief association membership. The relief association did business with a local bank that employs a relief association officer. As of December 31, 2017, the bank holds 80 percent of the relief association assets.

A related party transaction occurs when the relief association does business with a vendor that employs or is owned by a relief association officer or a member of an officer's immediate family. Such a transaction may provide a less than arm's length financial benefit to such officer or member of such officer's immediate family through a commission or a profit from a sale.

<u>Criteria</u>: Ethics laws state that all potential related party transactions should be disclosed to the membership and recorded in the minutes of relief association meetings. In addition, all officers and/or members involved with a business that is party to the related party transaction should abstain from all votes concerning such transactions.

<u>Cause</u>: Relief association officials indicated that they were unaware that related party transactions should be disclosed to the membership.

<u>Effect</u>: The failure to properly disclose a related party transaction may create potential conflicts of interest which could result in the relief association being involved in less than arm's length financial transactions.

#### Finding No. 6 – (Continued)

<u>Recommendation</u>: We recommend that the relief association officials take the actions necessary to eliminate the appearance of conflicts of interests. Actions should include, but are not limited to, written notification to the relief association membership for each related party transaction, and the abstention from decisions and voting rights by the relief association officials who are involved owners of businesses that have business dealings with the relief association. These actions should be documented in the relief association's minutes. Furthermore, the relief association officials should closely review all related party transactions to ensure that all transactions are at arm's length, i.e., the cost of the services rendered by the firm is competitive.

<u>Management's Response</u>: 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.

<u>Auditor's Conclusion</u>: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

#### Finding No. 7 – Failure To Obtain A Pennsylvania Sales Tax Exemption Number

<u>Condition</u>: The relief association failed to obtain a Pennsylvania sales tax exemption number. The relief association is currently using the fire service organization's sales tax exemption number, although the fire service organization and the relief association are separate legal entities.

Criteria: Act 118 at 35 Pa.C.S. 7415(e) states:

A volunteer firefighters' relief association organized or conducted in accordance with the requirements of this section shall be regarded as a charitable corporation for all purposes, including the right to establish exemption from the operation of certain taxes.

<u>Cause</u>: Relief association officials indicated that they were unaware of the necessity to obtain its own sales tax exemption number from the Department of Revenue.

<u>Effect</u>: As a result of the relief association's failure to obtain a sales tax exemption number, the relief association may be required to pay Pennsylvania sales tax on its purchases, which ultimately reduces the funds otherwise available for general operating expenditures or for investment purposes.

<u>Recommendation</u>: We recommend that the relief association officials immediately obtain a state sales tax exemption number from the Department of Revenue and furnish this exemption number to all vendors from whom the relief association purchases equipment. For further guidance, please refer to the Auditor General's publication, MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

### Finding No. 7 – (Continued)

<u>Management's Response</u>: 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: Compliance will be subject to verification through our next audit.

### KEYSTONE VALLEY FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION CASH AND INVESTMENT BALANCES AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2017

Cash	\$ 74,172
Fair Value of Investments	17,911
Total Cash and Investments	\$ 92,083

### KEYSTONE VALLEY FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION SUPPLEMENTARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2016 TO DECEMBER 31, 2017

### Expenditures:

Benefit Services:	
Insurance premiums	\$ 42,088
Relief benefits	 33
Total Benefit Services	\$ 42,121
Fire Services:	
Equipment purchased	\$ 115,835
Equipment maintenance	8,614
Training expenses	25,957
Total Fire Services	\$ 150,406
Administrative Services:	
Other administrative expenses	\$ 3,649
Total Expenditures	\$ 196,176

# KEYSTONE VALLEY FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

#### The Honorable Tom W. Wolf

Governor Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Keystone Valley Firefighters' Relief Association Governing Body:

**Mr. Douglas T. Delestienne**President

Ms. Stephanie A. Klingler
Vice President

Ms. Tammy Guiney
Secretary

Mr. Stanley Przychodzien
Treasurer

Mr. Brian Gathercole
Director

Mr. Geoffrey W. Burkhart
Director

Mr. Michael R. Short
Director

### KEYSTONE VALLEY FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF ASSOCIATION REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

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

Ms. Barbara Davis

Secretary Highland Township

Ms. Wendy A. Keegan

Secretary Parkesburg Borough

Ms. Linda Shank

Secretary Sadsbury Township

Ms. Cindy Mammarella

Secretary West Sadsbury Township

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