

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Berwick Borough Police Pension Plan Columbia County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2018

December 2019



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Eugene A. DePasquale • Auditor General



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

The Honorable Mayor and Borough Council
Berwick Borough
Columbia County
Berwick, PA 18603

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Berwick Borough Police Pension Plan for the period January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2018. We also evaluated compliance with some requirements subsequent to that period when possible. The audit was conducted pursuant to authority derived from Section 402(j) of Act 205 and in accordance with the standards applicable to performance audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform our audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The objectives of the audit were:

1. To determine if municipal officials took appropriate corrective action to address the findings contained in our prior audit report; and
2. To determine if the pension plan was administered in compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, administrative procedures, and local ordinances and policies.

Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objectives identified above. To determine if municipal officials took appropriate corrective action to address the findings contained in our prior audit report, we inquired of plan officials and evaluated supporting documentation provided by officials evidencing that the suggested corrective action has been appropriately taken. To determine whether the pension plan was administered in compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, administrative procedures, and local ordinances and policies, our methodology included the following:

- We determined whether state aid was properly determined and deposited in accordance with Act 205 requirements by verifying the annual deposit date of state aid and determining whether deposits were made within 30 days of receipt for all years within the period under audit.

- We determined whether annual employer contributions were calculated and deposited in accordance with the plan's governing document and applicable laws and regulations by examining the municipality's calculation of the plan's annual financial requirements and minimum municipal obligation (MMO) and comparing these calculated amounts to amounts actually budgeted and deposited into the pension plan as evidenced by supporting documentation.
- We determined whether annual employee contributions were calculated, deducted, and deposited into the pension plan in accordance with the plan's governing document and applicable laws and regulations by testing total members' contributions on an annual basis using the rates obtained from the plan's governing document in effect for all years within the period under audit and examining documents evidencing the deposit of these employee contributions into the pension plan.
- We determined whether retirement benefits calculated for all three of the plan members who retired during the current audit period represent payments to all (and only) those entitled to receive them and were properly determined and disbursed in accordance with the plan's governing document, applicable laws and regulations by recalculating the amount of the monthly pension benefit due to retired individuals and comparing these amounts to supporting documentation evidencing amounts determined and actually paid to recipients.
- We determined whether the January 1, 2015 and January 1, 2017 actuarial valuation reports were prepared and submitted by March 31, 2016 and 2018, respectively, in accordance with Act 205 and whether selected information provided on these reports is accurate, complete, and in accordance with plan provisions to ensure compliance for participation in the state aid program by comparing selected information to supporting source documentation.

Berwick Borough contracted with an independent certified public accounting firm for annual audits of its basic financial statements which are available at the borough's offices. Those financial statements were not audited by us and, accordingly, we express no opinion or other form of assurance on them.

Borough officials are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the Berwick Borough Police Pension Plan is administered in compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, administrative procedures, and local ordinances and policies. In conducting our audit, we obtained an understanding of the borough's internal controls as they relate to the borough's compliance with those requirements and that we considered to be significant within the context of our audit objectives, and assessed whether those significant controls were properly designed and implemented. Additionally and as previously described, we tested transactions, assessed official actions, performed analytical procedures, and interviewed selected officials to provide reasonable assurance of detecting instances of noncompliance with legal and regulatory requirements or noncompliance with provisions of contracts, administrative procedures, and local ordinances and policies that are significant within the context of the audit objectives.

The results of our procedures indicated that, in all significant respects, the Berwick Borough Police Pension Plan was administered in compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, administrative procedures, and local ordinances and policies, except as noted in the following findings further discussed later in this report:

- Finding No. 1 – Failure To Properly Determine And Fully Pay The Minimum Municipal Obligation Of The Plan
- Finding No. 2 – Incorrect Data On Certification Form AG 385 Resulting In An Underpayment Of State Aid

The accompanying supplementary information is presented for purposes of additional analysis. We did not audit the information or conclude on it and, accordingly, express no form of assurance on it.

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

December 17, 2019



EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE
Auditor General

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BACKGROUND

On December 18, 1984, the Pennsylvania Legislature adopted the Municipal Pension Plan Funding Standard and Recovery Act (P.L. 1005, No. 205, as amended, 53 P.S. § 895.101 et seq.). The Act established mandatory actuarial reporting and funding requirements and a uniform basis for the distribution of state aid to Pennsylvania's public pension plans. Section 402(j) of Act 205 specifically requires the Auditor General, as deemed necessary, to make an audit of every municipality which receives general municipal pension system state aid and of every municipal pension plan and fund in which general municipal pension system state aid is deposited.

Annual state aid allocations are provided from a 2 percent foreign (out-of-state) casualty insurance premium tax, a portion of the foreign (out-of-state) fire insurance tax designated for paid firefighters and any investment income earned on the collection of these taxes. Generally, municipal pension plans established prior to December 18, 1984, are eligible for state aid. For municipal pension plans established after that date, the sponsoring municipality must fund the plan for three plan years before it becomes eligible for state aid. In accordance with Act 205, a municipality's annual state aid allocation cannot exceed its actual pension costs.

In addition to Act 205, the Berwick Borough Police Pension Plan is also governed by implementing regulations adopted by the former Public Employee Retirement Commission published at Title 16, Part IV of the Pennsylvania Code and applicable provisions of various other state statutes including, but not limited to, the following:

Act 600 - Police Pension Fund Act, Act of May 29, 1956 (P.L. 1804, No. 600), as amended, 53 P.S. § 761 et seq.

The Berwick Borough Police Pension Plan is a single-employer defined benefit pension plan locally controlled by the provisions of the Code of Ordinances at Chapter 43, adopted pursuant to Act 600. The plan is also affected by the provisions of collective bargaining agreements between the borough and its police officers. The plan was established July 21, 1972. Active members are required to contribute 2 percent of compensation to the plan. As of December 31, 2018, the plan had 13 active members, no terminated members eligible for vested benefits in the future, and 12 retirees receiving pension benefits.

BACKGROUND – (Continued)

As of December 31, 2018, selected plan benefit provisions are as follows:

Eligibility Requirements:

Normal Retirement	Age 50 and 25 years of service.
Early Retirement	None
Vesting	100% vesting available after 12 years of service.

Retirement Benefit:

Benefit equals 50% of final 36 months average salary, plus a service increment of \$100 per month for each year of service in excess of 25 years, up to a maximum of \$500 per month.

Survivor Benefit:

Before Retirement Eligibility	Refund of member contributions plus interest.
After Retirement Eligibility	A monthly benefit equal to 50% of the pension the member was receiving or was entitled to receive on the day of the member's death.

Service Related Disability Benefit:

Benefit equals 50% of the member's salary at the time the disability was incurred, offset by Social Security disability benefits received for the same injury.

BERWICK BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

Compliance With Prior Audit Recommendations

Berwick Borough has complied with the prior audit recommendations concerning the following:

· Improper Reduction Of Members' Contributions

The municipality annually reduced members' contributions in accordance with Act 600.

· Unauthorized Provision For A Killed In Service Benefit

The municipality eliminated the unauthorized killed in service benefit in accordance with Act 51 of 2009.

BERWICK BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – Failure To Properly Determine And Fully Pay The Minimum Municipal Obligation Of The Plan

Condition: Plan officials did not properly determine or fully pay the minimum municipal obligation (MMO) of the Berwick Borough Police pension plan for the year 2017, as required by Act 205. The MMO determined by the municipality understated payroll by \$103,550. Based upon an estimate prepared by this department from the files and records provided by plan officials, the municipality had an unpaid MMO balance of \$6,509 for the year 2017.

Criteria: With regard to the MMO, Section 302(c) of Act 205 states, in part:

Annually, the chief administrative officer of the pension plan shall determine the minimum obligation of the municipality with respect to the pension plan for the following plan year.

With regard to the payroll estimate used in the preparation of the MMO, the Pennsylvania Code, Title 16, Section 204.1(c)(1) states, in part:

The payroll used in determining the minimum municipal obligation of a pension plan under Section 302(c) of the act shall be based on the payroll to be reported on the Internal Revenue Service Form W-2 and shall be calculated as the total payroll for active members of the plan as of the date of the determination, plus the payroll for the same active members of the plan projected to the year's end using the payroll rates in effect as of the date of the determination.

Section 302(d) of Act 205 states, in part:

The minimum obligation of the municipality shall be payable to the pension plan from the revenue of the municipality.

Furthermore, Section 302(e) of Act 205 states:

Any amount of the minimum obligation of the municipality which remains unpaid as of December 31 of the year in which the minimum obligation is due shall be added to the minimum obligation of the municipality for the following year, with interest from January 1 of the year in which the minimum obligation was first due until the date the payment is paid at a rate equal to the interest assumption used for the actuarial valuation report or the discount rate applicable to treasury bills issued by the Department of Treasury of the United States with a six-month maturity as of the last business day in December of the plan year in which the obligation was due, whichever is greater, expressed as a monthly rate and compounded monthly.

BERWICK BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 1 – (Continued)

Cause: Plan officials failed to implement adequate internal control procedures to comply with Act 205 requirements and ensure the accuracy of the data used in determination of the plan's MMO for 2017, which excluded overtime in the estimate.

Effect: The proper determination of the plan's MMO ensures plan officials can properly allocate the necessary resources to the pension plan for the upcoming year. The failure to fully pay the MMO could result in the plan not having adequate resources to meet current and future benefit obligations to its members.

Recommendation: We recommend that the municipality deposit the outstanding MMO due to the Berwick Borough Police pension plan for the year 2017, with interest, in accordance with Section 302(e) of Act 205. A copy of the interest calculation must be maintained by the borough for examination during our next audit of the plan.

Furthermore, we recommend that, in the future, plan officials implement adequate internal control procedures to properly and consistently determine the amount of payroll to be used in the MMO calculation.

Management's Response: Municipal officials agreed with the finding without exception.

Auditor's Conclusion: Compliance will be evaluated during our next audit of the plan.

BERWICK BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 2 – Incorrect Data On Certification Form AG 385 Resulting In An Underpayment Of State Aid

Condition: The borough failed to certify an eligible police officer (2 units) and understated payroll by \$51,951, \$58,384, \$59,835, and \$45,033, respectively, on the Certification Form AG 385s filed during 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019, respectively. The data contained on these certification forms is based on prior calendar year information.

Criteria: Pursuant to Act 205, at Section 402(e)(2), an employee who has been employed on a full-time basis for at least six consecutive months and has been participating in a pension plan during the certification year is eligible for certification.

Cause: Plan officials failed to establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure the accuracy of the data certified.

Effect: The data submitted on these certification forms is used, in part, to calculate the state aid due to the municipality for distribution to its pension plans. Because the borough’s state aid allocations were based on pension costs in 2016 and 2017 and unit value in 2018 and 2019, the borough received a total underpayment of state aid, as identified below:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Units (Understated)</u>	<u>Unit Value</u>	<u>Normal Cost</u>	<u>Payroll (Understated)</u>	<u>State Aid (Underpayment)</u>
2016	N/A	N/A	14.77%	\$ (51,951)	\$ (7,673)
2017	N/A	N/A	14.77%	(58,384)	(8,623)
2018	(2)	\$ 4,684	N/A	N/A	(9,368)
2019	(2)	5,121	N/A	N/A	(10,242)
Total Underpayment of State Aid					\$ (35,906)

N/A – Not applicable based on state aid methodology for the allocation year.

Although the borough will be reimbursed for the total underpayment of state aid due to the borough’s certification errors, the full amount of the 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 state aid allocations were not available for timely deposit and therefore, were not available to pay operating expenses or for investment.

BERWICK BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding No. 2 – (Continued)

Recommendation: We recommend that in the future, plan officials establish adequate internal control procedures, such as having at least two people review the data certified, to ensure compliance with the instructions that accompany Certification Form AG 385 to assist them in accurately reporting the required pension data.

Management's Response: Municipal officials agreed with the finding without exception.

Auditor's Conclusion: Compliance will be evaluated during our next audit of the plan.

BERWICK BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
 SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
 (UNAUDITED)

SCHEDULE OF FUNDING PROGRESS

Historical trend information about the plan is presented herewith as supplementary information. It is intended to help users assess the plan's funding status on a going-concern basis, assess progress made in accumulating assets to pay benefits when due, and make comparisons with other state and local government retirement systems.

The actuarial information is required by Act 205 biennially. The historical information, beginning as of January 1, 2013, is as follows:

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Actuarial Valuation Date	Actuarial Value of Assets (a)	Actuarial Accrued Liability (AAL) - Entry Age (b)	Unfunded (Assets in Excess of) Actuarial Accrued Liability (b) - (a)	Funded Ratio (a)/(b)
01-01-13	\$ 4,485,505	\$ 4,044,490	\$ (441,015)	110.9%
01-01-15	4,951,990	4,313,992	(637,998)	114.8%
01-01-17	4,982,488	5,106,568	124,080	97.6%

BERWICK BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
(UNAUDITED)

The comparability of trend information is affected by changes in actuarial assumptions, benefit provisions, actuarial funding methods, accounting policies, and other changes. Those changes usually affect trends in contribution requirements and in ratios that use the actuarial accrued liability as a factor.

Analysis of the dollar amount of the actuarial value of assets, actuarial accrued liability, and unfunded (assets in excess of) actuarial accrued liability in isolation can be misleading. Expressing the actuarial value of assets as a percentage of the actuarial accrued liability (Column 4) provides one indication of the plan's funding status on a going-concern basis. Analysis of this percentage, over time, indicates whether the system is becoming financially stronger or weaker. Generally, the greater this percentage, the stronger the plan.

BERWICK BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
(UNAUDITED)

SCHEDULE OF CONTRIBUTIONS FROM EMPLOYER
AND OTHER CONTRIBUTING ENTITIES

Year Ended December 31	Annual Required Contribution	Percentage Contributed
2013	\$ 68,903	100.0%
2014	60,812	117.5%
2015	79,911	108.5%
2016	63,906	100.0%
2017	82,449	92.1%
2018	65,844	133.7%

BERWICK BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
NOTES TO SUPPLEMENTARY SCHEDULES
(UNAUDITED)

The information presented in the supplementary schedules was determined as part of the actuarial valuation at the date indicated. Additional information as of the latest actuarial valuation date follows:

Actuarial valuation date	January 1, 2017
Actuarial cost method	Entry age normal
Amortization method	Level dollar
Remaining amortization period	12 years
Asset valuation method	Fair value
Actuarial assumptions:	
Investment rate of return	8.0%
Projected salary increases	5.0%
Cost-of-living adjustments	3.0% per year postretirement

BERWICK BOROUGH POLICE PENSION PLAN
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

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