

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

West Chester Borough Non-Uniformed Pension Plan Chester County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2022

May 2024



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL**

The Honorable Mayor and Borough Council
West Chester Borough
Chester County
West Chester, PA 19380

We have conducted a compliance audit of the West Chester Borough Non-Uniformed Pension Plan for the period January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2022. We also evaluated compliance with some requirements subsequent to that period when possible. The audit was conducted pursuant to authority derived from the Municipal Pension Plan Funding Standard and Recovery Act (Act 205 of 1984, as amended, 53 P.S. § 895.402(j)), which requires the Auditor General, as deemed necessary, to audit every municipality which receives general municipal pension system state aid and every municipal pension plan and fund in which general municipal pension system state aid is deposited. The audit was not conducted, nor was it required to be, in accordance with Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. We planned and performed the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our finding and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our finding 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 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 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 plan members who retired or elected to vest 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 benefits due to the retired individuals and comparing these amounts to supporting documentation evidencing amounts determined and actually paid or payable to the recipients.
- We determined whether the January 1, 2017, January 1, 2019, and January 1, 2021 actuarial valuation reports were prepared and submitted by March 31, 2018, 2020, and 2022, 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.

West Chester 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 West Chester Borough Non-Uniformed Pension Plan is administered in compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, administrative procedures, and local ordinances and policies. As previously described, we tested transactions,

interviewed selected officials and performed procedures to the extent necessary 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.

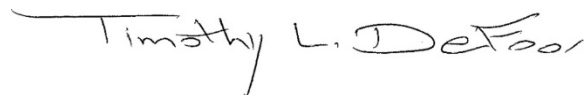
The results of our procedures indicated that, in all significant respects, the West Chester Borough Non-Uniformed Pension Plan was administered in compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, administrative procedures, and local ordinances and policies, except as noted in the following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

Finding – Noncompliance With Prior Recommendation – Failure To
Maintain Vested Pension Calculations

The finding contained in this audit report repeats a condition that was cited in our previous report that has not been corrected by borough officials. We are concerned by the borough's failure to correct this previously reported finding and strongly encourage timely implementation of the recommendation noted in this audit report.

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 West Chester 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.



Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
April 3, 2024

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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.

Annual state aid allocations are provided from a two 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 West Chester Borough Non-Uniformed Pension Plan is also governed by implementing regulations published at Title 16, Part IV of the Pennsylvania Code, and applicable provisions of various other state statutes.

The West Chester Borough Non-Uniformed Pension Plan is a single-employer defined benefit pension plan locally controlled by the provisions of Ordinance No. 15-2017 and a separately executed plan agreement with the plan's custodian for non-uniformed employees hired before January 1, 2013. The plan is also affected by the provisions of collective bargaining agreements between the borough and its non-uniformed employees. The plan was established January 1, 1964. Active union members were required to contribute 3.25 percent of wages to the plan in 2019, 3.5 percent in 2020, and 3.75 percent in 2021 and 2022. As of December 31, 2022, the plan had 43 active members, 41 terminated members eligible for vested benefits in the future, and 48 retirees receiving pension benefits from the plan.

WEST CHESTER BOROUGH NON-UNIFORMED PENSION PLAN
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDINGS

Compliance With Prior Recommendation

West Chester Borough has complied with the prior recommendation concerning the following:

- Incorrect Data On Certification Form AG 385 Resulting In A Net Underpayment Of State Aid

During the current audit period, municipal officials complied with the instructions that accompany Certification Form AG 385 and accurately reported the required pension data for this pension plan.

Noncompliance With Prior Recommendation

West Chester Borough has not complied with the prior recommendation concerning the following:

- Failure To Maintain Vested Pension Benefit Calculations

WEST CHESTER BOROUGH NON-UNIFORMED PENSION PLAN
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – Noncompliance With Prior Recommendation – Failure To Maintain Vested Pension Benefit Calculations

Condition: As previously disclosed in our four prior audit reports, the borough failed to maintain vested calculations for nine plan members who terminated employment with the borough from July 1, 1991 through June 29, 1996. Two of these former plan members became eligible to receive and began receiving a monthly vested benefit during prior audit periods, and two became eligible to receive and began receiving a monthly vested benefit during the current audit period. In addition to these nine members, it appears that a former plan member who terminated employment on February 1, 1993 and began received a monthly benefit in 2012, did not have the five years of service required for a vested benefit.

Criteria: The municipality should maintain adequate supporting documentation to substantiate the accuracy of all pension benefit determinations.

Cause: The borough has so far been unsuccessful in its efforts to locate the calculations.

Effect: The failure of plan officials to maintain vested pension benefit calculations could result in inconsistent or improper benefit calculations and incorrect benefit payments from the pension plan.

Recommendation: We again recommend that plan officials obtain adequate supporting documentation to verify the accuracy of the vested pension benefits being paid and intended to be paid from the pension plan.

Furthermore, we again recommend that plan officials determine whether the former plan member who terminated employment on February 1, 1993, is entitled to a vested pension benefit pursuant to the provisions contained in the plan's governing document. If it is determined that the former member is not eligible to receive a benefit, plan officials should take appropriate action to ensure that an unauthorized pension benefit is not paid to the former plan member.

We also again recommend that plan officials establish adequate internal control procedures to ensure that all pension benefit calculations are properly determined and maintained by the borough.

WEST CHESTER BOROUGH NON-UNIFORMED PENSION PLAN
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – (Continued)

Management’s Response: The borough provided the following response:

The 9 employees in question were employed almost 3 decades in the past when paper-based filing systems were used. Those records are stored off site and boxes have been recalled and searched for the following names:

[Employee names omitted]

Searched to date have resulted in locating 3 records – [Employee names omitted].

We will continue to retrieve boxes and review files in the hope of locating all 9 records to update our roster and change payment instructions, if necessary, to our third-party actuary and pension payroll partner.

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

WEST CHESTER BOROUGH NON-UNIFORMED 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, 2017, is as follows:

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Actuarial Valuation Date	Actuarial Value of Assets (a)	Actuarial Liability (AAL) - Entry Age (b)	Unfunded (Assets in Excess of) Actuarial Liability (b) - (a)	Funded Ratio (a)/(b)
01-01-17	\$ 14,608,972	\$ 19,886,343	\$ 5,277,371	73.5%
01-01-19	16,731,128	21,597,107	4,865,979	77.5%
01-01-21	20,748,674	23,931,683	3,183,009	86.7%

Note: The market values of the plan’s assets at 01-01-17, 01-01-19, and 01-01-21 have been adjusted to reflect the smoothing of gains and/or losses over a 4-year averaging period subject to a corridor between 80 to 120 percent of the market value of assets. This method will lower contributions in years of less than expected returns and increase contributions in years of greater than expected returns. The net effect over long periods of time is to have less variance in contribution levels from year to year.

WEST CHESTER BOROUGH NON-UNIFORMED 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.

WEST CHESTER BOROUGH NON-UNIFORMED PENSION PLAN
 SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION
 (UNAUDITED)

SCHEDULE OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Year Ended December 31	Actuarially Determined Contribution	Actual Contributions	Contribution Deficiency (Excess)	Covered- Employee Payroll*	Contributions as a Percentage of Covered- Employee Payroll
2013	\$ 880,253	\$ 733,150	\$ 147,103*	**	
2014	952,607	952,607	-	\$4,210,452	22.6%
2015	913,361	940,085	(26,724)	3,999,805	23.5%
2016	***898,845	***898,845	-	3,952,818	22.7%
2017	784,660	908,827	(124,167)	3,911,268	23.2%
2018	741,719	822,974	(81,255)	3,504,428	23.5%
2019	835,209	1,074,767	(239,558)	3,478,896	30.9%
2020	749,902	1,077,826	(327,924)	3,474,775	31.0%
2021	726,457	726,457	-	3,063,749	23.7%
2022	614,244	614,244	-	2,872,383	21.4%

* For 2013, the contribution deficiency reflects the 25 percent reduction to the plan's amortization contribution elected by the municipality under Act 44 for distressed municipalities, which allows for such reduction.

** This schedule is presented pursuant to the implementation of GASB Statement No. 67, *Financial Reporting for Pension Plans* by reporting entities responsible for administering the pension plan to improve financial reporting by state and local governmental pension plans. Due to the statement being implemented only recently, the amount of Covered-Employee Payroll was not provided for 2013.

*** 2016 contribution amount includes interest on late payment.

WEST CHESTER BOROUGH NON-UNIFORMED 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, 2021
Actuarial cost method	Entry age normal
Amortization method	Level dollar
Remaining amortization period	11 years
Asset valuation method	4-year smoothing, the actuarial value of assets will be limited to a maximum of 120% and a minimum of 80% of the fair market value of assets.
Actuarial assumptions:	
Investment rate of return	6.25%
Projected salary increases	4.25%
Cost-of-living adjustments	None assumed

WEST CHESTER BOROUGH NON-UNIFORMED PENSION PLAN
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

The Honorable Lillian DeBaptiste
Mayor

Mr. Patrick McCoy
Council President

Mr. Sean Metrick
Borough Manager

Ms. Barbara Lioni
Finance Director

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