ATTESTATION ENGAGEMENT

Township of Independence

Washington County, Pennsylvania 62-214

Liquid Fuels Tax Fund
For the Period
January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2021

November 2022



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0018
Facebook: Pennsylvania Auditor General
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TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR AUDITOR GENERAL

Independent Auditor's Report

The Honorable Yassmin Gramian, P.E. Secretary
Department of Transportation
Harrisburg, PA 17120

We examined the accompanying Forms MS-965 With Adjustments for the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund of the Township of Independence, Washington County, for the period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2021. The municipality's management is responsible for presenting the Forms MS-965 in accordance with the criteria described in the Background section of this report and the Department of Transportation's *Publication 9*. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the Forms MS-965 With Adjustments based on our examination.

Our examination was conducted in accordance with attestation standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the standards applicable to attestation engagements contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the examination to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the Forms MS-965 are presented in accordance with the criteria described above, in all material respects. An examination involves performing procedures to obtain evidence about the Forms MS-965. The nature, timing and extent of the procedures selected depend on our judgement, including an assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the Forms MS-965, whether due to fraud or error. We believe that the evidence we obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

As described in the Auditor Description Of Select Transactions section of this report, the adjustments included on the Forms MS-965 With Adjustments are made by the Department of the Auditor General.

In our opinion, the Forms MS-965 With Adjustments present, in all material respects, the information required by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation for the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund of the Township of Independence, Washington County, for the period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2021, in accordance with the criteria described in the Background section of this report and the Department of Transportation's *Publication 9*.

<u>Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)</u>

In accordance with Government Auditing Standards, we are required to report all deficiencies that are considered to be significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal control; fraud and noncompliance with provisions of laws or regulations that have a material effect on the Forms MS-965; and any other instances that warrant the attention of those charged with governance; noncompliance with provisions of contracts or grant agreements, and abuse that has a material effect on the Forms MS-965. We are also required to obtain and report the views of responsible officials concerning the findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as well as any planned corrective actions. We performed our examination to express an opinion on whether the Forms MS-965 are presented in accordance with the criteria described above and not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on internal control over reporting on the Forms MS-965 or on compliance and other matters; accordingly, we express no such opinions.

A *deficiency in internal control* exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, misstatements on a timely basis. A *material weakness* is a deficiency, or combination of deficiencies, in internal control such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the Forms MS-965 will not be prevented, or detected and corrected, on a timely basis. A *significant deficiency* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

Our consideration of internal control over reporting on the Forms MS-965 was for the limited purpose of expressing an opinion on whether the Forms MS-965 are presented in accordance with the criteria described above and would not necessarily identify all deficiencies in internal control that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. Given these limitations, during our engagement we did not identify any deficiencies in internal control that we consider to be material weaknesses. However, material weaknesses may exist that have not been identified.

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the Forms MS-965 are free from material misstatement, we performed tests of the Township of Independence, Washington County's compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of amounts on the Forms MS-965. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our engagement, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*. However, we did note a matter that, while not required to be included in this report by *Government Auditing Standards*, has been included in the finding below:

• Nonpermissible Expenditures - Recurring.

<u>Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)</u>

The examination finding contained in this report cites a condition that existed in the operation of the municipality during the previous engagement period and was not corrected during the current examination period. The municipality should strive to comply with the recommendations in this report.

The purpose of this report is to determine whether the municipality's Liquid Fuels Tax Fund money is spent in accordance with the laws and regulations identified in the Background section of this report and the Department of Transportation's *Publication 9*. This report is not suitable for any other purpose.

We appreciate the courtesy extended by the Township of Independence, Washington County, to us during the course of our examination. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Bureau of County Audits at 717-787-1363.

Timothy L. DeFoor Auditor General

Timothy L. Detool

October 12, 2022

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Background

The Liquid Fuels Tax Municipal Allocation Law, Act 655 of 1956, as amended, see also 72 P.S. § 2615.5, et sec., provides municipalities other than counties (i.e., townships, boroughs, cities, towns, home rule, and optional plan governments) with an annual allocation of liquid fuels taxes from the state's Motor License Fund to be used for the maintenance and repair of streets, roads, and bridges for which the municipality is responsible. The allocation of these funds to municipalities is based upon: (1) 50 percent on the municipality's proportion of local road mileage to the total local road mileage in the state; and (2) 50 percent on the proportion of a municipality's population to the total population in the state.

Title 75 Pa.C.S. § 9511 of the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code provides municipalities with annual maintenance payments to be received from the Motor License Fund for functionally local highways that were transferred to a municipality from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Each municipality must deposit the allocation of Liquid Fuels Tax funds and annual maintenance payments that it receives into a special fund called either the Municipal Liquid Fuels Tax Fund or State Fund. A municipality may not deposit any other monies into this fund except when the municipality does not have enough money in the special fund to meet the payments called for by its current annual budget for road and bridge purposes. In such a case, the municipality may borrow money or transfer money from its General Fund to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund.

The Department of Transportation has been given the regulatory authority for the administration of these funds. Department of Transportation's *Publication 9* includes the policies and procedures for the administration of Act 655, as amended, and the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund money. However, if there is a difference between *Publication 9* and any legislation, the legislation shall govern.

To qualify for the annual allocation of Liquid Fuels Tax funds, *Publication 9* indicates that each municipality shall:

- 1. Submit annual reports (MS-965, Actual Use Report, MS-965P, Project and Miscellaneous Receipts, and MS-965S, Record of Checks).
- 2. Make deposits and payments or expenditures in compliance with Act 655 of 1956, as amended. Failure to do so may result in not receiving allocations from PennDOT until all discrepancies are resolved. *Publication 9*, Section 2.6, includes information about investing Liquid Fuels Tax monies, using loan or bond proceeds, and types of receipts into the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund.

Background (Continued)

- 3. Submit the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's (DCED) Report of Elected and Appointed Officials by January 31st and the Survey of Financial Condition By March 15th.
- 4. Ensure resolution of all Contractor Responsibility Program (CRP) holds and blocks imposed by the Department of Revenue and the Department of Labor and Industry.
- 5. Ensure resolution of all reimbursements required as a result of audits performed by the Department of the Auditor General or monitoring reviews performed by the Department of Transportation's Financial Consultants.

Criteria

The criteria for the Form MS-965 With Adjustment are described below.

Section 1 of Form MS-965 With Adjustments provides a summary of Liquid Fuels Tax Fund expenditures by category. Categories requiring explanation include:

• Major equipment purchases are purchases of road machinery and road equipment with varying yearly costs in excess of the amounts indicated below:

2018	2019	2020	2021
ф10.000.00	ф11 100 00	ф11 200 00	#11 500 00
\$10,900.00	\$11,100.00	\$11,300.00	\$11,500.00

• Minor equipment purchases are purchases of road machinery and road equipment with varying yearly costs that are less than or equal to the amounts indicated below:

2018	2019	2020	2021
\$10,900.00	\$11,100.00	\$11,300.00	\$11,500.00

• Agility projects are exchanges of services with the Department of Transportation.

Background (Continued)

Section 2 of Form MS-965 With Adjustments provides information on the fund balance. Categories requiring explanation include:

- The state allocation is available from the Department of Transportation in March of each year. The amount the municipality receives is based half on its population and half on its road mileage.
- Municipalities that transferred roads from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to the municipality through the Highway Transfer Program receive annual turnback allocations in March of each year from the Department of Transportation. Turnback allocations are based on the mileage of the roads transferred.
- Expenditures include the total transferred from Section 1.

Section 3 of Form MS-965 With Adjustments determines if the municipality expended Liquid Fuels Tax Fund money in excess of the permissible amount for equipment and the balance that the municipality may carry forward for the purchase of equipment to the subsequent year.

Department of Transportation *Publication 9* requires that the amount expended for equipment purchases in a given year not exceed the sum of the equipment balance carried forward from the previous year and 20 percent of the current year's Liquid Fuels Tax Fund allocation and, if applicable, 20 percent of the turnback allocation plus other Department of Transportation approved adjustments.

If the municipality spent in excess of the amount listed on Line 4, the excess must be reimbursed to the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund.

The equipment balance to be carried forward for the subsequent year is the lesser of the amount on Line 6 or the ending fund balance on Line 6 of Section 2, but not less than zero.

Background (Continued)

Basis of Presentation

The financial activities of the municipality are accounted for in separate funds. The Liquid Fuels Tax Fund is used to account for state aid revenues from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation used primarily for building and improving local roads and bridges. The Form MS-965 has been prepared in accordance with reporting requirements prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation as a result of the Fuels Tax Act 655, dated 1956 and as amended, which does not constitute a complete presentation of the entity's assets, liabilities, expenses, and fund balance. Accordingly, the presentation of Form MS-965 With Adjustments is restricted to the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund, which represents a segment of the entity.

Basis Of Accounting

The accompanying Form MS-965 With Adjustments is prepared in accordance with reporting requirements prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. Under this method, revenues are recognized when received and expenditures are recorded when paid.

General Fixed Assets

General fixed assets are recognized as expenditures at the time of purchase. No depreciation has been provided on the heavy equipment used to maintain and repair roads and bridges.

TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE WASHINGTON COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND 2020 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 1 WITH ADJUSTMENTS

Expenditure Summary	 Reported	Adj	ustments	 Adjusted Amount
Minor equipment purchases	\$ -	\$	-	\$ -
Computer/Computer related training	-		-	-
Major equipment purchases	-		-	-
Agility projects	-		-	-
Cleaning streets and gutters	-		-	-
Winter maintenance services	4,782.11		-	4,782.11
Traffic control devices	420.90		-	420.90
Street lighting	-		-	-
Storm sewers and drains	3,393.60		-	3,393.60
Repairs of tools and machinery	9,030.81		-	9,030.81
Maintenance and repair of				
roads and bridges	104,132.02		-	104,132.02
Highway construction and				
rebuilding projects	-		-	-
Miscellaneous	 368.52			 368.52
Total (To Section 2, Line 5)	\$ 122,127.96	\$		\$ 122,127.96

TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE WASHINGTON COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND 2020 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 2 WITH ADJUSTMENTS

Fund Balance]	Reported	Ad	justments	 Adjusted Amount
1. Balance, January 1, 2020	\$	2,442.03	\$	-	\$ 2,442.03
Receipts:					
2. State allocation		134,494.67		-	134,494.67
2a. Turnback allocation		6,880.00		-	6,880.00
2b. Interest on investments		429.31		-	429.31
2c. Miscellaneous		2,077.64		(368.52)	1,709.12
3. Total receipts		143,881.62		(368.52)	 143,513.10
4. Total funds available		146,323.65		(368.52)	 145,955.13
5. Expenditures (Section 1)		122,127.96			 122,127.96
6. Balance, December 31, 2020	\$	24,195.69	\$	(368.52)	\$ 23,827.17

TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE WASHINGTON COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND 2020 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 3 WITH ADJUSTMENTS

Equipment Balance	Reported		Reported		Reported		Reported Adjust		Adjusted Amount
1. Prior year equipment balance	\$	2,442.03	\$	-	\$ 2,442.03				
2. Add: Current year equipment allocation (20% of Lines 2 + 2a, Section 2)		28,274.93		-	28,274.93				
3. PENNDOT approved adjustments					 <u>-</u>				
4. Total funds available for equipment acquisition		30,716.96		-	30,716.96				
5. Less: Major equipment expenditures					 				
6. Remainder		30,716.96		_	 30,716.96				
7. Equipment balance available for subsequent year (Lesser of Line 6 or Section 2 balance, but not less than zero)	\$	24,195.69	\$	(368.52)	\$ 23,827.17				

TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE WASHINGTON COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND 2021 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 1 WITH ADJUSTMENTS

Expenditure Summary	Reported	A	djustments	 Adjusted Amount
Minor equipment purchases	\$ 2,561.96	\$	(656.85)	\$ 1,905.11
Computer/Computer related training	-		-	-
Major equipment purchases	-		-	-
Agility projects	-		-	-
Cleaning streets and gutters	3,375.00		-	3,375.00
Winter maintenance services	10,332.73		-	10,332.73
Traffic control devices	5,952.80		-	5,952.80
Street lighting	-		-	-
Storm sewers and drains	-		-	-
Repairs of tools and machinery	40,193.37		(1,714.70)	38,478.67
Maintenance and repair of				
roads and bridges	89,596.69		(230.57)	89,366.12
Highway construction and				
rebuilding projects	-		-	-
Miscellaneous	 4,320.11		1,775.85	6,095.96
Total (To Section 2, Line 5)	\$ 156,332.66	\$	(826.27)	\$ 155,506.39

TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE WASHINGTON COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND 2021 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 2 WITH ADJUSTMENTS

Fund Balance	-	Reported	Ad	justments		Adjusted Amount
1. Balance, January 1, 2021	\$	24,195.69	\$	(368.52)	\$	23,827.17
Receipts:						
2. State allocation		124,829.03		-		124,829.03
2a. Turnback allocation		6,880.00		-		6,880.00
2b. Interest on investments		61.52		-		61.52
2c. Miscellaneous		1,116.94		368.52		1,485.46
3. Total receipts		132,887.49		368.52		133,256.01
4. Total funds available		157,083.18				157,083.18
5. Expenditures (Section 1)		156,332.66		(826.27)		155,506.39
6. Balance, December 31, 2021	\$	750.52	\$	826.27	\$	1,576.79

TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE WASHINGTON COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND 2021 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 3 WITH ADJUSTMENTS

Equipment Balance	 Reported	Ad	justments	 Adjusted Amount
1. Prior year equipment balance	\$ 24,195.69	\$	(368.52)	\$ 23,827.17
2. Add: Current year equipment allocation (20% of Lines 2 + 2a, Section 2)	26,341.81		-	26,341.81
3. PENNDOT approved adjustments	 			
4. Total funds available for equipment acquisition	50,537.50		(368.52)	50,168.98
5. Less: Major equipment expenditures	 			
6. Remainder	50,537.50		(368.52)	 50,168.98
7. Equipment balance available for subsequent year (Lesser of Line 6 or Section 2 balance, but not less than zero)	\$ 750.52	\$	826.27	\$ 1,576.79

TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE WASHINGTON COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND AUDITOR DESCRIPTION OF SELECT TRANSACTIONS

FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

The following information relates to certain types of transactions for which the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation requested that we provide additional detail:

Adjustments

2020 - Section 2

An adjustment of \$(368.52) was made to "Miscellaneous" because these receipts were overstated.

<u>2021 - Section 1</u>

An adjustment of \$(656.85) was made to "Minor equipment purchases" because miscellaneous expenditures were misclassified.

An adjustment of \$(1,714.70) was made to "Repairs of tools and machinery" because check No. 1099 for \$826.27 was voided but was included as an expenditure and miscellaneous expenditures of \$888.43 were misclassified.

An adjustment of \$(230.57) was made to "Maintenance and repair of roads and bridges" because miscellaneous expenditures were misclassified.

An adjustment of \$1,775.85 was made to "Miscellaneous" because expenditures of \$656.85 were misclassified as minor equipment purchases, expenditures of \$888.43 were misclassified as repairs of tools and machinery, and expenditures of \$230.57 were misclassified as maintenance and repair of roads and bridges.

2021 - Section 2

An adjustment of \$(368.52) was made to "Balance, January 1, 2021" to reflect the adjustment made to the fund balance in 2020 - Section 2.

An adjustment of \$368.52 was made to "Miscellaneous" because these receipts were understated.

<u>2021 - Section 3</u>

An adjustment of \$(368.52) was made to "Prior year equipment balance" to reflect the adjustment made to the equipment balance in 2020 - Section 3.

TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE WASHINGTON COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND AUDITOR DESCRIPTION OF SELECT TRANSACTIONS FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

Miscellaneous Receipts

The following miscellaneous receipts were deposited into the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund during the examination period:

Source	Description	2020	2021
Insurance Company General Fund Utility Company	Reimbursement for damages Reimbursement (see Finding) Reimbursement for damages	\$1,709.12 - -	\$ - 385.46 1,100.00
Totals		\$1,709.12	\$1,485.46

Miscellaneous Expenditures

The following miscellaneous expenditures were paid from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund during the examination period:

Payee	Description	2020	2021
Various Vendors	Nonpermissible expenditures	42. (0. 42	* • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •
	(see Finding)	\$368.52	\$6,095.96

TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE WASHINGTON COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

Finding - Nonpermissible Expenditures - Recurring

We cited the municipality for nonpermissible expenditures in our prior report for the period January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019. Our current examination disclosed that the municipality expended \$368.52 during 2020 and \$6,095.96 during 2021 from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund for the following nonpermissible items:

<u>Description</u>	Amount	Totals
Volunteer fire department road diesel	\$ 368.52	
2020 Total		\$ 368.52
LED high bay lights	639.91	
Tools for repairs for utility damages	888.43	
Heating oil	230.57	
Dumpsters	4,320.11	
Bungee cord	16.94	
2021 Total		6,095.96
Two Year Total		\$6,464.48

The Liquid Fuels Tax Municipal Allocation Law, 72 P.S. § 2615.4, provides, in part, that monies herein allocated may be used only for construction, reconstruction, maintenance, and repairs of such public roads or streets, including bridges, culverts and drainage structures, for which they are legally responsible. Also permitted are expenditures involving acquisition, maintenance, repairs and operation of street signs, traffic signs, traffic signal control systems, road equipment, and snow fences.

TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE WASHINGTON COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

Finding - Nonpermissible Expenditures - Recurring (Continued)

The Department of Transportation has been statutorily authorized to promulgate regulations concerning the administration of Liquid Fuels Tax Fund money and has determined that certain items, including those noted above, are outside the scope of permissible expenditures.

The municipality was unaware the expenditures were not permissible. The recurring heating oil expenditure was overlooked in error.

On January 21, 2021 and October 29, 2021, the municipality reimbursed \$368.52 and \$16.94, respectively, to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund. Also, on June 8, 2021, the municipality deposited \$1,100.00 to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund that was received from a utility company to reimburse for damages that occurred when the utility company was making repairs.

On February 11, 2022, which was subsequent to our examination period, the municipality reimbursed \$5,208.54 to the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund, which was \$229.52 in excess of the amount required.

Recommendation

We again recommend that, in the future, the municipality complies with the Liquid Fuels Tax Municipal Allocation Law and the Department of Transportation's Regulations regarding permissible expenditures.

Management's Response

The secretary/treasurer stated:

The municipality was unaware that the expenditures were nonpermissible.

Auditor's Conclusion

This is a recurring finding. We strongly recommend that the municipality comply with our recommendation. During our next examination, we will determine if the municipality complied with our recommendation.

TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE WASHINGTON COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND SUMMARY OF EXIT CONFERENCE FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021

An exit conference was held June 1, 2022. Those participating were:

TOWNSHIP OF INDEPENDENCE

Mrs. Cynthia L. Cecchini, Secretary/Treasurer

DEPARTMENT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

Mrs. Michele Simpson, Auditor

The results of the examination were presented and discussed in their entirety.

This report was initially distributed to:

The Honorable Yassmin Gramian, P.E.

Secretary
Department of Transportation

Township of Independence

Washington County 34 Campbell Street P.O. Box E Avella, PA 15312

The Honorable Thomas C. Jennings Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors

The Honorable Joyce McKenzie Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors

Mrs. Cynthia L. Cecchini Secretary/Treasurer

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.