ATTESTATION ENGAGEMENT

Township of Unity

Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania 64-217

Liquid Fuels Tax Fund
For the Period
January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2022

July 2024



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
Twitter: @PAAuditorGen
www.PaAuditor.gov

TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR AUDITOR GENERAL

Independent Auditor's Report

The Honorable Michael Carroll 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 Unity, Westmoreland County, for the period January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2022. 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 qualified opinion.

We are required to be independent and to meet our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with ethical requirements relating to the engagement.

As discussed in the Finding And Recommendations section of this report, on March 10, 2021, and March 3, 2022, the municipality made payments totaling \$155,585.64 from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund for the purchase of an XL 3100 V Gradall 4x2 hydraulic excavator that was restrictively bid. Additionally, as discussed in the Summary Of Prior Examination Recommendations section of this report, during the prior examination period, the municipality expended \$78,192,82 from its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund for a payment on the same excavator. The municipality reimbursed this amount to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund on February 10, 2023, which was subsequent to our examination period.

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

In our opinion, except for the matters discussed in the preceding paragraph, 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 Unity, Westmoreland County, for the period January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2022, in accordance with the criteria described in the Background section of this report and the Department of Transportation's *Publication 9*.

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; 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 Unity, Westmoreland 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 the following instance of noncompliance that is required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*:

• Restrictive Bidding - Recurring.

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

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 Unity, Westmoreland 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. Detoor

May 30, 2024

CONTENTS

Pag	<u>ze</u>
Background	.1
inancial Section:	
2021 Form MS-965 With Adjustments	.5
2022 Form MS-965 With Adjustments	.8
Auditor Description Of Select Transactions	l 1
Finding And Recommendations:	
Finding - Restrictive Bidding - Recurring.	12
Summary Of Prior Examination Recommendations	4
Summary Of Onsite Closeout Meeting	5
Report Distribution1	6

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:

2019	2020	2021	2022
44.400.00	444 200 00	44.5 00.00	** **********************************
\$11,100.00	\$11,300.00	\$11,500.00	\$11,800.00

• 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:

2019	2020	2021	2022
\$11,100.00	\$11,300.00	\$11,500.00	\$11,800.00

• 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 Forms 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 UNITY WESTMORELAND COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND 2021 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 1 WITH ADJUSTMENTS

Expenditure Summary	Reported		d Adjustments		Adjusted Amount	
Minor equipment purchases	\$	-	\$	-	\$	-
Computer/Computer related training		-		-		-
Major equipment purchases		137,001.48		-		137,001.48
Agility projects		-		-		-
Cleaning streets and gutters		-		-		-
Winter maintenance services		470,237.03		-		470,237.03
Traffic control devices		-		-		-
Street lighting		-		-		-
Storm sewers and drains		-		-		-
Repairs of tools and machinery		-		-		-
Maintenance and repair of						
roads and bridges		200,000.00		-		200,000.00
Highway construction and						
rebuilding projects		-		-		-
Miscellaneous						
Total (To Section 2, Line 5)	_\$_	807,238.51	\$		\$_	807,238.51

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

Fund Balance	Reported	Adjustments	Adjusted Amount
1. Balance, January 1, 2021	\$ 322,352.43	\$ -	\$ 322,352.43
Receipts: 2. State allocation	840,850.44	-	840,850.44
2a. Turnback allocation2b. Interest on investments2c. Miscellaneous	755.22 	- - -	755.22
3. Total receipts	841,605.66		841,605.66
4. Total funds available	1,163,958.09		1,163,958.09
5. Expenditures (Section 1)	807,238.51		807,238.51
6. Balance, December 31, 2021	\$ 356,719.58	\$ -	\$ 356,719.58

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

Equipment Balance	Reported		ed Adjustments			Adjusted Amount
1. Prior year equipment balance	\$	230,736.45	\$	-	\$	230,736.45
2. Add: Current year equipment allocation (20% of Lines 2 + 2a, Section 2)		168,170.09		-		168,170.09
3. PENNDOT approved adjustments						
4. Total funds available for equipment acquisition		398,906.54		-		398,906.54
5. Less: Major equipment expenditures		137,001.48				137,001.48
6. Remainder		261,905.06				261,905.06
7. Equipment balance available for subsequent year (Lesser of Line 6 or Section 2 balance, but not less than zero)	\$	261,905.06	\$	_	\$	261,905.06
out not less than zoro,	Ψ	201,703.00	Ψ		Ψ	201,703.00

TOWNSHIP OF UNITY WESTMORELAND COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND 2022 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 1 WITH ADJUSTMENTS

Expenditure Summary	Reported		Reported Adjustments		Adjusted Amount		
Minor equipment purchases	\$	_	\$ _	\$	-		
Computer/Computer related training		-	-		-		
Major equipment purchases		137,001.48	-		137,001.48		
Agility projects		-	-		-		
Cleaning streets and gutters		-	-		-		
Winter maintenance services		447,241.89	-		447,241.89		
Traffic control devices		-	-		-		
Street lighting		-	-		-		
Storm sewers and drains		-	-		-		
Repairs of tools and machinery		-	-		-		
Maintenance and repair of							
roads and bridges		-	-		-		
Highway construction and							
rebuilding projects		82,750.00	-		82,750.00		
Miscellaneous							
Total (To Section 2, Line 5)	\$	666,993.37	\$ 	\$	666,993.37		

TOWNSHIP OF UNITY WESTMORELAND COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND 2022 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 2 WITH ADJUSTMENTS

Fund Balance	Reported	Adjustments	Adjusted Amount
1. Balance, January 1, 2022	\$ 356,719.58	\$ -	\$ 356,719.58
Receipts: 2. State allocation 2a. Turnback allocation	819,556.07	-	819,556.07
2b. Interest on investments 2c. Miscellaneous	802.35	- -	802.35
3. Total receipts	820,358.42		820,358.42
4. Total funds available	1,177,078.00		1,177,078.00
5. Expenditures (Section 1)	666,993.37		666,993.37
6. Balance, December 31, 2022	\$ 510,084.63	\$ -	\$ 510,084.63

TOWNSHIP OF UNITY WESTMORELAND COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND 2022 FORM MS-965 – SECTION 3 WITH ADJUSTMENTS

Equipment Balance	Reported	Adjustments	Adjusted Amount
1. Prior year equipment balance	\$ 261,905.06	\$ -	\$ 261,905.06
2. Add: Current year equipment allocation (20% of Lines 2 + 2a, Section 2)	163,911.21	-	163,911.21
3. PENNDOT approved adjustments			
4. Total funds available for equipment acquisition	425,816.27	-	425,816.27
5. Less: Major equipment expenditures	137,001.48		137,001.48
6. Remainder	288,814.79		288,814.79
7. Equipment balance available for subsequent year (Lesser of Line 6 or Section 2 balance, but not less than zero)	\$ 288,814.79	\$ -	\$ 288,814.79

TOWNSHIP OF UNITY WESTMORELAND COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND AUDITOR DESCRIPTION OF SELECT TRANSACTIONS FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2021 TO DECEMBER 31, 2022

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

Lease-Purchase Agreement

On December 17, 2018, the municipality entered into a lease-purchase agreement with Laurel Mountain Leasing and Financial Services to purchase a 2019 International Crosswind street sweeper for \$265,415.93. The agreement was for a term of five years at an interest rate of 4.36 percent. Principal and interest payments of \$59,208.66 are due annually. Prior years' principal and interest payments from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund were \$103,541.75 and \$14,875.57, respectively.

During the current examination period, the municipality paid principal of \$105,372.38 and interest of \$13,044.94 from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund. These amounts are reflected in major equipment purchases on the 2021 and 2022 Forms MS-965 - Section 1. The outstanding balance of the lease-purchase agreement as of December 31, 2022, was \$56,501.80, plus interest.

Lease-Purchase Agreement

On February 20, 2020, the municipality entered into a lease-purchase agreement with Huntington National Bank to purchase an XL 3100 V Gradall 4x2 for \$360,907.00. The agreement was for a term of five years at an interest rate of 3.89 percent. Principal and interest payments of \$77,792.82 are due annually. Prior years' principal and document fee payments from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund were \$77,792.82 and \$400.00, respectively.

During the current examination period, the municipality paid principal of \$136,157.71 and interest of \$19,427.93 from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund. These amounts are reflected in major equipment purchases on the 2021 and 2022 Forms MS-965 - Section 1. Because the excavator was restrictively bid, Liquid Fuels Tax Fund money should not be used to make payments from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund (see Finding). The outstanding balance of the lease-purchase agreement as of December 31, 2022, was \$146,956.47, plus interest.

TOWNSHIP OF UNITY WESTMORELAND COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2021 TO DECEMBER 31, 2022

Finding - Restrictive Bidding - Recurring

We cited the municipality for restrictive bidding in our prior examination for the period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. Our current examination disclosed that on March 10, 2021, and March 3, 2022, the municipality made payments totaling \$155,585.64 from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund for the purchase of an XL 3100 V Gradall 4x2 hydraulic excavator which is a brand name. The use of brand names in advertising for equipment without including the words "or its equivalent," is considered restrictive bidding, and therefore, is prohibited by the Department of Transportation's *Publication 9*,§ 449.3(f), which states:

Brand names. In advertising for equipment to be rented or purchased, or for materials to be purchased or delivered in place, it is unlawful to require or specify any particular make or brand thereof, thereby excluding other makes or brands; however, a particular brand name or its equivalent may be specified if equal consideration is given to all brands which are reasonably similar to the specified brand. Such specifications must be reasonable and not merely imposed in order to exclude some brands of equipment or material in favor of other brands.

This condition occurred because the prior examination finding was written after the municipality had already made additional payments from the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund.

The failure to follow the Department of Transportation's *Publication 9* as noted above could result in the municipality having to reimburse \$155,585.64 to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund.

Recommendations

We recommend that the municipality reimburse \$155,585.64 to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund upon official notification by the Department of Transportation.

We again recommend that the municipality follow the Department of Transportation's *Publication 9*, § 449.3(f), regarding its use of Brand names in future advertisements for purchases.

Management's Response

The municipal officials stated:

The payments were already paid from the Liquid Fuels account before the audit finding.

TOWNSHIP OF UNITY WESTMORELAND COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2021 TO DECEMBER 31, 2022

Finding - Restrictive Bidding - Recurring (Continued)

Auditor's Conclusion

During our next examination, we will determine if the municipality complied with our recommendations.

TOWNSHIP OF UNITY WESTMORELAND COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND SUMMARY OF PRIOR EXAMINATION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2021 TO DECEMBER 31, 2022

Summary Of Prior Examination Recommendations

In our prior report, we recommended that the Department of Transportation review our examination finding to determine if the municipality should reimburse \$78,192.82 to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund for restrictive bidding.

During our current examination, we reviewed a letter dated July 14, 2022, from the Department of Transportation directing the municipality to reimburse \$78,192.82 to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund. We noted that the municipality reimbursed this amount to its Liquid Fuels Tax Fund on February 10, 2023, which was subsequent to our examination period.

In our prior report, we also recommended that the municipality follow the Department of Transportation's *Publication 9*, § 449.3(f), regarding its use of Brand names in future advertisements for purchases as cited above.

During our current examination, we noted that the municipality did not comply with our recommendation (see Finding).

TOWNSHIP OF UNITY WESTMORELAND COUNTY LIQUID FUELS TAX FUND SUMMARY OF ONSITE CLOSEOUT MEETING FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2021 TO DECEMBER 31, 2022

An onsite closeout meeting was held January 16, 2024. Those participating were:

TOWNSHIP OF UNITY

Mrs. Julieanne Zoppetti, Treasurer

DEPARTMENT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

Mrs. Michele Simpson, Auditor

This report was initially distributed to:

The Honorable Michael Carroll

Secretary
Department of Transportation

Township of Unity
Westmoreland County
154 Beatty County Road
Latrobe, PA 15650

The Honorable Michael O'Barto Chairman of the Board of Supervisors

The Honorable John F. Mylant Vice-Chairman of the Board of Supervisors

Mrs. Julieanne Zoppetti 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.