

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Sharon Township Non-Uniformed Pension Plan Potter County, Pennsylvania

July 2024



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL**

Board of Township Supervisors
Sharon Township
Potter County
Shinglehouse, PA 16748

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Sharon Township Non-Uniformed Pension Plan 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 finding 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 finding 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:

- For the period January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2023, we determined whether state aid was properly determined and deposited in accordance with Act 205 requirements by verifying the deposit date of state aid and determining whether deposits were made within 30 days of receipt. State aid allocations that were deposited into the pension plan for the years ended December 31, 2018 to December 31, 2023, are presented on the Summary of Deposited State Aid and Employer Contributions.
- For the period January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2023, 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. Employer contributions that were deposited into the pension plan for the years ended December 31, 2018 to December 31, 2023, are presented on the Summary of Deposited State Aid and Employer Contributions.
- For the period January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2023, we determined whether 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 the years in the period noted and examining documents evidencing the deposit of these employee contributions into the pension plan. We also tested individual employee contributions for all active employees employed during the period noted amounting to \$1,027 for 2022 and \$798 for 2023.
- For the period January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2023, we determined whether retirement benefits calculated for the plan member who separated employment and received a lump-sum distribution during the period noted 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 pension benefits due to the retired individual and comparing these amounts to supporting documentation evidencing amounts determined and actually paid to the recipient.
- We determined whether the January 1, 2021 and January 1, 2023 actuarial valuation reports were prepared and submitted by March 31, 2022 and March 1, 2024, 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.

- For the period January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023, we determined whether the terms of the plan's allocated insurance contracts, including ownership and any restrictions, were in compliance with plan provisions, investment policies, and state regulations by comparing the terms of the contracts with the plan's provisions, investment policies, and state regulations.

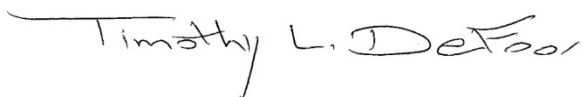
The township has elected to purchase allocated insurance contracts to fund the pension benefits for plan members. Under an allocated funding arrangement, the insurer receives and retains consideration in exchange for a legally enforceable obligation to pay future benefits. In accordance with Statement No. 67 of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board, allocated insurance contracts are excluded from the pension plan's assets. Consequently, the plan has no reportable assets.

Township officials are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the Sharon Township 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 Sharon Township Non-Uniformed Pension Plan was administered in compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, administrative procedures, and local ordinances and policies for the periods noted above, except as noted in the following finding further discussed later in this report:

Finding – Receipt Of State Aid In Excess Of Entitlement

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



Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
June 27, 2024

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Background.....	1
Status of Prior Finding.....	2
Finding and Recommendation:	
Finding – Receipt Of State Aid In Excess Of Entitlement.....	3
Potential Withhold of State Aid.....	5
Summary of Deposited State Aid and Employer Contributions.....	6
Report Distribution List.....	7

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 Sharon Township 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 including, but not limited to, the following:

Act 69 - The Second Class Township Code, Act of May 1, 1933 (P.L. 103, No. 69), as reenacted and amended, 53 P.S. § 65101 et seq.

The Sharon Township Non-Uniformed Pension Plan is a single-employer defined contribution pension plan locally controlled by the provisions of Ordinance No. 119, as amended. The plan was established January 1, 1980. Active members are not required to contribute to the plan; however, they may optionally contribute up to ten percent of their total compensation. The municipality is required to contribute ten percent of compensation to the plan. As of December 31, 2023, the plan had one active member.

SHARON TOWNSHIP NON-UNIFORMED PENSION PLAN
STATUS OF PRIOR FINDING

Compliance With Prior Recommendation

Sharon Township has complied with the prior recommendation concerning the following:

- Incorrect Data On Certification Form AG 385 Resulting In An Overpayment Of State Aid

On July 26, 2019, the township reimbursed \$1,394 to the Commonwealth for the overpayment of state aid received in 2018.

SHARON TOWNSHIP NON-UNIFORMED PENSION PLAN
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – Receipt Of State Aid In Excess Of Entitlement

Condition: The township received state aid in excess of the non-uniformed pension plan’s defined contribution pension costs in the years 2022 and 2023, as illustrated below:

	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
State aid allocation	\$ 8,935	\$ 7,638
Actual municipal pension costs	7,637	6,453
Excess state aid already returned to Commonwealth	(894)	-
Excess state aid	\$ 404	\$ 1,185

Criteria: Section 402(f)(2) of Act 205 states:

No municipality shall be entitled to receive an allocation of general municipal pension system State aid in an amount which exceeds the aggregate actual financial requirements of any municipal pension plans for police officers, paid firefighters or employees other than police officers or paid firefighters maintained by the municipality, less the amount of any aggregate annual member or employee contributions during the next succeeding plan year, as reported in the most recent complete actuarial report filed with the commission.

Cause: Due to turnover in municipal officials, the township officials were unaware of the need to annually reconcile the amount of state aid allocated to the pension plan with the plan’s actual defined contribution pension costs and reimburse the difference to the Commonwealth.

Effect: It is this department’s opinion that because the entire proceeds of the insurance premium tax on foreign casualty insurance companies are distributed annually to each eligible recipient municipality, it is inappropriate to use state aid in one year to offset pension costs in other years. Consequently, the overpayments of state aid in the years 2022 and 2023 must be returned to the Commonwealth for redistribution.

Furthermore, the township’s future state aid allocations may be withheld until the finding recommendation is complied with.

SHARON TOWNSHIP NON-UNIFORMED PENSION PLAN
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – (Continued)

Recommendation: We recommend that the municipality return the \$1,589 of excess state aid received in the years 2022 and 2023 to the Commonwealth. A check in this amount, with interest compounded annually from date of receipt to date of repayment, at a rate earned by the plan, should be made payable to: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and mailed to: Department of the Auditor General, Municipal Pension & Fire Relief Programs Unit, 321 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120. A copy of the interest calculation must be submitted along with evidence of payment.

Furthermore, we recommend that plan officials reconcile the amount of state aid and municipal contributions allocated to the pension plan with the plan's annual defined contribution pension costs and reimburse any excess state aid received to the Commonwealth.

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

Auditor's Conclusion: Due to the potential withhold of state aid, the township's compliance with the finding recommendation will be monitored subsequent to the release of the audit report and through our next audit of the plan.

SHARON TOWNSHIP NON-UNIFORMED PENSION PLAN
POTENTIAL WITHHOLD OF STATE AID

The finding contained in this audit report cites an overpayment of state aid to the township in the amount of \$1,589. A condition of this nature may lead to a total withholding of state aid in the future unless the finding is corrected. A check in this amount with interest, at a rate earned by the pension plan, should be made payable to: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and mailed to: Department of the Auditor General, Municipal Pension & Fire Relief Programs Unit, 321 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120.

SHARON TOWNSHIP NON-UNIFORMED PENSION PLAN
SUMMARY OF DEPOSITED STATE AID AND EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTIONS
(UNAUDITED)

Year Ended December 31	State Aid	Employer Contributions
2018	\$ 5,961	\$ 2,674
2019	8,635	None
2020	8,271	None
2021	8,233	None
2022	8,042	None
2023	7,638	None

SHARON TOWNSHIP NON-UNIFORMED PENSION PLAN
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Mr. Gordon Mesler
Chairman, Board of Township Supervisors

Ms. Brandy Chaapel
Secretary

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.