

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

East Whiteland Township Firefighters' Pension Plan

Chester County, Pennsylvania

For the Period

January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2023

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**

Board of Township Supervisors
East Whiteland Township
Chester County
Frazer, PA 19355

We have conducted a compliance audit of the East Whiteland Township Firefighters' Pension Plan for the period January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2023. 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 objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our finding and conclusions based on our audit objective.

The objective of the audit was 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 objective identified above. 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 and plan members who 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, 2019, January 1, 2021, and January 1, 2023 actuarial valuation reports were prepared and submitted by March 31, 2020, 2022, and 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.
- We determined whether provisions of the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) were in accordance with the provisions of Act 205 by examining provisions stated in the plan's governing documents.

East Whiteland Township contracted with an independent certified public accounting firm for annual audits of its basic financial statements for the years ended December 31, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022, which are available at the township's offices. Those financial statements were not audited by us and, accordingly, we express no opinion or other form of assurance on them.

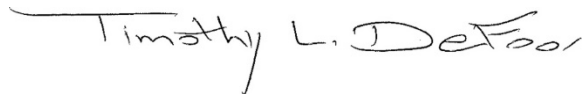
Township officials are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the East Whiteland Township Firefighters' Pension Plan is administered in compliance with applicable state laws, regulations, contracts, administrative procedures, and 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 objective.

The results of our procedures indicated that, in all significant respects, the East Whiteland Township Firefighters' 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 – Incorrect Data On Certification Form AG 385 Resulting In A
Net 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 East Whiteland 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy L. DeFoor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the left of the first letter.

Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
June 20, 2024

CONTENTS

| | <u>Page</u> |
|--|-------------|
| Background..... | 1 |
| Finding and Recommendation: | |
| Finding – Incorrect Data On Certification Form AG 385 Resulting In A Net Underpayment Of State Aid..... | 2 |
| Supplementary Information | 4 |
| Report Distribution List | 8 |

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 East Whiteland Township Firefighters' 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 East Whiteland Township Firefighters' Pension Plan is a single-employer defined benefit pension plan locally controlled by the provisions of Ordinance No. 240-2012, as amended, and a separately executed plan agreement with the plan's custodian effective January 1, 2012. The plan is also affected by the provisions of collective bargaining agreements between the township and its firefighters. The plan was established July 1, 1974. Active members are required to contribute five percent of monthly compensation to the plan. As of December 31, 2023, the plan had ten active members, two terminated members eligible for vested benefits in the future, and four retirees receiving pension benefits from the plan.

EAST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION PLAN
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

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

Condition: The township certified incorrect data on the Certification Forms AG 385 filed in 2021, 2022, and 2023 resulting in a net underpayment of state aid. The data contained on these certification forms is based on prior calendar year information. The errors were as follows:

- For the non-uniformed defined benefit pension plan, the township certified two ineligible non-uniformed employees (2 units) on the Certification Form AG 385 filed in 2022. The ineligible employees retired effective October 1, 2019 and October 31, 2019 and entered the Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP).
- For the non-uniformed defined contribution pension plan, the township failed to certify ten eligible non-uniformed employees (10 units) on the Certification Form AG 385 filed in 2022 and failed to certify nine eligible non-uniformed employees (9 units) on the Certification Form AG 385 filed in 2023.
- The township certified two ineligible police officers (4 units) on the Certification Forms AG 385 filed in 2022 and 2023. The ineligible members retired effective January 15, 2021 and February 1, 2021 and entered the DROP.
- The township certified an ineligible firefighter (2 units) on the Certification Forms AG 385 filed in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The ineligible member for the year 2021 terminated employment March 18, 2020, and the ineligible member for the years 2022 and 2023 retired effective October 1, 2019 and entered the DROP.

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

Furthermore, Act 205 at Section 402(e)(2) states, in part:

For the purpose of computing and reporting the applicable number of units, a DROP participant shall not be reported to the Auditor General as an active employee.

EAST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION PLAN
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding – (Continued)

Cause: Based on recent change in management preparing the Certification Form AG 385, the township failed to recognize that members of the non-uniformed defined contribution plan were eligible for certification. Furthermore, management was unaware that DROP participants are not eligible for certification. Additionally, the township lacked adequate internal control procedures, such as having another individual review the data certified to ensure compliance with the instructions that accompanied Certification Form AG 385 prior to submission.

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 township's state aid allocations were based on unit value, the township received an underpayment of state aid as identified below:

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Type of Plan</u> | <u>Units Overstated (Understated)</u> | <u>Unit Value</u> | <u>State Aid Overpayment (Underpayment)</u> |
|-------------|---------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| 2021 | Firefighters' | 2 | \$4,797 | \$ 9,594 |
| 2022 | Police | 4 | \$5,180 | \$ 20,720 |
| | Non-Uniformed | (8) | \$5,180 | (41,440) |
| | Firefighters' | 2 | \$5,180 | 10,360 |
| | | | | <u>\$ (10,360)</u> |
| 2023 | Police | 4 | \$5,828 | \$ 23,312 |
| | Non-Uniformed | (9) | \$5,828 | (52,452) |
| | Firefighters' | 2 | \$5,828 | 11,656 |
| | | | | <u>\$ (17,484)</u> |
| | | | | <u>\$ (18,250)</u> |

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 the next audit of the plan.

EAST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP FIREFIGHTERS' 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, 2019, 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) |
| 01-01-19 | \$ 2,062,426 | \$ 2,935,239 | \$ 872,813 | 70.3% |
| 01-01-21 | 2,828,981 | 3,837,417 | 1,008,436 | 73.7% |
| 01-01-23 | 3,725,176 | 5,039,355 | 1,314,179 | 73.9% |

Note: The market values of the plan's assets at 01-01-19, 01-01-21, and 01-01-23 have been adjusted to reflect that investment gain or loss is recognized over a five-year period subject to a maximum of 115 percent and a minimum of 85 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.

EAST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP FIREFIGHTERS' 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.

EAST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP FIREFIGHTERS' 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 |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|
| 2014 | \$ 85,251 | \$ 85,251 | \$ - | | |
| 2015 | 75,802 | 75,802 | - | | |
| 2016 | 85,040 | 85,040 | - | \$ 801,110 | 10.62% |
| 2017 | 106,494 | 106,494 | - | 835,655 | 12.74% |
| 2018 | 105,280 | 105,280 | - | 945,635 | 11.13% |
| 2019 | 158,964 | 158,964 | - | 865,531 | 18.37% |
| 2020 | 174,500 | 174,500 | - | 781,541 | 22.33% |
| 2021 | 186,843 | 186,843 | - | 1,032,376 | 18.10% |
| 2022 | 235,300 | 235,300 | - | 1,400,442 | 16.80% |
| 2023 | 319,708 | 319,708 | - | - | |

* 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 years prior to 2016. In addition, due to the timing of this audit, covered-employee payroll for 2023 was not provided in this schedule.

EAST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP FIREFIGHTERS' 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, 2023 |
| Actuarial cost method | Entry age normal |
| Amortization method | Level dollar |
| Remaining amortization period | 9 years |
| Asset valuation method | 5-year smoothing, subject to a maximum of 115% and a minimum of 85% of the market value of assets. |
| Actuarial assumptions: | |
| Investment rate of return | 7.25% |
| Projected salary increases | 4.50% |
| Cost-of-living adjustments | None assumed |

EAST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION PLAN
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Mr. Scott Lambert
Chairman, Board of Township Supervisors

Mr. Steven Brown
Township Manager

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.