

PRESENTATION TO
THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC FUNDS
Monitoring of Local Government Audits

Office of Legislative Audits
Robert A. Garman, Assistant Director, Quality Assurance
October 17, 2018

INTRODUCTION

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for the opportunity to present the results of our review of the audit reports submitted by each local government for the year ended June 30, 2017 which are summarized in our report entitled *Review of Local Government Audit Reports* dated September 11, 2018. For the 192 audit reports due, we found that the local governments have generally complied with generally accepted accounting principles and auditing standards. Additionally, local governments generally appeared to be in good financial condition at that time. When areas of noncompliance or potential financial problems were noted, we sent letters describing the conditions to the governments and, when appropriate, to their auditors in an effort to ensure the conditions do not recur. My presentation will address the following areas:

1. Overview of the local government auditing process
2. Problems disclosed by our review of local government audits
3. Follow-up action taken on problems
4. Concluding comments

OVERVIEW

Generally, each county, incorporated city or town, and taxing district located in Maryland is required by law to have an annual audit. Based on the provisions of Title 16 of the Local Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, each local government is required to have its financial statements audited by an independent certified public accountant in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. This law also requires that the financial statements be presented in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and that the results of the audits be submitted to the Office of Legislative Audits.

Most local governments must file their reports on or before October 31 for the preceding fiscal year ended June 30; however, local governments whose populations exceed 400,000, and certain other counties, must file on or before December 31 of each year. In addition, extensions may be granted to local governments for valid reasons. By law, certain small governments may request a waiver of the annual filing requirement and instead only have an audit once every four years. Sixteen local governments requested, and were granted, waivers of the annual filing requirement for 2017.

As provided for under the law, we have issued audit guidelines that address the basic requirements that must be met by the local governments and their independent auditors. While the independent auditors determine the specific procedures necessary in each audit, the guidelines are intended to help ensure that a minimum acceptable level of quality is maintained for audits and financial reports of local governments.

The Office of Legislative Audits performs a desk review of each audit report to determine areas of noncompliance by using a quality control checklist for government audits published by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. For example, we determine whether the auditor's report was presented in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, whether the local government's financial statements were presented in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, and whether financial statement disclosures were adequate.

Our desk review also includes a review to identify noncompliance with certain State laws, such as Local Government Article, Section 17-101 of the Annotated Code of Maryland which requires all deposits held in banks by local governments be insured or otherwise collateralized. Additionally, our desk review includes a basic financial analysis of each local government. This analysis includes a review of various financial trends and ratios (for example,

ratio of general fund balance to annual expenditures) to provide some insight regarding potential financial problems at the local government level.

Upon completion of each year's review, we prepare a report summarizing the areas of noncompliance with the audit guidelines (for example, departures from generally accepted accounting principles) or with State law (for example, uncollateralized cash deposits). In addition, our report discloses potential financial problems at the local government level such as deficit fund balances and unfavorable financial trends and ratios. This summary report is submitted to the State Comptroller and the Executive Director of the Department of Legislative Services, as required by law, as well as other interested parties.

Finally, the law requires applicable counties to file reports with our Office on their reviews of financial reports and audits of special taxing districts created by the counties. Our annual summary reports also include the results of our reviews of such financial information on county-created special taxing districts.

PROBLEMS DISCLOSED

As reflected on Exhibit A, page 1, most local governments have substantially complied with standards over the past several years. However, for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2017, about 26 percent (49 out of the 192 local government reports due) contained areas of noncompliance with the audit guidelines. Areas of noncompliance were not to the extent to cast doubt as to the reliability of the underlying financial statements. During our fiscal year 2017 review, the number of local governments with areas of noncompliance with the audit guidelines decreased somewhat in comparison to that of the preceding year.

In addition, our review disclosed areas of noncompliance with State law for 12 local governments (local governments with unsecured cash deposits) and potential financial problems for 2 local governments. See Exhibit A, page 2 for a summary of these areas and problems over

the past several years. Some local governments had more than one area of noncompliance with the guidelines.

The more significant and frequent problems disclosed by our review were as follows:

Timeliness:

1. Local governments did not timely file an audit report as required or failed to do so.

As of July 26, 2018, eight local governments were delinquent in filing audit reports as required by the Local Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

Local Government	Fiscal Years Outstanding
Town of Deer Park	2015, 2016, 2017
City of Hyattsville	2016, 2017
Town of Lonaconing	2017
Town of Marydel	2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017
City of Mount Rainier	2017
City of Seat Pleasant	2017
Bel Air Special Taxing Area	2017
Washington Suburban Transit Commission	2015, 2016

Auditor's Work:

2. Auditor's reports for five local governments were not presented in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.

Local Government Financial Presentation:

3. Financial statements submitted by 27 local governments did not present all required statements or the presentation was inappropriate.
4. Financial statements for 3 local governments lacked adequate disclosures in the statements and/or accompanying notes.
5. One report (Sykesville) contained an adverse opinion on one opinion unit and a qualified opinion on another opinion unit. An adverse opinion states that the financial statements do not present fairly the financial position, changes in financial position or, where applicable, cash flows in conformity with generally accepted

accounting principles. This Town's audit report contained an adverse opinion on the Town's discretely presented component unit opinion unit because of the omission of financial data for the Town's legally separate component unit. A qualified opinion is issued when the auditor states that, "except for" the effects of the matter to which the qualification relates, the financial statements are presented fairly. The Town's audit report also contained a qualified opinion on the governmental activities opinion unit because the Town had not measured the effect of Governmental Accounting Standards Board Statement No. 49 entitled *"Accounting and Financial Reporting for Pollution Remediation Obligations."* The Town's audit reports for each fiscal year since 2009 also contained an adverse opinion and a qualified opinion due to these situations.

Compliance:

6. Local governments with uninsured/uncollateralized cash deposits. Twelve local governments had unsecured, or inappropriately secured, cash deposits. In most cases, the amount of cash not secured was small in relation to the local governments' total assets and, in some cases, it was indicated in the financial statement disclosures that the local government had taken corrective action.

Potential Financial Issues:

7. Local government with unrestricted General Fund deficit balance. One local government (Charlestown) had a deficit fund balance at June 30, 2017.
8. Local governments with unfavorable General Fund trends and ratios. One local governments (Pocomoke City) had unfavorable General Fund trends and ratios for the period ending June 30, 2017.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

A letter describing the areas of noncompliance with the audit guidelines noted during our review was sent to each local government and its independent auditor. The letters requested that the matters be examined to avoid a recurrence in subsequent audits.

The local governments that failed to file audit reports for fiscal years 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017 were reported to the Executive Director of the Department of Legislative Services. If these reports are not filed, the State Comptroller, acting upon the advice of the Executive Director, is authorized by law to discontinue the payment of all funds, grants, or State aid to which the local governments are entitled.

For areas of noncompliance with State law pertaining to unsecured cash deposits and for potential financial problems (for example, deficit fund balances), our Office requests the applicable local governments to provide written descriptions of the actions to be taken to eliminate the conditions, when appropriate. We then review and evaluate the responses to these requests. Additionally, as requested by the Committee, when letters were sent to local governments regarding noncompliance with State laws and potential financial problems, copies of the letters were also sent to the appropriate members of the Maryland General Assembly.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the Office of Legislative Audits functions in an oversight capacity by issuing audit guidelines, reviewing local government audit reports for compliance with standards and regulations, and notifying the local governments and their auditors of any deficiencies noted. We believe that these efforts have helped improve the quality of audits and have promoted fiscal accountability among local governments in Maryland.

To further improve the quality of local government audits, we participate in various efforts to make technical information available to local governments. For example, we routinely respond to technical inquiries from local governments and their auditors.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have on this presentation.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC FUNDS

SUMMARY REVIEW

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUDIT REPORTS

REPORTS DUE	FY 2012			FY 2013			FY 2014			FY 2015			FY 2016			FY 2017								
	CO	CI	ID	CO	CI	ID	CO	CI	ID	CO	CI	ID	CO	CI	ID	CO	CI	ID						
	25	154	14	193	25	148	14	187	24	153	14	191	25	155	14	194	25	161	17	203	24	153	15	192
Areas of Noncompliance with Audit Guidelines																								
1.	Audit reports not filed @																							
2.	Audit reports not filed on time @																							
3.	Auditor issued a qualified opinion / disclaimer / adverse opinion or improperly issued an unqualified opinion																							
4.	Auditor's report not presented in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards @																							
a.	Auditor's report did not contain one or more of the basic elements required by auditing standards																							
b.	Auditor's opinion did not cover all opinion units or financial statements																							
c.	Auditor did not report on all required information.																							
5.	Financial statements not presented in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles @																							
a.	Required statements not presented or presentation inappropriate																							
b.	Inadequate disclosure in the financial statements (e.g., basis of accounting, cash deposits with financial institutions and investments)																							
c.	Governmental fund balances were not properly classified																							
6.	Auditor did not submit letter stating reasons for expressing other than an unqualified opinion																							
TOTAL																								

CO - Counties

CT - Cities and Towns

TD - Taxing Districts

TOT - Total Units

@ - Local governments may be counted more than once as certain local governments had more than one deficiency in these areas.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC FUNDS

SUMMARY REVIEW

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUDIT REPORTS

REPORTS DUE	FY 2012				FY 2013				FY 2014				FY 2015				FY 2016				FY 2017			
	CO	CI	ID	IOI	CO	CI	ID	IOI	CO	CI	ID	IOI	CO	CI	ID	IOI	CO	CI	ID	IOI	CO	CI	ID	IOI
	25	154	14	193	25	148	14	187	24	153	14	191	25	155	14	194	25	161	17	203	24	153	15	192

Areas of Noncompliance with State Law*

1. Uninsured/uncollateralized cash deposits	4	8	-	12	3	8	2	13	4	9	1	14	2	10	1	13	5	9	2	16	5	5	2	12
TOTAL AREAS OF NONCOMPLIANCE	4	8	0	12	3	8	2	13	4	9	1	14	2	10	1	13	5	9	2	16	5	5	2	12

Potential Financial Problems *

1. General fund deficits	-	2	-	2	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1
2. Unfavorable general fund trends and ratios	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	0	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	2	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1
TOTAL POTENTIAL FINANCIAL PROBLEMS	0	4	0	4	0	1	0	1	0	3	0	3	0	3	0	3	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2

CO - Counties
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* Some local governments had more than one area of noncompliance with State law or potential financial problem (that is, certain local governments may be included in both categories).

Note - As of October 12, 2018, acceptable responses to all of our requests for corrective action plans had been submitted except for two local governments. Specifically, the City of Pocomoke City (unfavorable general fund trends) and the Upper Potomac River Commission (uninsured, uncollateralized cash deposits) had not submitted a response.