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April 2026

Ken Landon, Chairman  
Members of the Board of Fire Commissioners  
Plainville Fire District  
767 West Genesee Road  
Baldwinsville, NY 13027

Report Number: 2021M-91-F

Dear Chairman Landon and Members of Board of Fire Commissioners:

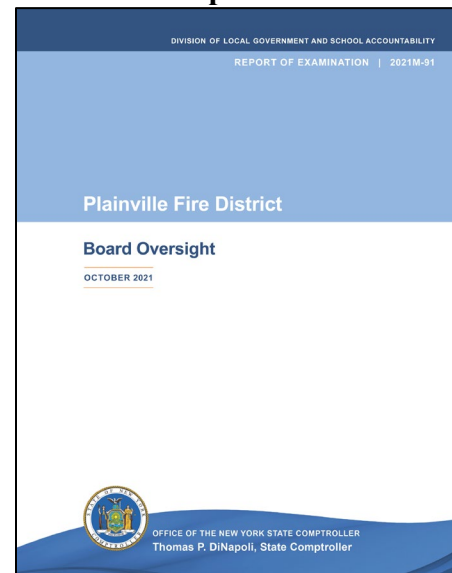
One of the Office of the State Comptroller's (OSC) primary objectives is to identify areas where local government officials can improve their operations and provide guidance and services that will assist them in making those improvements. The Office also works to develop and promote short-term and long-term strategies to enable and encourage fire district officials to reduce costs, improve service delivery and to account for and protect their fire district's assets.

In accordance with these objectives, we conducted an audit of the Plainville Fire District (District) to determine whether the District Board of Fire Commissioners (Board) provided adequate oversight of the District's financial operations. The Board consists of five members (Commissioners), including one who serves as the Chairman.

As a result of our audit, we issued a report, dated October 2021, identifying certain conditions and opportunities for the Board's review and consideration (Figure 1). In response to the audit, District officials filed a corrective action plan (CAP) with our Office in October 2021. The CAP identified the actions the Board planned to take to implement the audit recommendations.

To further our policy of providing assistance to local governments, we revisited the District on October 6, 2025. On February 2, 2026, we obtained additional information pertaining to the results of operations for 2025. Our follow-up review was limited to interviews with Commissioners and

**Figure 1: Plainville Fire District  
2021 Audit Report**



<https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2021/pdf/plainville-fire-district-2021-91.pdf>

the District’s Secretary-Treasurer (Treasurer), inspection of certain documents related to the issues identified in our report and a review of the District’s CAP.<sup>1</sup>

Based on our limited procedures, the Board fully implemented four recommendations, partially implemented three, and did not implement one. Until all recommendations are implemented, the Board cannot ensure District assets are safeguarded.

### **Recommendation 1 – Budgeting**

The Board should adopt budgets that include realistic estimates of appropriations and transfers to reserve funds.

#### Status of Corrective Action: Partially Implemented

Corrective Action Plan: The District’s CAP stated: *“Budgets shall reflect more realistic estimates based on historical data and the assessed needs of the district to provide continued services to the district residents. The fire district has completed an inventory assessment which has been incorporated into records management software to further identify annual and future appropriations; this shall assist in the development of budgets based on realistic estimates.”*

Observations/Findings: Since we issued our report, the Board adopted budgets that included planned transfers to fund reserves; however, the adopted budgets continued to include unrealistic estimates of appropriations. In fiscal years 2021 through 2025 budgets, the Board planned operating surpluses between \$100,000 and \$150,000, for a total of \$665,000 over the five-year period. The Board planned to use the \$665,000 to fund reserves over the same five-year period. However, the District instead used some of the operating surplus to make capital equipment purchases that were not included in the adopted budgets. Specifically, in 2022 the District purchased a tanker truck for over \$307,000 and in 2023 and 2025, it purchased two Chief’s vehicles for \$67,000 and \$93,000, respectively (Discussed further in Recommendation 4). As a result, only \$378,500 of the \$665,000 total planned surplus was realized. For example, in fiscal year 2022, the Board planned to transfer an operating surplus of \$150,000 to the capital reserves. However, because the Board did not budget for the tanker truck purchase that year, the District instead realized an operating deficit of almost \$170,000.

The Chairman and Treasurer told us they did not know they should budget for capital purchases. However, without including all planned expenditures in the budget, the Board and District officials did not provide transparent budgets to taxpayers and cannot ensure estimated revenues and real property tax levies are adequate to fund actual expenditures.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for the District’s CAP to the OSC audit report.

## **Recommendation 2 – Fund Balance Policy**

The Board should adopt a written fund balance policy that establishes a reasonable level of unrestricted fund balance to be maintained to meet the District’s financial needs.

Status of Corrective Action: Fully Implemented

Corrective Action Plan: The District’s CAP stated: “*A fund balance policy was adopted at the meeting of September 14, 2021 detailing a realistic approach to fund balance.*”

Observations/Findings: The Board adopted a fund balance policy in September 2021, which states “...[T]he desired unassigned general fund balance shall be not less than two months or 15 percent of general fund operating expenditures...” but not more than three months of general fund operating expenditures, or 20 percent of the total real property tax levy. The Treasurer told us these calculations are based on the prior year’s operating expenditures and the current year’s real property tax levy.

## **Recommendation 3 – Surplus Fund Balance**

The Board should reduce surplus fund balance and use the excess as a financing source to benefit District taxpayers. Such uses include, but are not limited to:

- Funding needed reserves,
- Funding one-time expenditures, and
- Reducing real property taxes.

Status of Corrective Action: Not Implemented

Corrective Action Plan: The District’s CAP did not address this recommendation.

Observations/Findings: Our audit determined the District’s unrestricted fund balance increased from \$102,000 at the end of fiscal year 2018 to over \$137,000 by the end of fiscal year 2020, or enough to fund nearly half of its annual expenditures. Since we issued our report, the District’s unrestricted fund balance increased to approximately \$179,000 at the end of fiscal year 2025, which was enough to fund almost eight months of annual operating expenditures. This was more than twice the amount allowed by the District’s fund balance policy (See Recommendation 2).

The Chairman and another Commissioner told us the Board relies on the Treasurer’s reports provided during the budget process to determine whether surplus fund balance is projected to be within policy limits. However, we observed that the estimated fund balances the Treasurer provided to the Board with the proposed budgets for fiscal years 2024, 2025 and 2026 were not calculated correctly. The Treasurer included three additional months of expenditures in the calculation, resulting in unrestricted fund balance projected to March 31 of the subsequent year, rather than to December 31, the District’s fiscal year end. As a result, the Board adopted budgets using underestimated fund balance projections and did not appropriate fund balance because the

Commissioners thought it was within the limit established by the fund balance policy (See Recommendation 2).

The Treasurer could not explain why she presented estimated fund balance this way. By retaining more fund balance than prescribed by policy, the District's real property tax levy may be higher than necessary. We explained to the Treasurer how to estimate available year-end fund balance and directed her to OSC's Local Government Management Guide (LGMG) entitled *Understanding the Budget Process*<sup>2</sup> for additional guidance.

#### **Recommendation 4 – Multiyear Financial and Capital Plans**

The Board should develop multiyear financial and capital plans to provide a framework for preparing future budgets and managing the financing of future capital needs. These plans should be monitored and updated on an ongoing basis.

Status of Corrective Action: Partially Implemented

Corrective Action Plan: The District's CAP stated: "*A written capital plan process has begun with anticipated completion by year end; the replacement of apparatus schedule is complete, major equipment replacement schedule is proceeding and a schedule of building repair/renovation/replacement will begin shortly.*"

Observations/Findings: The Board has not developed a multiyear financial plan. Although the Board adopted a multiyear capital plan in July 2021 and reviewed it at each year's organizational meeting, it did not include estimated costs or identify the funding source (e.g., fund balance, reserves) for each anticipated capital purchase. In addition, the multiyear capital plan did not include all District vehicles or their estimated replacement costs. As a result, the Board did not have a framework for preparing budgets and did not anticipate the cost of capital purchases or their impact on capital reserve funds and fund balance. For example, in fiscal year 2022 the District purchased a tanker truck for over \$307,000 that was not part of the multiyear capital plan and was not included in the budget. As a result of this unbudgeted expenditure, the District had a \$169,000 operating deficit instead of the \$150,000 planned operating surplus that year which was intended to fund capital reserves.

The Chairman and another Commissioner told us that the Board only prepared a multiyear capital plan because Board members thought a multiyear capital plan and a multiyear financial plan were the same thing. They also told us that Board members did not believe they needed to include the \$307,000 tanker truck purchase in the capital plan because the District already notified the public of the projected purchase before approving the capital plan. We described the multiyear financial plan and multiyear capital plan and explained each plan's use in long-term planning. Additionally, we directed the Commissioners to our LGMGs *Multiyear Financial Planning* and *Multiyear Capital Planning*<sup>3</sup> to assist them with developing these plans.

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<sup>2</sup> Available on OSC's website at: <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/publications/pdf/understanding-the-budget-process.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Available on OSC's website at: <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/publications/pdf/multiyear-financial-planning.pdf> and <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/publications/pdf/multiyear-capital-planning.pdf>

Without complete long term financial and capital plans, the Board did not have the framework and the information needed to develop reasonable budgets (See Recommendation 1) anticipate capital expenditures or properly manage fund balance including reserves (See Recommendation 3).

### **Recommendation 5 – Reserve Resolutions**

The Board should take action to ratify the “de facto” building improvements capital reserve and equipment capital reserve funds by adopting appropriate resolutions.

Status of Corrective Action: Fully Implemented

Corrective Action Plan: The District’s CAP stated: *“Resolutions memorializing the establishment of the Equipment Capital Reserve and the Building Capital Reserve were passed at the September 14, 2021 Board meeting.”*

Observations/Findings: The Board passed resolutions on September 14, 2021, pursuant to New York State (NYS) General Municipal Law Section 6-g, to establish a Building Improvement Capital Reserve Fund for future construction of a new fire station and an Equipment Capital Reserve Fund for future purchases of fire apparatus and equipment.

### **Recommendation 6 – Annual Financial Report Filing**

The Board should ensure the Treasurer files the District’s Annual Financial Report (AFR)<sup>4</sup> with OSC within 60 days after the close of the fiscal year.

Status of Corrective Action: Fully Implemented

Corrective Action Plan: The District’s CAP stated: *“The Board of Fire Commissioners shall ensure all annual audits and reports are performed and submitted timely.”*

Observations/Findings: In September 2021, the Treasurer filed the overdue AFRs for fiscal years 2018 through 2020, and although the Treasurer filed the 2021 AFR 62 days late, the 2022 through 2024 AFRs were filed on time.

### **Recommendation 7 – Annual Audit**

The Board should ensure timely annual audits of the Treasurer’s records are performed.

Status of Corrective Action: Partially Implemented

Corrective Action Plan: The District’s CAP stated: *“The Board of Fire Commissioners shall ensure all annual audits and reports are performed and submitted in a timely manner.”*

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<sup>4</sup> During our audit, and at the time of the audit report’s release, the AFR was known as the Annual Update Document, or AUD. The AUD became known as the AFR in 2023.

Observations/Findings: NYS Town Law Section 181-b requires a fire district board to obtain an independent audit when the district’s annual revenues exceed \$400,000<sup>5</sup> and to file the report with the fire district board, the town board and OSC, within 180 days following the end of the fiscal year audited. The Board was required to obtain an independent audit in each of the four completed fiscal years since we issued our report in October 2021. The District contracted with an independent public accountant (IPA) to audit the District’s financial records each year; however, the Board did not ensure the 2021 through 2024 annual audit reports were completed in a timely manner and filed with the appropriate parties.

The IPA completed the 2022 fiscal year audit report and filed it with the Board within 180 days of the end of the fiscal year; however, the 2021 and 2023 fiscal year audit reports were filed with the Board 211 and 19 days late, respectively. As of October 6, 2025, the date of our fieldwork, the 2024 audit report was 98 days late. In addition, none of the audit reports were filed with OSC. The Treasurer told us she was unaware she had to file the audit reports with the town board and she thought the IPA was submitting the audit reports to OSC. Neither the Chairman nor the Treasurer were able to explain why the IPA was late completing the audits. Without timely annual audits, there is an increased risk that financial operations are not properly accounted for and transactions are not properly recorded, hindering the Board’s ability to protect District assets and provide effective monitoring and oversight of the District’s financial operations.

### **Recommendation 8 – Claims Audit and Approval**

The Board should audit and approve claims prior to payment when required.

Status of Corrective Action: Fully Implemented

Corrective Action Plan: The District’s CAP stated: “*The procedure for payment of invoices has been examined and modified; henceforth, the Treasurer shall only pay utility bills and postage (or other allowable delivery related services) prior to Board approval. The Board shall continue to examine, audit and approve each payment voucher individually.*”

Observations/Findings: We reviewed the 23 claims paid in August 2025 totaling \$34,672 to determine whether the Board audited and approved the claims prior to payment, when required. The Board audited and approved all 23 claims; 13 claims were approved prior to payment and the remaining 10 claims were permitted by resolution to be paid in advance of audit and were included in the subsequent warrant for audit and approval by the Board.<sup>6</sup>

During our review, we discussed the basis for our recommendations and the operational considerations relating to these issues. We encourage District officials to continue their efforts to fully implement our recommended improvements. For additional guidance, District officials should refer to OSC’s web page, including our LGMGs referenced in this review.

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<sup>5</sup> Prior to 2020, an annual audit was required when district revenues exceeded \$300,000.

<sup>6</sup> A governing board, by resolution, may authorize payment in advance of audit for public utility services (electric, gas, water, sewer and telephone), postage and freight and express charges. The claims for such prepayments should be audited as soon as possible after payment and included on the next abstract as prepaid amounts.

Thank you for the courtesies and cooperation extended to our auditors during this review. If you have any further questions, please contact Nicole Tomsen, Chief of Municipal Audits of our Statewide Audit Unit at (716) 847-3647.

Sincerely,

Robin L. Lois, CPA  
Deputy Comptroller

## Appendix A – District’s CAP to the OSC Audit Report

### PLAINVILLE FIRE DISTRICT

P.O. Box 173  
Plainville, New York 13137



The Plainville Board of Fire Commissioners are in receipt of the audit report 2021M-91, this response shall serve as a combined response and corrective action plan to the findings therein.

The Plainville Fire District accepts the findings of report 2021M-91 and are in receipt of the recommended corrective actions contained therein:

1. Adopt budgets that include realistic estimates of appropriations and transfers to reserve funds.
2. Adopt a written fund balance policy that establishes a reasonable level of unrestricted fund balance to be maintained to meet the district’s financial needs.
3. Reduce surplus fund balance and use the excess as a financing source to benefit District taxpayers. Such uses include, but are not limited to:
  - Funding needed reserves,
  - Funding one-time expenditures, and
  - Reducing real property taxes.
4. Develop multiyear financial and capital plans to provide a framework for preparing future budgets and managing the financing of future capital needs. These plans should be monitored and updated on an ongoing basis.
5. Take action to ratify the "de facto" building improvements capital reserve and equipment capital reserve funds by adopting appropriate resolutions.
6. Ensure the Treasurer files the District's AUD with OSC within 60 days after the close of the fiscal year.
7. Ensure timely annual audits of the Treasurer's records are performed.
8. Audit and approve claims prior to payment when required.

This plan of action was adopted by the Board of Fire Commissioners on September 14, 2021:

#### **Budgets**

Budgets shall reflect more realistic estimates based on historical data and the assessed needs of the district to provide continued services to the district residents. The fire district has completed an inventory assessment which has been incorporated into records management software to further identify annual and future appropriations; this shall assist in the development of budgets based on realistic estimates.

#### **Fund Balance and Capital Planning**

A fund balance policy was adopted at the meeting of September 14, 2021 detailing a realistic approach to fund balance. The policy will be reviewed annually to ensure continued relevance, applicability and compliance. The policy will be used in conjunction with our long-range capital planning efforts, identifying minimum and maximum amounts of fund balance and determinations for under/over funding.

A written capital plan process has begun with anticipated completion by year end; the replacement of apparatus schedule is complete, major equipment replacement schedule is proceeding and a schedule of building repair/renovation/replacement will begin shortly.

**Capital Reserve Funds**

Resolutions memorializing the establishment of the Equipment Capital Reserve and the Building Capital Reserve were passed at the September 14, 2021 Board meeting.

**Treasurer Oversight**

The procedure for payment of invoices has been examined and modified; henceforth, the Treasurer shall only pay utility bills and postage (or other allowable delivery related services) prior to Board approval. The Board shall continue to examine, audit and approve each payment voucher individually.

The Board of Fire Commissioners shall ensure all annual audits and reports are performed and submitted in a timely manner. Annual AUD and audit shall be reviewed at each March Board meeting.

2018 and 2019 AUD's have submitted to OSC. 2020 will be submitted by September 24, 2021. Audits will be reviewed at the November 2021 Board meeting.

Additionally, Commissioners and District Treasurer have been provided with information on the following OSC webinars and urged to participate by year end: **Developing an Effective Fund Balance Policy, Multiyear Financial Planning and Multiyear Capital Planning and Budgeting.**

Respectfully submitted,



Ken Landon  
Chairman of the Board of Fire Commissioners  
Plainville Fire District  
September 20, 2021