New York State Comptroller
THOMAS P. DiNAPOLI

Ransomville Fire District

Transparency of Fiscal Activities

November 2026 | S9-26-36
Prepared by the Division of Local Government and School Accountability

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Audit Results

Ransomville Fire District

Audit Objective

Did the Ransomville Fire District (District) Board of Fire Commissioners (Board) conduct an annual audit of the Treasurer's financial records and reports, and did the Treasurer file the Annual Financial Report (AFR) with the Office of the New York State Comptroller (OSC) as required?

Audit Period

January 1, 2025 – May 1, 2026

We extended our observation of annual AFR filings forward to June 23, 2026 and back to fiscal year 2022.

Understanding the Audit Area

To fulfill its fiscal oversight responsibilities, a board of fire commissioners (board) should conduct an annual audit of the treasurer's financial records and ensure the treasurer files the AFR with OSC on time as required by New York State (NYS) General Municipal Law (GML) Section 30. Doing so will help identify and address errors or irregularities and provide fire district residents, taxpayers and other interested parties with transparent and reliable information about the fire district's fiscal condition and operations.

District officials budgeted a total of $332,500 for the general fund appropriations in fiscal year 2025 to provide essential fire protection services; the budget was funded by $337,264 in revenue collections.

Audit Summary

The Board did not conduct an annual audit of the Treasurer's financial records and reports for fiscal year 2025. Neither the Chairman nor another Commissioner we spoke to was aware the Board should conduct an annual audit, and were therefore unable to tell us when, if ever, the Board last audited the Treasurer's financial records and reports. However, both the Chairman and the other Commissioner told us they attended the required fire district commissioner training,[1] which should include content about the annual audits. In addition, the Treasurer did not prepare and file the 2025 AFR with OSC, or the AFRs for the previous two fiscal years, as required by GML Section 30.

Because the Board did not fulfill its oversight responsibilities, and the Treasurer did not fulfill her statutory responsibilities, transparency of the District's fiscal activities was diminished. As a result, District residents, taxpayers, OSC and other interested parties did not have access to the District's current fiscal condition.

Furthermore, had the Board conducted an annual audit of the Treasurer's records and reports, it may have identified that the Treasurer did not maintain property records for the District's capital assets,[2] and potentially helped remedy this issue.

The report includes seven recommendations that, if implemented, will improve the Board's oversight and transparency of the District's financial activities. District officials generally agreed with our recommendations and their response is included in Appendix B.

This audit was conducted pursuant to Article V, Section 1 of the State Constitution and OSC's authority as set forth in Article 3 of GML. The audit's methodology and standards are included in Appendix C.

The Board has the responsibility to initiate corrective action. Pursuant to Section 181-b of Town Law, a written corrective action plan (CAP) that addresses the findings and recommendations in this report must be prepared and forwarded to OSC within 90 days. To the extent practicable, implementation of the CAP must begin by the end of the next fiscal year. For more information on preparing and filing the CAP, please refer to the OSC

1 See: https://www.osc.ny.gov/local-government/resources/fire-district-information-fire-district-training-providers
2 A capital asset is defined as a tangible or intangible asset that is used in operations and that has a useful life of more than one year, such as vehicles, machinery and equipment.

brochure, *Responding to an OSC Audit Report*, which was provided with the draft audit report. The Board is encouraged to make the CAP available for public review.

Transparency of Fiscal Activities: Findings and Recommendations

Fire districts are generally governed by an elected board, composed of a fixed number of fire commissioners who are responsible for overseeing the fire district's financial operations and the safeguarding of fire district resources. Furthermore, the board of fire commissioners should ensure that the treasurer provides it with all books, records, receipts, claim vouchers and canceled check images annually, as required by Town Law Section 177. This will enable the board of commissioners to annually audit the treasurer's books and records to help ensure that funds are accurately accounted for and that transactions are properly recorded.

Pursuant to GML Section 30, the fire district treasurer is responsible for preparing and filing with OSC, an annual report of the fire district's fiscal position, known as the AFR. After filing, the AFR is made available to the public on OSC's website.[3]

More details on the criteria used in this report, as well as resources OSC makes available to local officials that can help them improve operations, are included in Appendix A.

Finding 1 – The Board did not audit the Treasurer's records and reports.

The Board did not conduct an audit of the Treasurer's financial records and reports for fiscal year 2025, nor did it request the Treasurer's annual records. The Chairman and another Commissioner told us they were unaware the Board should conduct an annual audit, and therefore, it did not request the Treasurer to produce her records for an annual audit. However, they both told us they attended mandatory fire district commissioner training that should include content about these audits. The Treasurer told us she was aware of the requirement to annually provide her records and reports to the Board in accordance with Town Law Section 177; however, she did not prioritize this responsibility.

We reviewed the Treasurer's fiscal year 2025 records and reports using the same guidance OSC developed to help local officials fulfill their audit responsibilities. This guidance is in OSC's *Local Government Management Guide: Fiscal Oversight Responsibilities of the Governing Board* and is readily available on our website.[4]

We determined that the Treasurer did not maintain complete and accurate property records of the District's capital assets. Consequently, the Board could not readily determine whether all District assets were properly recorded, safeguarded and accounted for. Had the Board conducted an annual audit of the Treasurer's books and records, it may have identified, and potentially helped remedy this issue.

Although we did not identify other significant exceptions in our testing, a thorough annual audit helps the Board fulfill its oversight responsibilities by:

- Independently reviewing financial records, reports and bank reconciliations,
- Identifying deficiencies or irregularities, and
- Ensuring corrective action is taken if necessary.

Without an annual audit, sufficient oversight, errors, irregularities or misuse of District resources may occur and remain undetected.

3 https://www.osc.ny.gov/open-book-new-york
4 https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/publications/pdf/fiscal-oversight-responsibilities-of-the-governing-board.pdf

Recommendations

The Board should:

1. Conduct a thorough annual audit of the Treasurer's records and reports and ensure the Treasurer provides her records as required.
2. Attend relevant and beneficial training sessions to obtain a better understanding of its duties or consult with counsel, where appropriate. Training provided by OSC can be found at: www.osc.ny.gov/localgov/academy/index.htm
3. Ensure the Treasurer maintains complete and accurate property records for the District's capital assets.

The Treasurer should:

4. Submit her books, records, receipts, vouchers (i.e., claims) and canceled check images to the Board annually as required by Town Law.
5. Maintain complete and accurate property records for the District's capital assets.

Finding 2 – The Treasurer has not prepared and filed the 2025 AFR as required by GML.

The Treasurer, who started in 2016, had not prepared and filed with OSC the 2023 through 2025 fiscal years' AFRs,[5] as required by GML. In addition, the last filed AFR, for the year ending December 31, 2022, was filed on June 27, 2023, 118 days late. As of June 23, 2026, the delinquent AFRs were between 845 and 114 days late.

The Treasurer told us that she was aware of the requirement to file the AFR with OSC within 60 days after the fiscal year's end, and that the AFRs between 2023 and 2025 were not filed. She explained that competing personal priorities made it difficult for her to catch up on the filings. The Chairman told us that he was aware the District was behind in filing the AFRs and that the matter was discussed during Board meetings, including that the Treasurer told the Board she requested an extension from OSC and was working to complete the overdue AFRs. However, an AFR filing extension only provides the District with an additional 60 days to file. Furthermore, because it is the Board's responsibility to oversee the general management and control of the District's finances, it should ensure that the Treasurer prepares and files the AFR with OSC as required.

Because the Treasurer did not prepare and file the financial information, taxpayers, residents, OSC and other interested parties were not able to properly assess the District's fiscal activities and condition using District records to make informed decisions. As such, we analyzed the fund balances of the District's general fund for fiscal years 2023 to 2025.[6] Although we did not identify any significant fiscal concerns, the Board should ensure that the Treasurer files the AFR in accordance with statutory requirements, in an effort to increase overall transparency of the District's fiscal activities with the public.

Recommendations

The Treasurer should:

6. Prepare and file the delinquent AFRs with OSC as required by GML.

The Board should ensure:

7. The Treasurer prepares and files the delinquent AFRs, as required by GML.

5 OSC's website provides more information on AFR non-filers and the District's current AFR filing status at: https://web.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/afr-non-filers/.

6 See Appendix C for methodology

Appendix A: Profile, Criteria and Resources

Profile

The District provides fire protection services to the Town of Porter, and to portions of the Towns of Lewiston and Wilson located in Niagara County. The District is governed by the elected Board, composed of five Commissioners, including one who serves as Chairman. The Board is responsible for overseeing the District's financial operations and safeguarding its resources. As the District's chief fiscal officer since 2016, the appointed Treasurer is responsible for the custody of all District funds, keeping accounts of all receipts and expenditures, and depositing all funds received in a timely manner. The District appointed a Commissioner as Secretary who is responsible for maintaining the Board meeting minutes and official District documents.

Criteria

A fire district treasurer is responsible for maintaining the fire district's financial records and reports. The accounting records should be up to date and should document assets, liabilities, fund balance and results of operations (revenues and expenditures) for each fire district fund. The treasurer must maintain an accurate and complete accounting of all funds received and disbursed, and deposit and secure fire district funds within 10 days of receipt, as required by Town Law Section 177. A fire district treasurer's financial books and records can include:

- Cash receipt and disbursement transactions,
- Cash reconciliations,
- Receivables,
- Investment records,
- Deposit protections,
- Indebtedness and property records,
- Payrolls, and
- Financial reports.

Town Law Section 177 requires a fire district treasurer to submit their books, records, receipts, claims vouchers and canceled check images to the board annually so the board can conduct an audit of the treasurer's records.[7]

Audits provide the board with the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of fiscal activities and help ensure that adequate board oversight is maintained over fire district operations. An annual audit also provides independent verification that transactions are properly recorded, that fire district funds are properly accounted for and whether any significant fiscal concerns exist.

An audit of the fire district treasurer's records should be thorough and sufficiently detailed to determine that the following minimum concerns are met:

- Financial records are complete and up to date,
- Transactions are recorded properly,
- Reconciliations are performed monthly, and
- Required reports are made in a timely and accurate manner.

7 Town Law Section 181-b requires a board to obtain an annual audit by a certified public accountant (CPA) or an independent public accountant if the fire district has revenues of $400,000 or more.

Based on the financial records and reports maintained by the fire district treasurer and the annual accounting provided to the board, GML Section 30 requires the fire district treasurer to prepare and file the AFR of the fire district's fiscal position and results of operations with OSC within 60 days after the close of the fiscal year. After filing, the AFR fiscal information is available to the public on the OSC website.[8]

Additional Resources

OSC's *Local Government Management Guides,* and other informational resources that are available on OSC's website to help officials understand and perform their responsibilities, include:

- *Local Government Management Guide: Fiscal Oversight Responsibilities of the Governing Board* https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/publications/pdf/fiscal-oversight-responsibilities-of-the-governing-board.pdf
- Fire District Information: https://www.osc.ny.gov/local-government/resources/fire-district-information

In addition, local officials can use OSC's website to search for audits, resources, publications and training for officials at: https://www.osc.ny.gov/local-government.

8 https://www.osc.ny.gov/open-book-new-york

Appendix B: Response From District Officials

The content below is a reproduced copy of the original response letter issued by District officials, is reformatted to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)*,[9] and may have included changes to spelling and grammar. The substance of the content was not changed.

Ransomville Fire District #1
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RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
RANSOMVILLE FIRE DISTRICT
TOWN OF PORTER, NIAGARA COUNTY, NEW YORK

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE AND SUBMIT CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN
OSC AUDIT REPORT: TRANSPARENCY OF FISCAL ACTIVITIES (S9-26-36)

WHEREAS, the Office of the New York State Comptroller (OSC) conducted an audit of the fiscal activities of the Ransomville Fire District, titled Transparency of Fiscal Activities (S9-26-36); and

WHEREAS, the Board of Fire Commissioners has reviewed the findings and recommendations contained within the final audit report; and

WHEREAS New York State General Municipal Law 35 and Town Law require the Board of Fire Commissioners to adopt and submit a formal Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to the OSC within ninety (90) days of receiving the final report; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Board of Fire Commissioners hereby approves, adopts, and authorizes the implementation of the attached Corrective Action Plan addressing the operational and statutory oversight weaknesses identified by the OSC; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the President of the Board of Fire Commissioners is authorized and directed to sign this resolution and the attached Corrective Action Plan, and forward the documents to the Office of the New York State Comptroller in fulfillment of all statutory obligations.

[Redacted officials' personal information]

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN (CAP)
OSC AUDIT REPORT: TRANSPARENCY OF FISCAL ACTIVITIES (S9-26-36)
SUBMITTED BY: BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS, RANSOMVILLE FIRE DISTRICT

1. Mandatory Annual Board Auditing (Town Law Section 177)
    - OSC Recommendation: The Board must conduct annual internal audits of the Fire District's financial records and reports in accordance with Town Law Section 177.
    - Corrective Action: The Board has institutionalized a hard annual deadline to execute thorough internal fiscal check-ups. The review will strictly leverage the checklists provided in the OSC's Fiscal Oversight Responsibilities Guide.
    - Implementation Date: January 20th (Annually)
    - Assigned Personnel: Board of Fire Commissioners

9 https://www.ada.gov/resources/2024-03-08-web-rule/#highlights-of-the-requirements-in-the-rule

2. Elimination of the Financial Reporting Backlog (GML Section 30)
    - OSC Recommendation: The District must eliminate its financial reporting backlog and ensure future Annual Financial Reports (AFR) are filed with the OSC within statutory deadlines under General Municipal Law Section 30.
    - Corrective Action: The District has cleared its historical backlogs, as reflected in real-time corrections on the OSC portal. The 2023 AFR was certified and submitted on July 09, 2026. The 2024 AFR was certified and submitted on September 21, 2026. The final remaining delinquency, the 2025 AFR, is actively underway.
    - Implementation Date: November 30, 2026 (for the 2025 AFR submission)
    - Assigned Personnel: District Treasurer
3. Capital Asset Register Implementation
    - OSC Recommendation: The District should establish, maintain, and routinely update a comprehensive fixed asset register to properly track and account for all physical assets.
    - Corrective Action: The Treasurer is constructing a localized inventory tracking sheet for physical assets, including machinery, vehicles, and apparatus. This tracking data will undergo formal validation reviews alongside the baseline annual audit process.
    - Implementation Date: Concurrent with the Annual Audit process (Annually by January 20th)
    - Assigned Personnel: District Treasurer/ Board of Fire Commissioners
4. Commissioner Educational Tracks
    - OSC Recommendation: The Board must ensure that all commissioners receive proper training regarding their fiscal and operational oversight responsibilities to prevent compliance gaps.
    - Corrective Action: Sitting and newly elected board members will register for and complete structural municipal management tracks hosted by certified Fire District Training Providers to prevent future compliance vulnerabilities.
    - Implementation Date: Ongoing, upon election or appointment
    - Assigned Personnel: Board of Fire Commissioners

SUBMITTED BY:

Joseph Pardee
Chairman/President, Board of Fire Commissioners
Date: October 21, 2026

Appendix C: Audit Methodology and Standards

OSC auditors obtained an understanding of internal controls that were deemed significant within the context of the audit objective and assessed those controls. Information related to the scope of our work on internal controls, as well as the work performed in our audit procedures to achieve the audit objective and obtain valid audit evidence, included the following:

- We reviewed Board meeting minutes and interviewed the Treasurer, Secretary, Chairman and one Commissioner to gain an understanding of the District's operations, the Treasurer's fiscal recordkeeping and reporting and the Board's oversight regarding annual audits, filing of the AFR and review of financial reports.
- We performed an annual audit of the Treasurer's records for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2025, using OSC guidance available to the Commissioners. Using the OSC-developed guidance,[10] we made observations and reviewed:
    - All collections using cash receipt source documentation including copies of remitted checks, bank deposit slip receipts, bank statements and hall rental agreements on file for all 13 cash receipts in fiscal year 2025 totaling $337,264 to determine whether the Treasurer deposited the cash collections into the District's bank accounts in a timely manner, as required, and recorded the receipts in the accounting records. We determined there were no exceptions.
    - All 244 check disbursements totaling $264,961 recorded in the cash disbursements ledger for fiscal year 2025, to determine whether they were Board-approved, adequately supported and for proper District purposes. We reviewed canceled check images from the bank and Board-audited claim voucher packets to determine the payee, amount and purpose. We determined there were no exceptions.
    - All 14 non-payroll electronic disbursements totaling $1,746 made during 2025 to determine whether they were Board-approved, adequately supported, and for proper District purposes. We determined there were no exceptions.
    - The December 2025 reconciliations for all four District bank accounts and compared the bank balances to the cash balances recorded in the accounting records. We traced reconciling items to subsequent bank statements and canceled check images to verify whether the outstanding checks and deposits in transit were cleared. We used our professional judgment to select December 2025 because it was the last month of the twelve-month fiscal year 2025. We determined there were no exceptions.
    - Collateral statements from the District's financial institution to determine whether deposits of all District funds were secured and protected and we determined there were no exceptions.
    - The District's equipment and fixed assets records to determine whether property records were maintained, and up to date, and whether physical inventories were performed and compared to the records.
    - The 2025 fiscal year canceled checks payable to the Treasurer, and the Board-approved pay rates observed in the Board meeting minutes to determine whether amounts paid by the Treasurer were according to Board-approved pay rates. We communicated minor exceptions to District officials.
- We traced all checks payable to the Treasurer, Secretary and Commissioners from the Treasurer's cash disbursement ledger and the bank canceled check images to the source documentation in the claim voucher packets to determine whether the checks were for the same payee and amount and

10 See *supra*, footnote 4. Note that receivables and investment and indebtedness records were not applicable to the District

were for proper District purposes. We used our professional judgment to select these individuals because of their role in the District's fiscal activities. We found no exceptions.

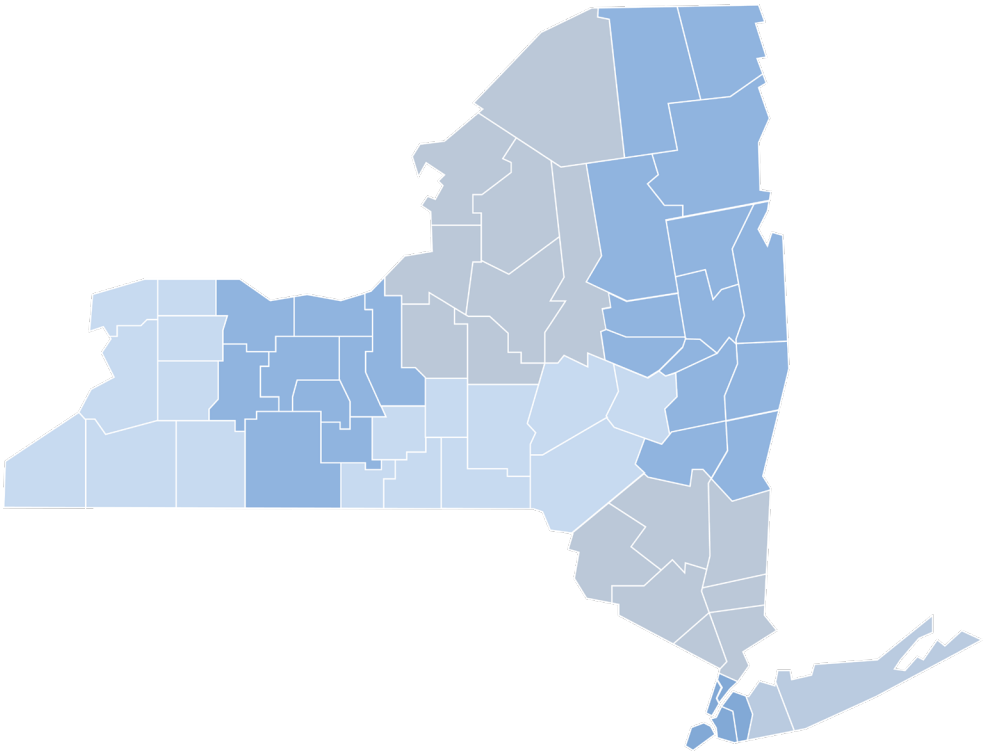
- We determined whether the District experienced any significant fiscal concerns by reviewing the District's year-end unrestricted fund balances from 2023 through 2025 and compared them to the 2024 through 2026 fiscal year's budgeted appropriations to reflect the District's ability to fund its adopted 2024, 2025, and 2026 budgeted appropriations.

OSC auditors conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards (GAGAS). Those standards require that auditors plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for the findings and conclusions based on the audit objective. Auditors believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for the findings and conclusions based on the audit objective.

Unless otherwise indicated in this report, samples for testing were selected based on professional judgment, as it was not the intent to project the results onto the entire population. Where applicable, information is presented concerning the value and/or size of the relevant population and the sample selected for examination.

Questions?

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