

**BOARD OF FIRE
COMMISSIONERS**

LOWER TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT #3

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER, NEW JERSEY

AUDIT REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED

DECEMBER 31, 2023

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
LOWER TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT #3**

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FINANCIAL SECTION



FORD - SCOTT

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Independent Auditor's Report

To the Board of Commissioners
of Lower Township Fire District #3
Erma, New Jersey 08204

Report on the Financial Statements

Opinions

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of the governmental activities and each major fund of the Board of Commissioners of Lower Township Fire District #3 (the "Fire District"), State of New Jersey, as of and for the year ended December 31, 2023, and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise the District's basic financial statements as listed in the table of contents.

Unmodified Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position of the governmental activities and each major fund of the Board of Commissioners of Lower Township Fire District #3, State of New Jersey, as of December 31, 2023, and the respective changes in financial position for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and the audit requirements prescribed by the Division of Local Government Services, Department of Community Affairs, State of New Jersey (the "Division"). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of the Fire District and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinions.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principles. Management is also responsible for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatements, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Fire District's ability to continue as a going concern for twelve months beyond the financial statement date, including any currently known information that may raise substantial doubt shortly thereafter.

Auditor's Responsibility for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements, as a whole, are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinions. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS, Government Auditing Standards and audit requirements prescribed by the Division of Local Government Services will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from an error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgement made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS, Government Auditing Standards and audit requirements prescribed by the Division of Local Government Services, we:

- exercise professional judgement and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.
- Obtain an understanding of the internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Fire District's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.
- Conclude whether in our judgement there are conditions or events considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Fire District's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charge with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control – related matters that we identified during the audit.

Required Supplementary Information

Accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America require that the *management's discussion and analysis and budgetary comparison information* identified in the table of contents be presented to supplement the basic financial statements. Such information, although not a part of the basic financial statements, is required by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board who considers it to be an essential part of financial reporting for placing the basic financial statements in an appropriate operational, economic, or historical context. We have applied certain limited procedures to the required supplementary information in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America, which consisted of inquiries of management about the methods of preparing the information and comparing the information for consistency with management's responses to our inquiries, the basic financial statements, and other knowledge we obtained during our audit of the basic financial statements.

We do not express an opinion or provide any assurance on the information because the limited procedures do not provide us with sufficient evidence to express an opinion or provide any assurance.

Other Reporting Required by *Government Auditing Standards*

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we have also issued our report dated July 3, 2024, on our consideration of the Fire District's, internal control over financial reporting and on our tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements and other matters. The purpose of that report is to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over financial reporting and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on internal control over financial reporting or on compliance. That report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering the Fire District's internal control over financial reporting and compliance.

Very truly yours,

FORD, SCOTT & ASSOCIATES, L.L.C.

**FORD, SCOTT & ASSOCIATES, L.L.C.
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS**

Leon P. Costello

**Leon P. Costello
Certified Public Accountant
Registered Municipal Accountant
No. 393**

July 3, 2024

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REQUIRED SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION - PART I

MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

This section of the Township of Lower Fire District #3's annual financial report presents management's analysis of the District's financial condition and activities for the year. This information should be read in conjunction with the financial statements.

Overview:

The Township of Lower Fire District #3, hereafter referred to as the "District," is a primary governmental entity located in the Township of Lower, County of Cape May, State of New Jersey. The Fire District is run by a board of commissioners who are elected into office by the registered voters of District #3 in the Township of Lower.

The District is responsible for establishing a budget and maintaining fiscal control over public funds that are used to provide for the safety and welfare of the residents located within District #3 in the Township of Lower. Under existing statute, the District is exempt from both Federal and State taxes.

The accounts of the District are maintained in accordance with the principles of "fund accounting". The General Fund is used to account for all revenues and expenditures applicable to the general operations of the District. A Capital Fund is also maintained for accounting of expenditures for property, plant and equipment financed by debt authorized.

Funding is acquired through property tax levies. In 2023 the total tax levy was \$868,201.00, which corresponds to a property tax rate of 0.073 per \$100 of assessed valuation.

Financial Highlights

Key financial highlights for 2023 are as follows:

- In total, net position increased \$430,273.51, which represents approximately a 16% increase from 2022 as a result of revenues increasing.
- General Revenues in the form of property tax assessments accounted for \$868,201.00 or 92% of the total revenues of \$947,816.91.
- Total assets of governmental activities increased by \$1,042,350.26 as cash and cash equivalents increased by \$1,032,725.91 and capital assets increased \$9,624.35.
- The Fire District had \$517,543.40 in expenses. General revenues (primarily property tax assessments) were in the amount of \$947,816.91.

Reporting the Fire District as a Whole

The Statement of Net Position and the Statement of Activities report information about the District as a whole. These statements include all assets and liabilities using the full accrual basis of accounting. All of the current year's revenues and expenses are taken into account when the revenue is earned or the expense is incurred. These two statements report the District's net position and changes in them. One can think of the District's net position, the difference between assets and liabilities, as one way to measure the District's financial health, or financial position. Over time, increases or decreases in the District's net position are one indicator of whether its financial position is improving or deteriorating. The reader will, however, need to consider other non-financial factors, such as changes in the District's tax base, to assess the overall health of the District.

The District's activities are reported as governmental activities. The District is primarily financed through the levying of property taxes.

The District's basic services are reported in governmental funds, which focus on how money flows into and out of those funds and the balances remaining at year-end that are available for spending. The fund is reported using the modified accrual method of accounting, which measures cash and all other financial assets that can readily be converted to cash. The governmental fund statements provide a detailed short-term view of the District's general government operations and the basic services it provides.

MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

Governmental fund information helps you determine whether there are more or fewer financial resources that can be spent in the near future to finance the District's programs. We describe the differences between governmental activities and governmental funds in a reconciliation detailed on Exhibit F.

The Fire District as a Whole

Recall that the Statement of Net Position provides the perspective of the Fire District as a whole. Net Position may serve over time as a useful indicator of a government's financial position.

The Fire District's financial position is the product of several financial transactions including the net results of activities, the acquisition and disposal of capital assets, and the depreciation of capital assets.

Table 1 provides a summary of the Fire District's net position for 2023 and 2022.

Table 1		
Net Position		
	2023	2022
Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 2,363,375.40	1,330,649.49
Capital Assets	2,477,456.82	2,467,832.47
Total Assets	4,840,832.22	3,798,481.96
Liabilities		
Other Liabilities	1,762,132.05	1,150,055.30
Total Liabilities	1,762,132.05	1,150,055.30
Net Position		
Invested in Capital Assets	854,456.82	1,717,832.47
Restricted for Other Purposes	100,000.33	100,000.33
Unrestricted	2,124,243.02	830,593.86
Total Net Position	\$ 3,078,700.17	2,648,426.66

The Fire District's net position was \$3,078,700.17 on December 31, 2023. This was a 16% increase from December 31, 2022.

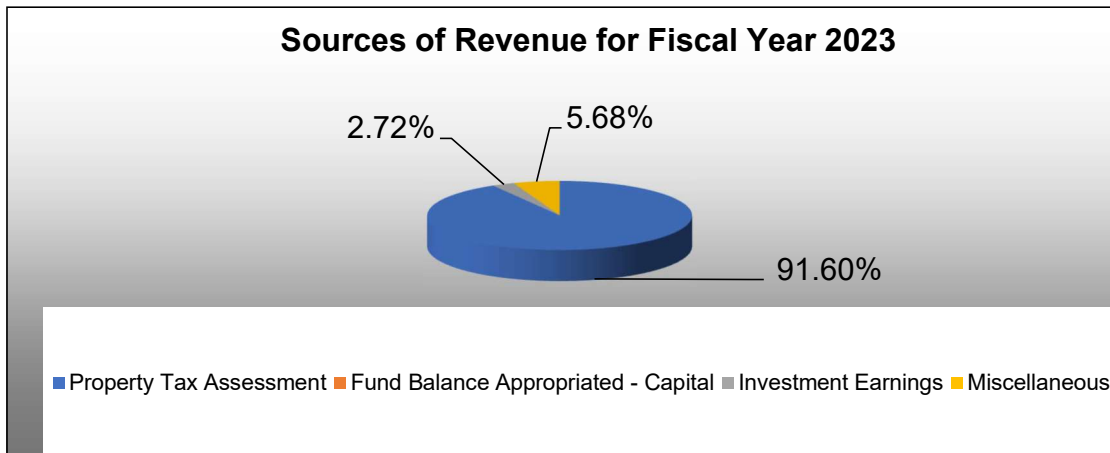
MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

Table 2 shows changes in net position for fiscal year 2023 and 2022.

Table 2		2023	2022
Changes in Net Position		2023	2022
Revenues			
General Revenues:			
Property Tax Assessments	\$	868,201.00	859,176.00
Fund Balance Appropriated - Capital		-	354,487.00
Supplemental Fire Services Aid		1,306.24	1,306.24
Interest on Investments		25,809.67	6,186.59
Other		52,500.00	26,509.63
Total Revenues		947,816.91	1,247,665.46
Program Expenses			
Administration		31,248.06	26,998.00
Cost of Operations		230,102.80	354,103.94
Depreciation		239,375.65	269,019.26
Capital		-	354,487.00
Debt Service		16,816.89	15,843.83
Total Expenses		517,543.40	1,020,452.03
Less: Excess of Revenue over Expenditures			
Add: Deficiency of Expenditures over Revenues			
Increase (Decrease) in Net Position	\$	430,273.51	227,213.43

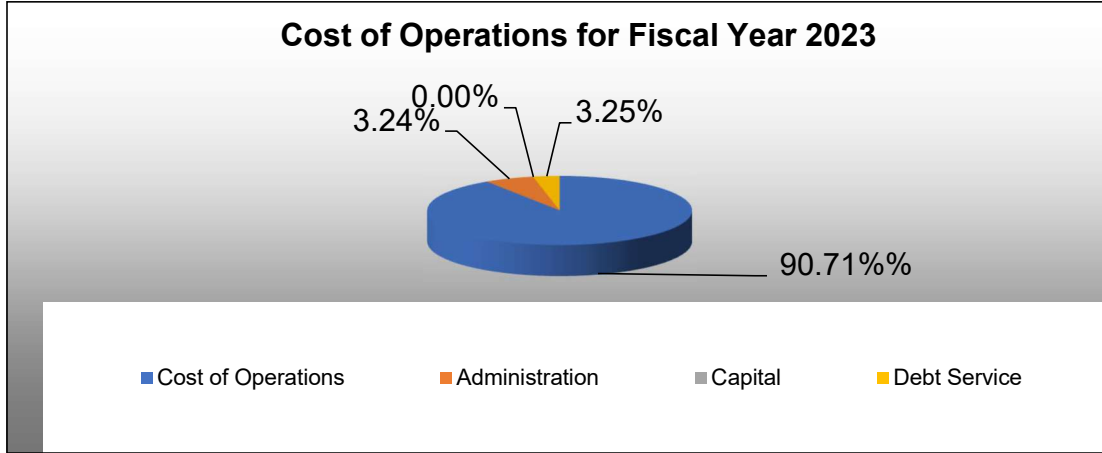
Governmental Activities

The property tax assessments made up 92% of revenues. The investment earnings, supplemental fire services, and EMS rent made up the remaining 8% of revenues for fiscal year 2023. The Fire District's total revenues were \$947,816.91 for the year ended December 31, 2023.



MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

The total cost of operations was \$517,543.40.



Business-Type Activities

The Fire District does not have any business-type activities.

The Fire District's Funds

The governmental fund (general fund presented in the fund-based statements) is accounted for using the modified accrual basis of accounting. Total revenues amounted to \$963,722.91 and expenditures were \$625,803.37.

As demonstrated by the various statements and schedules included in the financial section of this report, the Fire District continues to meet its responsibility for sound financial management. The following schedules present a summary of the revenues of the governmental funds for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2023, and the amount and percentage of total revenues compared to prior year revenues.

Revenue	2023 Amount	Percentage of Total	2022 Amount	Percentage of Total
Property Taxes	\$ 868,201.00	90.09%	859,176.00	68.00%
Fund Balance Appropriated - Capital	-	0.00%	354,487.00	28.05%
Supplemental Fire Services Aid	1,306.24	0.14%	1,306.24	0.10%
Investment Earnings	25,809.67	2.68%	6,186.59	0.49%
Miscellaneous	68,406.00	7.10%	42,415.63	3.36%
Total	\$ 963,722.91	100.00%	1,263,571.46	100.00%

The following schedule represents a summary of governmental fund expenditures for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2023, and the percentage of total expenditures compared to prior year amounts.

Expenditures	2023 Amount	Percentage of Total	2022 Amount	Percentage of Total
Administration	\$ 31,248.06	4.99%	26,998.00	4.09%
Operation & Maintenance	470,168.80	75.13%	393,383.09	59.54%
Debt Service	124,386.51	19.88%	240,362.51	36.38%
Total	\$ 625,803.37	100.00%	660,743.60	100.00%

MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

General Fund Budgeting Highlights

The Fire District's budget is prepared according to New Jersey law, and is based on accounting for certain transactions on a basis of cash receipts, disbursements, and encumbrances. The most significant budgeted fund is the General Fund.

For the Future

The Township of Lower Fire District #3 is in good financial condition presently.

In conclusion, the Township of Lower Fire District #3 has committed itself to financial excellence for many years. The Fire District plans to continue its sound fiscal management to meet the challenges of the future.

This financial report is designed to provide our citizens, taxpayers, investors and creditors with a general overview of the Fire District's finances and to show the Fire District's accountability for the money it receives. If you have questions about this report or need additional information, contact the Chairman of the Board of Fire Commissioners, Lower Township Fire District #3, P.O. Box 162, Rio Grande, N.J. 08204.

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FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER FIRE DISTRICT #3
STATEMENT OF NET POSITION
DECEMBER 31, 2023

		<u>Governmental Activities</u>
ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$	1,380,375.40
Restricted Cash		983,000.00
Capital Assets:		
Capital Assets Being Depreciated, Net		2,477,456.82
		<hr/>
Total Assets		<u><u>4,840,832.22</u></u>
 LIABILITIES		
Accounts Payable		6,374.67
Due to LOSAP		24,840.00
Accrued Interest Payable		2,430.38
Reserve for Generator & Signage Upgrades		105,487.00
Noncurrent Liabilities		
Due Within One Year		190,000.00
Due Beyond One Year		1,433,000.00
		<hr/>
Total Liabilities		<u><u>1,762,132.05</u></u>
 NET POSITION		
Invested in Capital Assets		854,456.82
Assigned to:		
Subsequent Year's Expenditures		100,000.00
Reserved for Capital Projects		0.33
Unrestricted		2,124,243.02
		<hr/>
Total Net Position	\$	<u><u>3,078,700.17</u></u>

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER FIRE DISTRICT #3
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Program Revenue Fees, Fines & Charges For Services</u>	<u>Net (Expenses)/Revenues and Changes in Net Position</u>
			<u>Governmental Activities</u>
Governmental Activities:			
Fire Protection:			
Administration	\$ 31,248.06		(31,248.06)
Cost of Providing Services	246,008.80	15,906.00	(230,102.80)
Depreciation	239,375.65		(239,375.65)
Interest on Long-Term Debt	16,816.89		(16,816.89)
Total Expenses	<u>533,449.40</u>	<u>15,906.00</u>	<u>(517,543.40)</u>
Total Governmental Activities	<u>\$ 533,449.40</u>	<u>15,906.00</u>	<u>(517,543.40)</u>
General Revenues:			
Taxes			868,201.00
Interest			25,809.67
Other Revenue			53,806.24
Total General Revenues			<u>947,816.91</u>
Change in Net Position			430,273.51
Net Position - Beginning			2,648,426.66
Net Position - Ending		\$	<u><u>3,078,700.17</u></u>

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER FIRE DISTRICT #3
BALANCE SHEET
GOVERNMENTAL FUNDS
DECEMBER 31, 2023

	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Capital Fund</u>	<u>Total Governmental Funds</u>
ASSETS			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 1,380,375.40		1,380,375.40
Due from Other Funds		0.33	0.33
Total Assets	<u>1,380,375.40</u>	<u>0.33</u>	<u>1,380,375.73</u>
LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES			
Accounts Payable	6,374.67		6,374.67
Due to Capital	0.33		0.33
Due to LOSAP	24,840.00		24,840.00
Reserve for Generator & Signage Upgrades	105,487.00		105,487.00
Total Liabilities	<u>136,702.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>136,702.00</u>
FUND BALANCE			
Assigned to:			
Subsequent Year's Expenditures	100,000.00		100,000.00
Reserved for Capital Projects		0.33	0.33
Unassigned Fund Balance	<u>1,143,673.40</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>1,143,673.40</u>
	<u>1,243,673.40</u>	<u>0.33</u>	<u>1,243,673.73</u>
Total Liabilities and Fund Balances	<u>\$ 1,380,375.40</u>	<u>0.33</u>	<u>1,380,375.73</u>

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER FIRE DISTRICT #3
RECONCILIATION OF THE GOVERNMENTAL FUND BALANCE SHEET
TO THE STATEMENT OF NET POSITION
DECEMBER 31, 2023

Total fund balances for governmental funds	\$ 1,243,673.73
Capital assets used in governmental activities are not resources and therefore are not reported in the funds. The cost of the assets is \$7,050,893.42 and the accumulated depreciation is \$4,573,436.60	2,477,456.82
Long-term liabilities are not due and payable in the current period and therefore are not reported as liabilities in the funds.	(1,623,000.00)
Bond proceeds held in escrow for the purchase of a new fire apparatus	983,000.00
Interest on long-term debt in the statement of activities is accrued, regardless of when due.	(2,430.38)
Total net position of governmental activities	\$ <u><u>3,078,700.17</u></u>

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER FIRE DISTRICT #3
STATEMENT OF REVENUE, EXPENDITURES, AND CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES
GOVERNMENTAL FUNDS
DECEMBER 31, 2023

	General Fund	Capital Fund	Total Governmental Funds
REVENUES			
District Taxes	\$ 868,201.00	-	868,201.00
Supplemental Fire Services Aid	1,306.24	-	1,306.24
Interest on Deposits and Investments	25,809.67	-	25,809.67
Miscellaneous Revenue	52,500.00	-	52,500.00
EMS Rent	15,906.00	-	15,906.00
Total Revenues	<u>963,722.91</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>963,722.91</u>
EXPENDITURES			
Administrative	31,248.06		31,248.06
Fire Protection	444,453.37		444,453.37
Non-Bondable Assets	25,715.43		25,715.43
Debt Service:			-
Principal	110,000.00		110,000.00
Interest	14,386.51		14,386.51
Total Expenditures	<u>625,803.37</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>625,803.37</u>
Excess/(Deficit) of Revenues over Expenditures	<u>337,919.54</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>337,919.54</u>
Other Financing Sources/(Uses) (LOSAP) - Contribution (PL 1997, C 388)	<u>(24,840.00)</u>		<u>(24,840.00)</u>
Total Other Financing Sources/(Uses)	(24,840.00)	-	(24,840.00)
Net Change in Fund Balance	313,079.54	-	313,079.54
Fund Balance Beginning	930,593.86	0.33	930,594.19
Fund Balance Ending	<u>\$ 1,243,673.40</u>	<u>0.33</u>	<u>1,243,673.73</u>

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER FIRE DISTRICT #3
RECONCILIATION OF THE STATEMENT OF REVENUE, EXPENDITURES, AND CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES
GOVERNMENTAL FUNDS
DECEMBER 31, 2023

Net change in fund balance - total governmental funds	\$	313,079.54
<p>The change in net position for governmental activities in the statement of activities is different because:</p> <p>Capital outlays are reported in governmental funds as expenditures. However, on the statement of activities, the cost of those assets is allocated over their estimated useful lives as depreciation expense. This is the amount by which capital outlays exceeded depreciation in the current fiscal year.</p>		
Depreciation expense		(239,375.65)
Additions		249,000.00
<p>Repayment of debt principal is an expenditure in the governmental funds, but the repayment reduces long-term liabilities in the statement of net position and is not reported in the statement of activities.</p>		
Bonds Payable		110,000.00
<p>In the statement of activities, interest on long-term debt is accrued, regardless of when due. In the governmental funds, interest is reported when due. The accrued interest is a deduction in the reconciliation.</p>		
		(2,430.38)
Change in Net Position of Governmental Activities	\$	430,273.51

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER FIRE DISTRICT #3
STATEMENT OF FIDUCIARY NET ASSETS
FIDUCIARY FUNDS
DECEMBER 31, 2023
(UNAUDITED)

	Expendable Trust Fund
ASSETS	
Investments	\$ 551,020.44
Due from Other Funds	24,840.00
Total Assets	575,860.44
NET ASSETS	
Held in Trust for LOSAP	\$ 575,860.44

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NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

**Lower Township Fire District #3
Notes to Financial Statements
December 31, 2023**

NOTE 1: SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Lower Township Fire District #3 operates with an elected Board of Commissioners. The District performs fire protection services in the Township of Lower, Cape May County, New Jersey.

The financial statements of the Board of Commissioners of District #3, Township of Lower (the "District"), have been prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) as applied to governmental units. The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) is responsible for establishing GAAP for state and local governments through its pronouncements (Statements and Interpretations). The more significant accounting policies established in GAAP and used by the District are discussed below.

A. Reporting Entity

The District is an instrumentality/subordinate entity of the State of New Jersey, established to function as a taxing entity to provide fire suppression in the Erma area of Lower Township. The Board consists of five (5) elected officials and is responsible for the fiscal control of the District. A secretary and treasurer are appointed by the Board and are responsible for the administrative control of the District.

Lower Township Fire District #3 is not a component unit of any other financial reporting entity nor does the Fire District have any component units to be presented in accordance with Governmental Accounting Standards Board Statement No. 34.

B. Basic Financial Statements -Government-Wide Statements

The District's basic financial statements include both government-wide (reporting the District as a whole) and fund financial statements (reporting the District's major funds). Both the government-wide and fund financial statements categorize primary activities as either governmental or business type. The District has no business type activities. In the government-wide Statement of Net Position, the governmental column (a) is presented on a consolidated basis by column, (b) and is reported on a full accrual, economic resource basis, which recognizes all long-term assets and receivables as well as long-term debt and obligations. The District's net position is reported in three parts—invested in capital assets, net of related debt, restricted and unrestricted net position.

The government-wide Statement of Activities reports both the gross and net cost of each of the District's functions. The functions are also supported by general government revenues. The Statement of Activities reduces gross expenses (including depreciation) by related program revenues, operating and capital grants. Program revenues must be directly associated with the function. Operating grants include operating-specific and discretionary (either operating or capital) grants. The net costs (by function) are normally covered by general revenue (property taxes, intergovernmental revenues, interest income, etc). The District does not allocate indirect costs.

This government-wide focus is more on the sustainability of the District as an entity and the change in the District's net position resulting from the current year's activities.

C. Basic Financial Statements—Fund Financial Statements

The financial transactions of the District are reported in individual funds in the fund financial statements. Each fund is accounted for by providing a separate set of self-balancing accounts that comprises its assets, liabilities, reserves, fund equity, revenues and expenditures/expenses. The various funds are reported by generic classification within the financial statements.

**Lower Township Fire District #3
Notes to Financial Statements
December 31, 2023**

The following fund types are used by the District:

Governmental Funds:

The focus of the governmental funds' measurement (in the fund statements) is upon determination of financial position and changes in financial position (sources, uses, and balances of financial resources) rather than upon net income. The following is a description of the governmental funds of the District:

- a. A General fund is the general operating fund of the District. It is used to account for all financial resources except those required to be accounted for in another fund.
- b. A Capital Fund is maintained for the District, in which expenditures for property, plant, and equipment financed by debt is contained, as is the related debt issued and outstanding.

Fiduciary Funds of the District are:

- a. Expendable trust funds are used to account for assets held by the District as a trustee for individuals, other governments or other entities. Expendable trust funds account for assets where both the principal and interest may be spent. These are unaudited.

D. Basis of Accounting

Basis of accounting refers to the point at which revenues or expenditures/expenses are recognized in the accounts and reported in the financial statements. It relates to the timing of the measurements made regardless of the measurement focus applied.

1. Accrual:

The government-wide financial statements are presented on the accrual basis of accounting. Revenues are recognized when earned and expenses are recognized when incurred.

2. Modified Accrual:

The governmental funds financial statements are presented on the modified accrual basis of accounting. Under the modified accrual basis of accounting, revenues are recorded when susceptible to accrual; i.e., both measurable and available. "Available" means collectible within the current period or within 60 days after year end. Expenditures are generally recognized under the modified accrual basis of accounting when the related liability is incurred. The exception to this general rule is that principal and interest on general obligation long-term debt, if any, is recognized when due.

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Lower Township Fire District #3
Notes to Financial Statements
December 31, 2023

E. Financial Statement Amounts

1. Cash and Cash Equivalents:

The District has defined cash and cash equivalents to include cash on hand, demand deposits, and cash with fiscal agent.

2. Capital Assets:

Capital assets purchased or acquired are reported at historical cost or estimated historical cost. Contributed assets are reported at fair market value as of the date received. Additions, improvements and other capital outlays that significantly extend the useful life of an asset are capitalized. Other costs incurred for repairs and maintenance are expensed as incurred.

3. Fund Balances – Governmental Funds:

In the fund financial statements, governmental funds report the following classifications of fund balance:

- Non-spendable – includes amounts that cannot be spent because they are either not spendable in form or are legally or contractually required to be maintained intact.
- Restricted – includes amounts restricted by external sources (creditors, laws of other governments, etc.) or by constitutional provision or enabling legislation.
- Committed – includes amounts that can only be used for specific purposes. Committed fund balance is reported pursuant to resolutions passed by the Board of Commissioners, the District's highest level of decision making authority. Commitments may be modified or rescinded only through resolutions approved by the Board of Commissioners.
- Assigned – includes amounts that the District intends to use for a specific purpose, but do not meet the definition of restricted or committed fund balance. Under the District's policy, amounts may be assigned by the Board of Commissioners.
- Unassigned – includes amounts that have not been assigned to other funds or restricted, committed or assigned to a specific purpose within the General Fund. The District reports all amounts that meet the unrestricted General Fund Balance Policy described below as unassigned:

When an expenditure is incurred for purposes for which both restricted and unrestricted fund balance is available, the District considers restricted funds to have been spent first. When an expenditure is incurred for which committed, assigned, or unassigned fund balance are available, the District considers amounts to have been spent first out of committed funds, then assigned funds, and finally unassigned funds, as needed.

4. Revenues:

Substantially all governmental fund revenues are accrued. Property taxes are billed and collected within the same period in which the taxes are levied. Subsidies and grants to proprietary funds, which finance either capital or current operations, are reported as non-operating revenue. In applying GASB standards to grant revenues, the provider recognizes liabilities and expenses and the recipient recognizes receivables and revenue when the applicable eligibility requirements, including time requirements, are met. Resources transmitted before the eligibility requirements are met and reported as advances by the provider and deferred revenue by the recipient.

5. Expenditures:

Expenditures are recognized when the related fund liability is incurred. Inventory costs are reported in the period when inventory items are purchased.

**Lower Township Fire District #3
Notes to Financial Statements
December 31, 2023**

F. Budgets/Budgetary Control

Annual appropriated budgets are prepared each year for the general fund. The budgets are submitted to the Bureau of Authority Regulations Division of Local Government Services and are voted upon at the annual District's election. Budgets are prepared using the modified accrual basis of accounting. The legal level of budgetary control is established at line item accounts within each fund. All budget transfers must be approved by resolution of the Fire Commissioners, as well as the State of New Jersey. No material budget transfers were made during the year.

Formal budgetary integration into the accounting system is employed as a management control device during the year which complies with generally accepted accounting principles. Encumbrance accounting is also employed as an extension of formal budgetary integration in the government fund types. Unencumbered appropriations lapse at fiscal year end.

G. Use of Estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect certain reported amounts and disclosures. Accordingly, actual results could differ from those estimates.

H. Recent Accounting Pronouncements Not Yet Effective

In April 2022, the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) issued Statement No. 99, "Omnibus 2022". This statement, which is effective for periods beginning after June 15, 2022, and all reporting periods thereafter, will not have any effect on the District's financial reporting.

In June 2022, the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) issued Statement No. 100, "Accounting Changes and Error Corrections – an amendment of GASB Statement No. 62". This statement is effective for fiscal years beginning after June 15, 2023, and will not have any effect on the District's financial reporting.

In June 2022, the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) issued Statement No. 101, "Compensated Absences". This statement is effective for fiscal years beginning after December 15, 2023, and will not have any effect on the District's financial reporting.

In December 2023, the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) issued Statement No. 102, "Certain Risk Disclosures". This statement is effective for fiscal year beginning after June 15, 2024, and will not have any effect on the District's financial reporting.

NOTE 2: INVESTMENTS

Interest Rate Risk. The District does not have a formal investment policy that limits investment maturities as a means of managing its exposure to fair value losses arising from increasing interest rates. However, New Jersey Statutes 40A:5-15.1(a) limits the length of time for most investments to 397 days.

Credit Risk. New Jersey Statutes 40A:5-15.1(a) limits District investments to those specified in the Statutes. The type of allowable investments are Bonds of the United States of America or of the local unit or school districts of which the local unit is a part of: obligations of federal agencies not exceeding 397 days; government money market mutual funds; the State of New Jersey Cash Management Plan; local government investment pools; or repurchase of fully collateralized securities.

Concentration of Credit Risk. The District places no limit on the amount the District may invest in any one issuer.

Lower Township Fire District #3
Notes to Financial Statements
December 31, 2023

Unaudited Investments

As more fully described in Note #8, the District has created a Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP) for emergency service volunteers. The LOSAP investments are similar to those allowed in a deferred compensation program as specified in NJSA 43:15B-1 et. seq. except that all investments are retained in the name of the District. All investments are valued at fair value. In accordance with NJAC 5:30-14.37 the investments are maintained by Lincoln Financial Advisors, which is an authorized provider approved by the Division of Local Government Services. Information on the investments is not available at this time.

NOTE 3: CASH

Custodial Credit Risk – Deposits. Custodial credit risk is the risk that in the event of a bank failure, the government’s deposits may not be returned to it. The municipality’s policy is based on New Jersey Statutes requiring cash be deposited only in New Jersey based banking institutions that participate in the New Jersey Governmental Depository Protection Act (GUDPA) or in qualified investments established in New Jersey Statutes 40A:5-15.1(a) that are treated as cash equivalents. Under the act, all demand deposits are covered by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). Public funds owned by the District in excess of FDIC insured amounts are protected by GUDPA. However, GUDPA does not protect intermingled trust funds or fund that may pass to the District relative to the happening of a future condition. As of December 31, 2023, \$0 of the District’s bank balance of \$2,425,375.40 was exposed to custodial credit risk.

NOTE 4: GENERAL FIXED ASSETS

A summary of changes in general fixed assets for the year ended December 31, 2023 follows:

Governmental Activities	Beginning Balance	Additions	Retirements/ Adjustments	Ending Balance
Building & Improvements	\$ 3,138,395.80	\$ 249,000.00	\$ 761,560.67	\$ 4,148,956.47
Equipment	3,948,497.62		(1,046,560.67)	2,901,936.95
Totals at Historical Cost	7,086,893.42	249,000.00	(285,000.00)	7,050,893.42
Less Accumulated Depreciation for:				
Building & Improvements	(2,181,546.35)	(150,418.59)		(2,331,964.94)
Equipment	(2,437,514.60)	(88,957.06)	285,000.00	(2,241,471.66)
Total Accumulated Depreciation	(4,619,060.95)	(239,375.65)	285,000.00	(4,573,436.60)
Governmental Activities Capital Assets, Net	\$ 2,467,832.47	\$ 9,624.35	\$ -	\$ 2,477,456.82

**Lower Township Fire District #3
Notes to Financial Statements
December 31, 2023**

NOTE 5: DEBT SERVICE

The following tabulation presents the principal and interest requirements for the following year of district debt issued and outstanding:

<u>Year</u>		<u>Principal</u>	<u>Interest</u>	<u>Total</u>
2024	\$	190,000.00	57,279.99	247,279.99
2025		203,000.00	52,531.20	255,531.20
2026		217,000.00	46,009.50	263,009.50
2027		231,000.00	39,091.20	270,091.20
2028		235,000.00	31,879.80	266,879.80
2029-2033		547,000.00	80,153.40	627,153.40
		<u>\$ 1,623,000.00</u>	<u>306,945.09</u>	<u>1,929,945.09</u>

\$1,300,000 Serial Bonds dated December 31, 2016, due in annual installments through December 31, 2028, bearing interest at 2.07% per annum. The balance remaining as of December 31, 2023, is \$640,000.

\$983,000 Serial Bonds dated October 12, 2023, due in semi-annual installments through December 31, 2033, bearing interest at 4.740% per annum. The balance remaining as of December 31, 2023, is \$983,000.

NOTE 6: RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

The Fire District has signed an agreement with Erma Volunteer Fire Company. This agreement states that Erma Volunteer Fire Company will provide Lower Township Fire District #3 with necessary fire extinguishment services including manpower for a fee of \$54,000, made in four equal installments during the year.

The District is also involved in an interlocal services agreement with The Township of Lower, The Borough of Wildwood Crest, The Wildwood Crest Volunteer Fire Company, and Erma Volunteer Fire Company. This agreement states that Wildwood Crest will be first responders to all fire calls in the Wildwood Crest area that is of Lower Township jurisdiction, specifically Diamond Beach and Bayview Drive. As stated in the agreement, the District will pay \$92,500 to the Wildwood Crest Volunteer Fire Company for the services provided, and the Township of Lower will pay \$22,500 back to the District for their share of the agreement.

NOTE 7: RISK MANAGEMENT

The Fire District is exposed to various risks of loss related to torts, theft, casualty, errors and omissions and other losses for which the District carries commercial insurance. Settled claims have not exceeded insurance coverage in any of the past two years.

NOTE 8: LENGTH OF SERVICE AWARDS PROGRAM (UNAUDITED)

The voters of Lower Township Fire District #3 approved establishment of a Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAP) deferred compensation plan. This plan is made available to all bona fide eligible volunteers who are performing qualified services which is defined as firefighting and prevention services, emergency medical services and ambulance services pursuant to Section 457 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, except for provisions added by reason of the LOSAP as enacted into federal law in 1997. The establishment of this LOSAP will also comply with New Jersey Public Law 1997, Chapter 388 and the LOSAP document. The plan is administered by Lincoln Life Insurance Company and Lincoln Financial Group, its agent. The LOSAP Deferred Compensation Plan has not been audited.

**Lower Township Fire District #3
Notes to Financial Statements
December 31, 2023**

NOTE 9: NET POSITION

As of December 31, 2023, net position amounted to \$3,078,700.17.

NOTE 10: SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

The District has evaluated subsequent events through July 3, 2024, the date which the financial statements were available to be issued and no items were noted for disclosure.

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REQUIRED SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION - PART II

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER FIRE DISTRICT #3
GENERAL FUND
STATEMENT OF REVENUES, EXPENDITURES AND CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES -
BUDGET AND ACTUAL
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023

	Budget	Adjusted Final Budget	Actual	Variance - Over (Under)
Revenues:				
District Taxes	\$ 868,201.00	868,201.00	868,201.00	-
Fund Balance Appropriated - General	135,000.00	135,000.00		(135,000.00)
Supplemental Fire Services Aid	1,306.00	1,306.00	1,306.24	0.24
Interest on Deposits and Investments	3,500.00	3,500.00	25,809.67	22,309.67
Miscellaneous Revenue		-	52,500.00	52,500.00
EMS Rent	15,450.00	15,450.00	15,906.00	456.00
Total Revenues	1,023,457.00	1,023,457.00	963,722.91	(59,734.09)
Expenditures:				
Operating and Maintenance:				
Administration:				
Salaries and Wages	24,400.00	24,400.00	24,400.00	-
Election	2,200.00	7,200.00	6,848.06	351.94
Total Administration	26,600.00	31,600.00	31,248.06	351.94
Cost of Operations & Maintenance:				
Advertising	1,000.00	1,000.00	325.00	675.00
Insurance Premiums	50,000.00	60,000.00	59,365.62	634.38
Maintenance and Repairs	155,770.00	155,770.00	109,568.48	46,201.52
Professional Fees	25,700.00	48,700.00	47,384.00	1,316.00
Supplies	4,500.00	4,500.00	799.07	3,700.93
Fire Contract - Erma	54,000.00	54,000.00	54,000.00	-
Training and Education	15,000.00	15,000.00	5,225.00	9,775.00
Office Expenses	9,000.00	9,000.00	4,831.66	4,168.34
Utilities and Related Services	75,500.00	75,500.00	52,956.69	22,543.31
Fire Hydrant Rent	20,000.00	20,000.00	16,567.85	3,432.15
Bureau of Fire Safety	35,000.00	15,000.00	-	15,000.00
Contracted Services	95,000.00	95,000.00	93,430.00	1,570.00
Non Bondable Equipment - Other	256,000.00	256,000.00	25,715.43	230,284.57
Contingent	25,000.00	7,000.00	-	7,000.00
Total Cost of Operations and Maintenance	821,470.00	816,470.00	470,168.80	346,301.20
Debt Service:				
General Obligation Bonds - Principal	110,000.00	110,000.00	110,000.00	-
General Obligation Bonds - Interest	14,387.00	14,387.00	14,386.51	0.49
Total Debt Service	124,387.00	124,387.00	124,386.51	0.49
Total Expenditures	972,457.00	972,457.00	625,803.37	346,653.63
Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues Over Expenditures	51,000.00	51,000.00	337,919.54	286,919.54
Other Financing Sources (Uses):				
Operating Transfers In (Out): (LOSAP) - Contribution (PL 1997, C 388)	(51,000.00)	(51,000.00)	(24,840.00)	26,160.00
Total Other Financing (Uses)	(51,000.00)	(51,000.00)	(24,840.00)	26,160.00
Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues and Other Financing Sources Over (Under) Expenditures and Other Financing Uses	-	-	313,079.54	313,079.54
Fund Balances - Beginning of Year	930,593.86	930,593.86	930,593.86	-
Fund Balances - End of Year	\$ 930,593.86	930,593.86	1,243,673.40	313,079.54

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OTHER SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION



FORD - SCOTT

& ASSOCIATES, L.L.C.

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT
ON INTERNAL CONTROL OVER FINANCIAL REPORTING AND ON COMPLIANCE AND OTHER
MATTER BASED ON AN AUDIT OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS PERFORMED IN ACCORDANCE
WITH GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS

To the Board of Commissioners
Lower Township Fire District #3
Erma, New Jersey 08204

We have audited, in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America, standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and audit requirements prescribed by the Division of Local Government Services, Department of Community Affairs, State of New Jersey (the "Division"), the financial statements of the Township of Lower Fire District #3, State of New Jersey (the "District"), as of and for the year ended December 31, 2023, and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise the Fire District's basic financial statements, and have issued our report thereon dated July 3, 2024, which was qualified for the inclusion of unaudited LOSAP information.

Internal Control over Financial Reporting

In planning and performing our audit of the financial statements, we considered the District's internal control over financial reporting (internal control) to determine the audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances for the purpose of expressing our opinions on the financial statements, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the District's internal control. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on the effectiveness of the District's internal control.

Our consideration of the internal control over financial reporting was for the limited purpose described in the first paragraph of this section and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. Given these limitations, during our audit we did not identify any deficiencies in internal control that we consider to be material weaknesses. However, material weaknesses may exist that have not been identified.

A deficiency in internal control exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, misstatements on a timely basis. A material weakness is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control, such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the entity's financial statements will not be prevented, or detected and corrected on a timely basis. A significant deficiency is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

A significant deficiency is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance. We identified no deficiencies in internal control that we consider to be significant deficiencies.

Compliance and Other Matters

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the District's financial statements are free of material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of financial statement amounts. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion.

District's Responses to Findings

The District's response to the findings identified in our audit is described in the accompanying *schedule of findings and responses*. The District's response was not subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the financial statements and, accordingly, we express no opinion on it.

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control or on compliance. This report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with Government Auditing Standards in considering the entity's internal control and compliance. Accordingly, this communication is not suitable for any other purpose.

FORD, SCOTT & ASSOCIATES, L.L.C.
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

Leon P. Costello

Leon P. Costello
Certified Public Accountant
Registered Municipal Accountant
No. 393

July 3, 2024

THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF LOWER TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT #3
SCHEDULE OF FINDINGS AND RESPONSES
FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023
Schedule of Financial Statement Findings

None

**THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF LOWER TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT #3
SUMMARY SCHEDULE OF PRIOR YEAR AUDIT FINDINGS
AND RESPONSES AS PREPARED BY MANAGEMENT
FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

STATUS OF PRIOR YEAR FINDINGS

There were no prior year findings.