

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT
FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2024



SUSSEX COUNTY VOTECH SCHOOL DISTRICT LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT

REPORT SUMMARY FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2024

BACKGROUND

Performance audits are used to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization's operations. The objective of this performance audit is to provide management, the Sussex County Vocational Technical School District Board of Education and the State of Delaware with information to improve performance, public accountability, and transparency.

The purpose of this performance audit is to determine whether the District's operations over the collection and spending of local school district property tax funds complied with relevant laws and regulations. Our performance audit addressed the following areas:

- The tax rate setting process
- Payments for services and supplies
- Employee compensation and payroll processing

The Auditor of Accounts is mandated by 29 Del. C., §2906(f) to perform annual audits of local school district tax funds. Under Delaware Code¹, school districts may levy and collect taxes for school purposes upon the assessed value of all taxable real estate in the district

KEY INFORMATION AND FINDINGS

Performance audit testing of the rate-setting process revealed the District's management and Board of Education analyzed expected spending and set the FY 2024 tax rates to provide adequate revenues, as summarized here.

- Revenues from the District's debt service were not consistent with expenditures. See finding noted below.
- The District's debt service reserve of \$7,818,040 as of June 30, 2024 did not comply with the State of Delaware requirements.

Sussex County Vocational Technical School District Quick Facts

Students Served

1,323

Employees

434



SUSSEX COUNTY VOTECH SCHOOL DISTRICT LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT SUMMARY FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2024

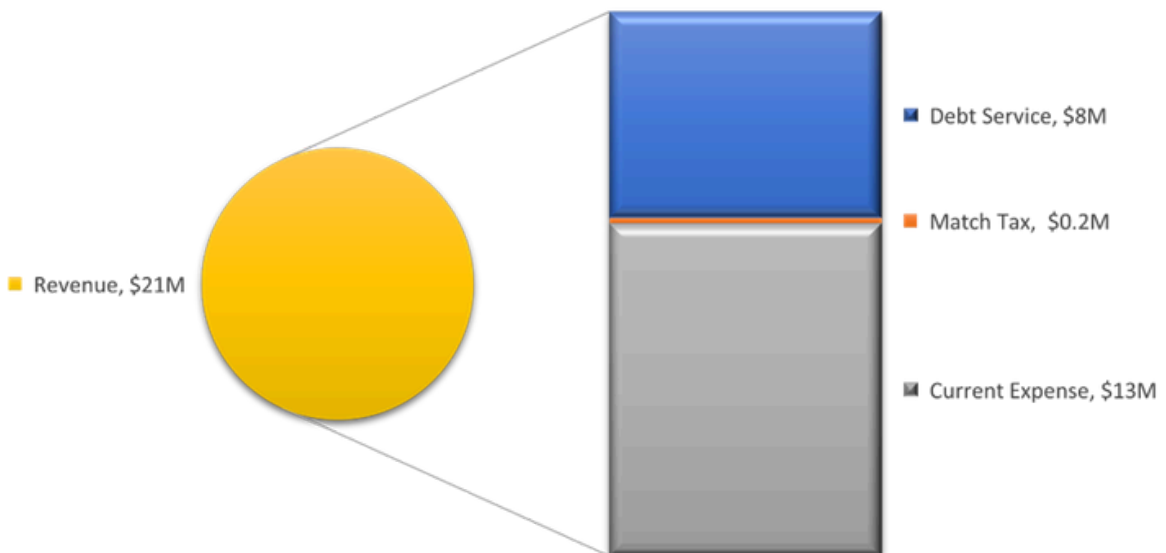
KEY INFORMATION AND FINDINGS CONTINUED

SOURCES OF REVENUE FOR FY24



The District allocates the local property tax funds received by their intended purpose (current expense and debt service taxes). We found that the allocation was consistent with the tax rates approved by the Board of Education. The four components of local school tax revenue allocations are summarized below:

Local School Tax Revenue Allocation (in \$ millions)





SUSSEX COUNTY VOTECH SCHOOL DISTRICT LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT SUMMARY FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2024

KEY INFORMATION AND FINDINGS CONTINUED

Findings may involve deficiencies in internal control; noncompliance with provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements; or instances of fraud. Performance audit testing of the District's expenditures did not uncover fraud, waste or abuse. The audit relied on various sources of information and methods to obtain an understanding of and assess Local Funds' processes for the School District, including inquiry, document reviews, risk assessment, and identification and performance assessment of key controls.

Testing identified the following conditions that are reported as findings:

- The District's debt reserve did not comply with the Attorney General Opinion 1W-024 from 1975 stated that a reserve is considered excessive when it is greater than 110% of total debt expenditures

The potential exposure to the State of the weaknesses in the purchasing internal controls is that they increase the risk that the District would make purchases without first obtaining the best prices and terms.

**SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT AND
INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT**

JUNE 30, 2024

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
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JUNE 30, 2024

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Independent Auditor's Report

Dr. Kevin E. Carson, Superintendent
Sussex County Vocational Technical School District
17099 County Seat Highway
Georgetown, Delaware 19947

Dear Dr. Carson:

We present the attached report which provides the results of our performance audit of the Sussex County Vocational Technical School District's Local Funds' design and operation of internal controls and compliance with applicable State and District regulations and policies during the fiscal year ended June 30, 2024. The Office of Auditor of Accounts engaged Belfint, Lyons & Shuman, P.A. to conduct a Performance Audit of the Sussex County Vocational Technical School District's Local Funds under OAOA Contract Number 22-CPA01_SDLOCALFUNDS.

The Office of Auditor of Accounts is authorized under 29 Del. C., §2906(f) to perform post-audits of local school district tax funds' budget and expenditures. Sussex County Vocational Technical School District's management is responsible for the design and operation of internal controls over Local Funds and compliance with the applicable Delaware Code sections.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* as issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Government Auditing Standards requires the auditor to perform limited procedures on the District's response to the findings identified in our audit and described in the accompanying *Schedule of Findings and Recommendations*. The District's response was not subject to the other auditing procedures applied in the performance audit.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Sussex County Vocational Technical School District, the Delaware Department of Education, and the Office of Auditor of Accounts, and is not intended to be, and should not be, used by anyone other than these specified parties. Under 29 Del. C. §10002(o), this report is a matter of public record, and its distribution is not limited. This report, as required by statute, will be provided to the Office of the Governor, Office of the Controller General, General Assembly, Office of the Attorney General, and Office of Management and Budget.

Belfint, Lyons & Shuman, P.A.

January 23, 2026
Wilmington, Delaware

cc: Lydia E. York - State Auditor
Kristen Hatfield - Business Manager

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT
JUNE 30, 2024

PERFORMANCE AUDIT OVERVIEW

Performance audits are audits that provide findings or conclusions based on an evaluation of sufficient, appropriate evidence against criteria. Performance audits provide objective analysis to assist management and those charged with governance and oversight in using the information to improve program performance and operations, reduce costs, facilitate decision making by parties with responsibility to oversee or initiate corrective action, and contribute to public accountability.

BACKGROUND

Overview - Any Delaware School District may, in addition to the amounts apportioned to it by the Delaware Department of Education (DOE) or appropriated to it by the General Assembly, levy and collect additional taxes for school purposes upon the assessed value of all taxable real estate in the district except real estate exempt from taxation per 14 Del. C., §2601¹. The purpose of this performance audit is to determine whether internal controls over the collection and use of these real estate tax funds were designed and operated in accordance with Delaware law and District policy. For purposes of this report, real estate taxes levied for school purposes are referred to as “Local Funds.” Although there are other types of Local Funds, they are not included in the scope of our performance audit.

Laws and Regulations - The school districts’ authority to levy taxes is governed by 14 Del. C., Ch. 19 for nonvocational districts and by 14 Del. C., Ch. 26 for vocational districts. The legislative provisions and other policies relevant to local school taxes are summarized below. There are four categories of local school taxes: current expense, debt service, tuition, and match taxes summarized as follows:

Current Expense - Current expense tax rates are levied for general operation expenses incurred by the school district. Rate increases are approved via voter referendum. Vocational school districts do not require a referendum to increase their current expense rate as the rate is established by 14 Del. C., §2601.

Debt Service - Debt service tax rates are levied to cover the local share of the principal and interest payments on bonds funding major capital projects, which per Delaware Administrative Code Section 401, *Major Capital Improvement Program*, are projects costing \$1,000,000 or more. The local share of major capital projects is between 20% and 40% of the total cost per 29 Del. C., §7503(b) with the remaining balance financed by the State of Delaware. The project must be approved by the DOE and bond issuances are authorized via voter referendum. Per 14 Del. C., §2116 and §2118(a), with a passing referendum, districts are authorized to levy a debt service tax sufficient to cover the local share of annual principal and interest payments plus 10% for expected delinquencies.

¹ 14 Del § 2601 establishes vocational School Districts current tax rate.

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024

BACKGROUND - CONTINUED

Laws and Regulations - Continued

Debt Service - Continued

Vocational schools do not require a referendum to increase their debt service rate. Per 29 Del. C., §7503(b), the bond authorization act in which the project is included authorizes the vocational district to levy taxes sufficient to cover the local share of principal and interest bond payments.

The District is required to maintain debt service reserves, within a range of at least four months to no more than 110% of the following fiscal year's debt service payments based on the following opinions issued by the State of Delaware Attorney General:

- Attorney General Opinion 89-I017 from 1989 stated that, per the DOE, a sufficient reserve is at least four months of the following fiscal year's debt service payments.
- Attorney General Opinion 1W-024 from 1975 stated that a reserve is considered excessive when it is greater than 110% of total debt expenditures in the following year as districts' powers to levy taxes for debt service are limited per 14 Del. C., §2116 and §2118(a) to principal, interest and 10% for delinquencies.

Tuition - Tuition tax rates are levied to cover educational expenses for in-district and out-of-district placements of students in special programs and schools. The rate is set annually by the school board based on anticipated needs in the district and does not require a voter referendum. Per 14 Del. C., §2601(b), vocational school districts are not authorized to levy tuition taxes.

Match - Match funds provide a local match to State appropriations where required or allowed by law. Examples of Match programs include technology, minor capital improvements (MCIs), extra time, reading and math resource teachers, student success block grant, and opportunity fund. The following summarizes the significant match taxes authorized for the year ended June 30, 2024:

Technology - These funds are intended to support the purchase and replacement of technology, technology maintenance through personnel or services, professional learning, or other technology needs intended to improve the school district. The FY 1999 Bond and Capital Improvements Act authorized appropriations for education technology and authorized school districts to indefinitely levy up to one half of the rate required to meet the district's match. Technology match taxes are currently set by DOE memo issued December 1998.

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024

BACKGROUND - CONTINUED

Laws and Regulations - Continued

Match - Continued

Minor Capital Improvements - Per Delaware Administrative Code § 405, *Minor Capital Improvement Program*, minor capital pertains to projects costing less than \$1,000,000, intended to keep assets in their original condition. The maximum local share for minor capital expenditures is 40% per 29 Del. C., §7528(b). The State of Delaware provides the remaining balance up to a maximum dollar amount which is included in the Delaware Capital Budget annually.

Enhanced Minor Capital Improvements - The FY 2023 State of Delaware Capital Budget appropriated additional minor capital improvements funds to the school districts. The funds are not subject to the \$1,000,000 minor capital improvement restriction. An amendment to the FY 2023 State of Delaware Capital Budget authorizes districts to assess a local match on a 60% state and 40% local basis either in one fiscal year or over multiple fiscal years through fiscal year ending June 30, 2025. Districts must obligate their minor capital improvement funds prior to utilizing the enhanced minor capital improvement funds, except for the purposes of remediating lead contaminated drinking water infrastructure.

Extra Time, Reading Resource and Math Resource Teachers - In accordance with 14 Del. C., §1902(b), the FY 2024 Operating Budget Epilogue Sec. 348 authorizes school districts to levy a local match for Extra Time as well as Reading Resource Teachers and Mathematics Resource Teachers which were originally established by the following:

- Per the FY 2008 Operating Budget Epilogue, the extra time appropriation is intended for additional instruction for low achieving students and school districts were encouraged to match on a 70% state and 30% local basis.
- Per the FY 2010 Operating Budget Epilogue, the reading and math resource teacher appropriations are intended to fund state salaries for resource teachers in each school and districts were encouraged to match on a 70% state and 30% local basis.

Student Success Block Grant - The FY 2024 Operating Budget Epilogue Sec. 357 authorizes school districts to assess a local match for costs relating to the Student Success Block Grant appropriations, which are intended for reading assistance in grades K through 4.

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024

BACKGROUND - CONTINUED

Laws and Regulations - Continued

Match - Continued

Opportunity Fund - The FY 2024 Operating Budget Epilogue Sec. 354 authorizes school districts to assess a local match for costs associated with Opportunity Fund appropriations intended to enhance services and provide additional supports to English Learner and low-income students, as well as be used for mental health services and/or for additional reading supports for grades K-5. Per a June 2019 DOE Memo, schools are allowed to match on a 70% state and 30% local basis.

Substitute Teacher Block Grant - The State of Delaware FY 2024 Operating Budget Epilogue Sec. 370 authorizes school districts to assess a local match for costs associated with the Substitute Teacher Block Grant appropriations, which are intended to fund salaries for full-time substitute teachers in high need elementary, middle and high schools, with populations of 50 percent or more low-income students.

Capitation - Districts may also levy a school capitation tax on all persons 18 years of age and older, determined by the board, provided that such school capitation tax is approved by the voters of the district in the same manner as required for the levy of taxes on the assessed value of real estate, per 14 Del. C., §1912.

Year-end Required Reserves - Districts are required by 14 Del. C., §1507 to hold sufficient local reserves at the end of each fiscal year to satisfy the local portion of payroll expenditures during the period from July 1st through October 15th of the subsequent fiscal year plus one month's payroll, after adjusting for 75% equalization funding (referred to as Division III Funding) expected to be received.

DISTRICT SPECIFIC SUMMARY

The Sussex County Vocational Technical School District, operates Sussex Technical High School which offers 19 technical areas of study. The district serves about 1,323 students with about 434 full and part-time staff. The Sussex County Vocational Technical School District's Board of Education is the governing body of the District. The School Board includes seven members, appointed by the Governor of the State of Delaware, who serve seven-year terms. For the purposes of this report, Sussex County Vocational Technical School District is referred to as the "School District" or "District."

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024

AUDIT OBJECTIVES

The objectives established for the performance audit of the School District were:

Objective 1 - School District internal controls over the expenditure of Local Funds were designed and operated in accordance with the requirements of the *Delaware Code*, State of Delaware *Administrative Code*, State of Delaware *Budget and Accounting Policy Manual (BAM)*, School District Accounting Policies, and the School District Budget (the requirements).

Objective 2 - School District internal controls over the receipt of Local Funds were designed and operated in accordance with the requirements.

Objective 3 - School District real estate taxes were approved and calculated in accordance with the requirements.

AUDIT SCOPE

The period covered by the Performance Audit was July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024. We sampled and examined transactions from the populations of expenditures and receipts of Local Funds for the period from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024. In sampling these transactions, we relied on documentation provided by the School District, the DOE, and the State of Delaware's financial accounting and human resources systems.

AUDIT METHODOLOGY

To address the audit objectives of this performance audit, we performed the following procedures:

- A. Planning Phase: The audit relied on various sources of information and methods to properly plan the audit and to obtain an understanding of and assess Local Funds' processes for the School District, including the following:
 - 1. Reviewed the applicable sections of the *Delaware Code*, State of Delaware *Administrative Code*, State of Delaware *BAM*, School District Accounting Policies, and the School District Budget to gain an understanding of the legal and policy requirements governing Local Funds.
 - 2. Inquired about whether there were any findings and recommendations in reports resulting from previous audits that relate to the objectives of this audit and whether the recommendations have been implemented.

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024

AUDIT METHODOLOGY - CONTINUED

3. Reviewed the Board of Education's meeting minutes for the audit period to identify unusual transactions or matters which impact activities funded by the District's Local real estate tax funds.
4. Identified and reviewed contracts, agreements, and other important documents.
5. Performed risk assessment procedures such as:
 - a. Obtained and documented an understanding of the School District and its environment and identified risks.
 - b. Conducted engagement team discussions, including discussions about the possibility of error or fraud involving Local Funds.
 - c. Made inquiries of management and others about risks (including fraud risks, related-party transactions, unusual transactions, and compliance with laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements).
 - d. Obtained and documented an understanding of the School District's internal control system over Local Funds by performing walkthroughs.
6. Identified key internal controls over the District's Local Funds for testing.
7. We determined that we could rely on the internal controls in the State's First State Financials Accounting System (FSF) and the State's Payroll Human Resource Statewide Technology (PHRST) system for our Performance Audit. This conclusion was based on our review of the following documents:
 - a. The State's System and Organizational Controls (SOC 1), Type II Report: Covering the period from April 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024, issued by the State's Independent Service Auditor.
 - b. The State's Management Confirmation (Bridge Letter): Covering the subsequent period from April 1, 2024, through June 30, 2024, issued by the Department of Finance.

**SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024**

AUDIT METHODOLOGY - CONTINUED

B. Performance Assessment: Based on the information gathered, we developed the following risk-based approach to assess the design and operation of internal controls over Local Funds with respect to the audit objectives and the requirements as defined previously. The following chart provides a summary of the Performance Assessment procedures performed:

Objective Testing Procedures	Key Areas Tested	Requirements Assessed
<u>Objective 1: Expenditures Controls</u>		
Disbursement testing, procurement testing, payroll testing.	Design and operation of controls over Local funds' disbursements, including tests of purchasing cards, single payment suppliers and procurement. Design and operation of controls over Local funds' payroll, including payroll changes, and approvals.	Delaware Code, State Administrative Code, <i>BAM</i> , District Accounting Policies, District Budget
<u>Objective 2: Receipt Controls</u>		
Budgetary process, tax warrants and receipt recording testing.	Design and operation of controls over Local Fund receipts, including budgetary process, tax warrants, and monthly receipt recording.	Delaware Code, State Administrative Code
<u>Objective 3: Real Estate Tax Approval and Calculation</u>		
Budget, tax warrant, and reserve analysis.	Approval process, tax calculations, and reserve compliance.	Delaware Code, referendum requirements, Delaware Attorney General's opinions

To assess the design and operation of internal controls with respect to Audit Objective 1, we conducted the following:

1. To assess the design of disbursement related internal controls, we analyzed the information gathered in the Planning Phase regarding the following internal control structures:
 - a. Disbursements from all Local Funds including disbursements fund partly with State of Delaware General Fund or Federal appropriations.
 - b. District Purchasing Procedures.

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024

AUDIT METHODOLOGY - CONTINUED

Using the information gathered, we concluded the District's internal controls over disbursement were designed in accordance with the requirements and were properly designed for the performance of control testing.

2. To assess the operation of disbursement internal controls and the District's compliance with the requirements, we selected and tested random samples² of disbursement transactions funded with Local Taxes. We obtained supporting documents from the District to determine if the related products and services were received; transactions were properly documented, authorized, recorded; and that transactions complied with the requirements. We selected the following samples:

- a. A sample of disbursements:

We identified purchases made using State-wide contracts (Contracts entered into by the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB), Government Support Services Division (GSS)). We selected a subsample of transactions with State-wide contract vendors to verify that District's purchases complied with the terms of the State-wide contracts.

3. To assess operation of procurement internal controls, we summarized the District's purchases into risk-based categories. The following categories³ were identified for sampling during the planning phase:
 - a. Cumulative Purchasing Card expenditures by vendor, with consideration to other non-purchasing card payments to the vendor, to test whether single payments (or multiple payments for similar products or services) may have exceeded the applicable procurement thresholds. Purchasing Card expenditures are higher risk because employees could make purchases without following District procurement requirements. We selected a representative sample of Purchase Card transactions that exceeded the District's procurement threshold, if any.

² We selected samples that are sufficient to provide a high level of reliance (95% confidence level) on the operational effectiveness of the internal controls and compliance requirements being tested for the audit period. Sample sizes are based on the degree of planned control reliance along with assessed risk to achieve sufficient evidence to support findings and conclusions.

³ Analysis of the District's purchasing activity was performed at the District level and included all funding sources. Our analysis included all District funding (local, state, and federal) because the procurement requirements apply regardless of funding source. While analysis was performed at the District level our audit samples were selected from Local funds, with consideration of the transaction materiality of only the Local Funds.

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024

AUDIT METHODOLOGY - CONTINUED

- b. Payments to Single-Payment Suppliers (suppliers that were paid only once during the year) to test whether payments may have exceeded the applicable procurement thresholds. Single-Payment Suppliers are subject to increased risk because one-time payments could be used to circumvent the District's purchasing requirements. We selected a representative sample of Single Payment Suppliers that exceed the District's procurement threshold, if any.
 - c. The remaining population of transactions was summarized by vendor. We analyzed cumulative expenditures by vendor, with consideration to multiple purchase orders and multiple direct-claim payments (purchases without purchase orders) for similar products and services. We reviewed the summary of purchases by vendor for vendor activity that exceeded the applicable procurement thresholds. District purchasing operations are decentralized, which increases the risk that similar cumulative vendor procurements could exceed the thresholds in the State's and District's purchasing requirements. We selected a representative sample of vendors that exceed the District's procurement threshold for testing.
4. To assess the design of internal controls over payroll, we analyzed the results of the information gathered in the Planning Phase to identify internal control weaknesses and opportunities for improvement. We specifically analyzed the following internal control processes:
- a. Employee hiring and approval.
 - b. Salary determination.
 - c. Changes to employee salary related to changes in positions related to the achievement of additional education and certifications.
 - d. Payroll preparation and approval.
5. To assess the operation of payroll internal controls and compliance with the requirements, we performed the following:
- a. Selected a sample of payroll transactions from the population of current year payroll change events⁴ funded by Local Tax appropriations. We tested the selected payroll change events for the following on the next page:

⁴ Payroll change events include promotions, new hires, position changes, and salary changes for the achievement of additional education or certification.

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024

AUDIT METHODOLOGY - CONTINUED

Payroll change events include promotions, new hires, position changes, and salary changes for the achievement of additional education or certification.

- i. Employees' annual salary increases agreed to published and approved salary tables.
 - ii. Changes to payroll, other than annual salary increases, agreed to supporting documentation and Department of Education approvals, as appropriate.
 - iii. Proper approval was made, as required by District internal controls and the requirements.
 - b. Sampled and tested management's reconciliation, review, and approval of bi-weekly payrolls.
6. To assess the design of internal controls over the approval of real estate taxes and internal controls over the receipt of Local Funds with respect to Audit Objective 2, we performed the following:
 - a. Reviewed evidence of the budgetary process by review of Board of Education minutes.
 - b. Obtained the preliminary and final District budgets for the fiscal year. This provides that the District undertook a process to analyze its financial needs and set tax rates that are estimated to provide sufficient resources to meet its obligations during the fiscal year.
 - c. Obtained the District's executed tax warrant submitted to the County for the fiscal year.
 - d. Analyzed the District's process for receiving and recording the monthly receipt of Local Funds from the County.
7. To assess the operation of internal controls over the approval and calculation of real estate taxes and the District's compliance with the requirements with respect to Audit Objectives 2 and 3, we performed the following:
 - a. Compared taxes levied per official tax warrants to supporting rate calculations, budgets, relevant legislation (including tax revenue reserve limits) and District approval.
 - b. Obtained and reviewed the District monthly recording of Local Funds receipts. Obtained evidence that District management reviewed and approved the recording of the monthly Local Funds receipts.

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024

AUDIT METHODOLOGY - CONTINUED

- c. Compared the recording of local tax fund receipts by Appropriation to our expectations based on the official tax warrant.
- d. Analyzed year-end District reserves to determine if the following reserves complied with the following requirements:
 - i. Debt service reserves were within the range set by the Delaware Attorney General's opinions and were sufficient to fund debt service in the first four months of the following fiscal year and no more than 110% of the following fiscal year's debt service payments.
 - ii. Overall Local Reserves met the minimum set by the requirements to fund payroll expenditures in the first three and a half months of the following fiscal year.
- 8. Analyzed tax revenue reserves at the beginning and end of the fiscal year, as applicable. The District did not receive any communications from the Department of Education indicating any potential deficiencies in its reserve balances.

AUDIT RESULTS

Objective 1 - School District internal controls over the expenditure of Local Funds were designed and operated in accordance with the requirements.

Results - We found the design of the key internal controls over payroll, non-payroll, and debt expenditures of Local Funds were designed and operated in accordance with the requirements during the period from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024.

Non-Payroll Expenditures - To assess the operation of the internal controls over non-payroll expenditures of Local Funds, we selected a random sample of 35 from a population of 2723 disbursement transactions. Our review of the selected transactions determined that the purchases complied with both State and District requirements and that the transactions were properly approved by the District as evidenced by approvals on invoices and receipts as well as in First State Financials (FSF), the Delaware State accounting system.

School districts are allowed, but not required, to use State-wide contracts procured by the OMB's GSS Division. We selected five transactions from a population of Local Fund disbursements made to vendors with Statewide contracts in conjunction with the procedures performed over procurement. We compared the terms of the invoices and the District's contracts to the Statewide contracts and determined that the transactions were properly approved by the District as evidenced by approval on invoices and receipts as well as in FSF,

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024

AUDIT RESULTS - CONTINUED

Objective 1 - Continued

Results - Continued

Non-Payroll Expenditures - Continued - and that the District's purchases complied with the agreements entered into with the vendors, by the OMB's GSS Division; and therefore, were in compliance with State and District procurement requirements.

Procurement - To assess the District's compliance with both State and District procurement requirements, we analyzed the District's total FY 2024 disbursement population, including purchasing card expenditures by vendor, and using a risk-based approach, we selected the following samples:

- A judgmentally selected sample of three from the population of 30 vendors with cumulative expenditures exceeding the \$50,000 procurement threshold per the *BAM* (this is the lowest threshold that requires competitive purchasing).
- There were no vendors with purchasing card purchases made by the District that exceeded \$50,000 in aggregate; therefore, a sample of these transactions was not selected.
- There were no single-payment supplier purchases made by the District that exceeded \$50,000; therefore, a sample of these transactions was not selected.

We examined documentation for each of the transactions selected and found that the purchasing process for goods and services purchased from the three vendors during the fiscal year was in compliance with State and District procurement requirements.

Payroll Expenditures - To assess the operation of the internal controls over payroll expenditures, made from Local Funds, we selected a random sample of 20 from the population of 200 Local Funds pay rate changes, processed during the fiscal year, other than annual salary increases. Our examination of the transactions determined that all of the sampled changes were supported.

To test employees' annual pay increases, we selected a random sample of 10 out of 510 annual step increases and agreed each employee's salary profile in the State's payroll system, Payroll and Human Resource Statewide Technology (PHRST), to the District's approved FY 2024 salary schedules.

We reviewed evidence of the District's bi-weekly payroll reconciliation and approval process for a random sample of five selected from the population of 26 bi-weekly payroll cycles. We determined that authorized

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024

AUDIT RESULTS - CONTINUED

Objective 1 - Continued

Results - Continued

Payroll Expenditures - Continued - District personnel performed and maintained evidence of a review of bi-weekly payroll expenditures.

Debt Service Expenditures - We examined the requirement that the District maintain its debt service reserve, within a range of at least four months and no more than 110% of the following fiscal year's debt service payments. We also compared budget to actual debt service expenditures, at the District level, during our analysis of debt service real estate tax rate calculations in Objective 3. Because the payment of debt service is managed and initiated at a statewide level by the State of Delaware Department of Finance and is outside of the scope of this performance audit, we did not assess the design or operation of internal controls over debt service expenditures.

Objective 2 - School District internal controls over the receipt of Local Funds were designed and operated in accordance with the requirements.

Results - We obtained the FY 2024 Sussex County School District Reports of Local Property Tax Collections. We selected a sample of three of 12 monthly receipts of Local Funds from Sussex County. We found the District's records included evidence that the receipts were recorded and reviewed by the District.

We reconciled the monthly reports to the District's Local Tax Receipts with a negligible difference. We then recalculated the District's distribution of its receipts among the three categories of local taxes and determined that the District accurately distributed the receipts based on the official warrants and code requirements. We also observed transfers of restricted current expense receipts to relevant appropriations.

Objective 3 - School District real estate taxes were approved and calculated in accordance with the requirements.

Results - To determine if real estate taxes were approved and calculated in accordance with the requirements, we obtained the official tax warrant for FY 2024 and concluded the following:

- The District assesses a local match tax for the following: Technology and Extra Time. We found the District's aggregate local match tax revenues were consistent with the prior year and were immaterial in relation to total Local Fund revenues.

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024

AUDIT RESULTS - CONTINUED

Objective 3 - Continued

Results - Continued

- We compared debt service tax collections based on the debt service rate to principal and interest schedules for FY 2024 and FY 2025 and determined that the rate was sufficient to cover debt service expenditures in FY 2024 and provide the District with a reserve equal to approximately 187% of FY 2025 debt payments as summarized below, which exceeds the maximum of 110% of FY 2025 debt payments set by the State of Delaware Attorney General. Refer to Finding Number 1 in the Schedule of Findings and Recommendations for details of the deficiency identified and related recommendations.

July 1, 2023 Debt Service Reserve Balance	\$	1,862,562
FY 2024 Debt Service Activity		
Receipts - Principal		6,811,895
Receipts - Interest		1,250,137
Expenditures		<u>(2,106,554)</u>
June 30, 2024 Debt Service Reserve Balance	\$	<u>7,818,040</u>
Budgeted FY 2025 Debt Service	\$	<u>4,177,445</u>
Reserve to Expected Future Payments Ratio		<u>187%</u>

We accumulated information from the following sources to meet this audit objective: The FY 2024 Debt Service Tax Collections and FY 2023 Debt Service Reserves were obtained from the June 30, 2024, Daily Validity Report (Document Direct Report DGL060), which is a daily report on the status of appropriations. The FY 2024 and FY 2025 Debt Service Principal and Interest were obtained from debt service schedules presented in the District's June 30, 2024, Final Budget Report and FY 2025 Budget, respectively.

- We compared the District's local tax funded reserves, held as of June 30, 2024, and 75% of its expected preliminary State equalization funds to its local tax funded payroll obligations for the period from July 1, 2024 through October 15, 2024, with a surplus of at least one month's payroll. We determined that the carryover balances and preliminary State equalization funds were sufficient to meet the District's local payroll obligations during the period of July 1, 2024 with a surplus of at least one month's payroll, through October 15, 2024, as required by 14 Del. C., §1507.

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024

AUDIT RESULTS - CONTINUED

Objective 3 - Continued

Results - Continued

The FY 2024 local tax funded reserves were obtained from the June 30, 2024 Daily Validity Report. The District's debt service reserves, held as of June 30, 2024, were excluded for the purposes of the analysis. The preliminary State equalization funds were calculated as 75% of the total State equalization funds appropriated to the District in FY 2024 per the June 30, 2024 Daily Validity Report. Local tax funded payroll obligations for the period from July 1, 2024 through October 15, 2024, were obtained from the District's FY 2025 General Ledger.

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024

SCHEDULE OF FINDINGS AND RECOMENDATIONS

Finding Number 1 - Debt Service Reserve is in Excess of 110% of Future Fiscal Year Payments

Condition: We found that the District's Debt Service Reserve was in excess of 110% of the amount needed for the next fiscal year's debt service payments :

- The District's FY 2024 Tax Rate Proposal issued July 3, 2023 calculated a debt service tax rate of \$.1607 to fund budgeted FY 2024 debt service.
- The District's FY 2024 debt service rate, along with interest earned on unspent bond proceeds, resulted in a debt service reserve at the end of FY 2024 equal to 187% of total debt service expenditures expected in FY 2025.

Criteria: The District is required to maintain a debt service reserve of at least four months and no greater than 110% of the following fiscal year's debt service payments based on the following opinions issued by the State of Delaware Attorney General:

- Attorney General Opinion 89-I017 from 1989 stated that, per the DOE, a sufficient reserve is at least four months of the following fiscal year's debt service payments.
- Attorney General Opinion 1W-024 from 1975 stated that a reserve is considered excessive when it is greater than 110% of total debt expenditures in the following year as Districts' powers to levy taxes for debt service are limited per 14 Del. C., 2116 and 2118(a) to principal and interest and 10% for delinquencies.

Cause: The District's FY 2024 tax rate was levied at the rate of \$.1607. However, this rate, existing reserves, and interest earnings on unspent bond proceeds resulted in receipts that exceeded the amount needed to meet the District's obligations and maintain acceptable reserves.

Effect: By not taking into consideration interest earnings on unspent bond proceeds, the District created an excessive debt service reserve as of June 30, 2024.

Recommendation: We recommend that the District implement procedures to annually evaluate the debt service reserves to maintain compliance with the code.

SUSSEX COUNTY VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
LOCAL FUNDS PERFORMANCE AUDIT - CONTINUED
JUNE 30, 2024

CONCLUSION

Based on the work performed in connection with this performance audit, we concluded the following:

Objective 1 - The School District's internal controls over the expenditure of Local Funds were designed and operated in accordance with the requirements.

Objective 2 - The School District's internal controls over the receipt of Local Funds were designed and operated in accordance with the requirements.

Objective 3 - Except for the exceptions detailed in Finding Number 1 in the *Schedule of Findings and Recommendations*, the School District's internal controls over the School District's real estate taxes were approved and calculated in accordance with the requirements.

Sussex County Vocational Technical School District

17137 County Seat Highway, P.O. Box 351, Georgetown, DE 19947

Kevin E. Carson, Ed.D.
Superintendent

302.856.2542
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January 15, 2026

To Whom it May Concern

RE: District's Response to Finding #1-Debt Service Reserve is in Excess of 110% of Future Fiscal Year Payments

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this anticipated finding regarding our debt service balance. The district understands the intention of having adequate funds available for debt service payment while balancing the responsibility of minimizing taxation to our taxpayers. The circumstances pertaining to our debt service balance are unique for the following reasons:

- During the time in which the district needed to establish its tax rate for FY 22, information from the state budget treasurer's office was unavailable to determine actual principal and interest expenses for the year. Therefore, the district, not wishing to be in arrears, established a projected tax rate based upon an anticipated interest rate and billing cycle.
- During the time in which the district needed to establish its tax rate for FY 23, information from the state budget treasurer's office was unavailable to determine actual principal and interest expenses for the year. Therefore, the district, not wishing to be in arrears, established a projected tax rate based upon an anticipated interest rate and billing cycle.
- During the time in which the district needed to establish its tax rate for FY 24, information from the state budget treasurer's office was unavailable to determine actual principal and interest expenses for the year. Therefore, the district, not wishing to be in arrears, established a projected tax rate based upon an anticipated interest rate and billing cycle.
- During FY 25, on July 2 the district was informed our actual bonds were not sold in the FY 25 bond sale for our project. With the bonds not being sold, the district had to make another assumption regarding principal and interest for last year's funding.
- The delay in receipt of information delayed the district's receipt of amortization schedules and limited the district's ability to accurately project principal and interest payments for the associated appropriations.
- As of this writing, the district is awaiting definitive principal and interest charges for three separate major capital funding allocations.

January 15, 2026

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The district wanted to ensure funds were available should schedules be received, notes sold, and bills executed. The district accepts responsibility for stabilizing and equalizing the appropriate charge to our taxpayers once all information and schedules are received from the Office of State Treasurer. Because of the above matters, we anticipate debt service for FY 25 to be more than 110% also. During the tax rate establishment for FY 26, the district did lower debt service charges to our taxpayers, and we anticipate future reductions based upon the cost of estimated funds established by the bond sales. Our goal is to be lower than 110%.

Sincerely,



Kevin E. Carson, Ed.D.

Superintendent

KEC:dlv

