

Troup County
School District, Georgia

Performance Audit on Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax
For The Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2019



200 Galleria Parkway S.E., Suite 1700
Atlanta, Georgia 30339-5946
Phone: (770) 955-8600
Web: www.mjcpa.com

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Introduction

To the Members of the Board of Education
Troup County School District
LaGrange, Georgia

Georgia Code Section 20-2-491 requires public school systems to obtain continuing performance audits for expenditure of sales tax for capital outlays if the tax generates \$5 million or more annually. The independent performance audit shall:

1. Include a goal of ensuring, to the maximum extent possible, that the tax funds are expended efficiently and economically so as to ensure that the School District receives maximum benefit from the dollars collected.
2. Provide for issuance of periodic reports, not less than once annually, with respect to the extent to which tax funds are expended efficiently and economically as described in item 1 above.
3. Provide for issuance of periodic public recommendations, not less than annually for improvements in meeting the goal specified in item 1 above.

SPLOST, or “Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax,” is a referendum voted and approved by Troup County voters in which one percent is added to the local sales tax for the purpose of funding Troup County School District (the “School District”) building and renovation projects that would otherwise require financing through increasing residents’ property taxes. SPLOST funds are also available for retiring general obligation bond debts incurred with respect only to capital outlay projects and to issue new general obligation bonds for specific capital outlay projects to be paid with SPLOST funds.

The School District works under the direction of the Troup County Board of Education (the “Board”) and its superintendent, and the projects selected for SPLOST funding are chosen by the Board.

The Troup County School District had one SPLOST program (2017) during the period covered by this audit report from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. The 2017 SPLOST funds are to be used together with other available funds, to be applied toward the costs of (1) acquiring additional real property for future school expansions; (2) elementary school, middle school and/or high school modifications, (3) additions to, renovations of, repairs and improvements to and equipping of existing educational buildings, properties and facilities of the School District, including without limitation, classroom additions, physical educational facilities and improvements, and resurfacing and parking facilities; (4) technology/software upgrades and additions, infrastructure, textbooks and equipment; (5) additional school buses; (6) and paying expenses incident thereto, including payment of any capitalized interest.

Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology

Audit Scope

Mauldin & Jenkins, LLC was engaged to conduct a performance audit of the SPLOST program. The audit focused on the School District's compliance with state and local laws and mandates and the receipt and expenditure of sales tax proceeds for allowable SPLOST educational purposes.

The audit covers the SPLOST program from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. From a listing of all disbursements made during the specified time frame, we selected sixty (60) disbursements to test, totaling \$6,346,910 (27.63%) of the total disbursements, which amounted to \$22,973,584 for the audit period.

Audit Objectives

The overall objective of the performance audit was to evaluate whether the tax funds are expended efficiently and economically so that the School District is receiving maximum benefit from the dollars collected. The specific audit objectives were:

- To determine whether the schedule of projects adheres to the approved resolution adopted by the Troup County Board of Education,
- To determine that the reporting effectiveness between the School District and the Board of Education communicates the status of capital outlay projects to ensure that legislative, regulatory, and organizational goals and objectives are achieved,
- To determine the reliability of the monitoring function to verify that actual project expenditures are not exceeding budgeted amounts,
- To determine whether there is an effective means of monitoring program performance within a projected timeline, to evaluate the validity of expenditures, and to evaluate the timely completion of each capital project,
- To determine the reliability, validity or relevance of financial analyses to verify that cash flows conform to forecasted projections by project and priority, and that intended economic results are accomplished,
- To determine whether effective procedures exist to verify that design and construction of capital projects adhere to applicable quality control standards,
- To determine the effectiveness of financial controls in place to ensure that the receipt and disbursement of tax revenue funds are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and
- To determine whether management of the School District is following Board approved procurement policies and procedures.

Audit Methodology

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. 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.

To ensure that the SPLOST performance audit is adequately planned, performed and supervised, we performed the following steps:

Planning

Prior to the conduct of the audit, we determined mutual expectations in performing the engagement and meeting time lines. We discussed policies and procedures, methodologies, and other relevant aspects of the School District's SPLOST program with relevant staff. We requested various schedules from the School District's staff and discussed with them the date the fieldwork was expected to begin.

Preliminary Analytical Review

The preliminary analytical review provided direction to our audit approach. In this analysis, we developed expectations related to projects, program documentation, key personnel, program organization, and account balances and relationships among those account balances. During the audit, tests were designed to confirm the expectations developed during our preliminary analytical review. We also performed a preliminary analytical review to analyze the laws governing SPLOST funds and to identify in advance the critical audit risk areas.

Risk Assessment

Our audit approach is risk-based, whereby we assess risks for each identified objective. These assessments include an assessment of inherent and control risks to determine a combined risk assessment. Depending on the combined risk assessment, we perform substantive or analytical procedures, or a combination of both, to test the related objectives. These assessments were made during the planning process and throughout the engagement.

Understanding the Control Environment and Testing Key Controls

We examined the School District's internal controls related to the SPLOST program, focusing on formulating comments and suggestions for improving operations. We used a discussion memorandum format to document the relevant accounting cycles and processes from start to finish. We also completed questionnaires to further document an understanding of the School District's internal controls over the expenditures of the SPLOST program. Utilizing our understanding of the control environment, we tested certain internal controls to provide further support for the audit.

Preparation of a Tailored Audit Program

Based upon preliminary analytical review, control documentation and testing, audit programs were designed in order for conclusions to be reached for each audit objective.

Reporting

At the conclusion of the performance audit, we prepared a preliminary report of findings and a written analysis of proposed recommendations in draft form. This preliminary report and analysis was presented to the School District's representative(s). Upon completion of the presentation and review of the report and analysis by the School District's representative(s), we provided a public report of the results of the annual performance audit.

Audit Results

Based on the results of our audit, we conclude that the Troup County School District's SPLOST Program is operating in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, the referendum approved by Troup County voters, and industry best practices. The following are the specific results of our audit:

Objective #1: To determine whether the schedule of projects adheres to the approved resolution adopted by the Troup County Board of Education.

Procedures: We obtained a copy of the 2017 SPLOST Resolutions as approved by the Board of Education of the School District and the voters of Troup County. A sample size of sixty (60) disbursements was determined to be sufficient in order to test the transaction's processing and compliance with the approved SPLOST resolution. We then conducted a disbursement test for disbursements made during the audit period to ensure that the projects for which expenditures were incurred were included in the approved resolution and supported by documentation such as a vendor invoice.

Results: Based on the results of our disbursement test, the expenditures tested were related to activities approved in the 2017 SPLOST resolutions.

Objective #2: To determine that the reporting effectiveness between the School District and the Board of Education communicates the status of capital outlay projects to ensure that legislative, regulatory, and organizational goals and objectives are achieved.

Procedures: We discussed the policies and procedures for communication with the Board with management. Based on inquires and review of the status reports presented at the monthly Board meetings, there is a communication process with the Board on the financial and construction status of projects, as well as notification to the general public of the progress.

Results: Based on the results of the inquiries made and review of monthly status reports, the School District has an effective method in place to communicate with the Board and the general public in regard to the financial and construction status of each project to ensure that legislative, regulatory, and organizational goals and objectives are achieved.

Objective #3: To determine the reliability of the monitoring function to verify that actual project expenditures are not exceeding budgeted amounts.

Procedures: We discussed the monitoring of expenditures versus budget with management. We reviewed the financial status reports maintained on construction projects and monitoring of budget to actual expenditures. The Architect and Director of Construction approve all requests for payment from the contractor. We reviewed the disbursements selected as part of our testing as described in Objective #1 for the Director of Construction's approval.

Results: Based on the results of inquiries made and review of the financial status reports, the School District has an adequate process in place to monitor expenditures to ensure that actual project expenditures do not exceed budgeted amounts.

Objective #4: To determine whether there is an effective means of monitoring program performance within a projected timeline, to evaluate the validity of expenditures, and to evaluate the timely completion of each capital project.

Procedures: We discussed the monitoring of projects with the CFO. Per discussions held, the CFO is kept up to date of progress via pictures and reports. CFO and the Architect monitor projects to ensure that invoices submitted for work completed are valid. The CFO receives and examines monthly financial reports showing expenditures used to date. We reviewed the status reports and financial reports provided to the CFO noting they are provided on a monthly basis. Additionally, we conducted a disbursement test, as described in Objective #1, to ensure that the Board has policies and procedures in place to ensure that expenditures are properly approved by an individual who reviews the work to ensure that invoices submitted are valid in regard to work completed.

Results: Based on the results of inquiries made and review of status and financial reports, the School District has an effective program in place to monitor program performance and to ensure the timely completion of each capital project within the projected timeline. The School District does have policies and procedures in place to ensure that expenditures incurred and paid are valid expenditures of the SPLOST projects.

Objective #5: To determine the reliability, validity or relevance of financial analyses to verify that cash flows conform to forecasted projections by project and priority, and that intended economic results are accomplished.

Procedures: In order to determine the reliability, validity, and relevance of financial analyses prepared by various staff involved in the SPLOST Program, we inquired as to the procedures performed in regard to the financial analyses. Per discussions with the CFO, cash flows and budget to actual status reports are prepared and sent to the Board. We reviewed these reports noting they are provided to the Board monthly.

Results: Based on the results of inquiries made and review of the financial reports, the School District has an adequate process in place to monitor cash flows to ensure that financial analyses used for verifying that cash flows conform to forecasted projections by project and priority are reliable, valid, and relevant and that the intended economic results are accomplished.

Objective #6: To determine whether effective procedures exist to verify that design and construction of capital projects adhere to applicable quality control standards.

Procedures: We discussed procedures in place to monitor the design and construction of capital projects with the construction consultant and CFO. Per review of proposals submitted, the School District did pre-qualify architects for the project to ensure the architects used were familiar with standards and specifications necessary for schools. Additionally, the School District and the architects work together to perform on-site visits to ensure that the construction adheres to the specifications for that project and that work performed is correct and of good quality. They take pictures and send documents to the School District. We conducted a disbursement test, as described in Objective #1, to ensure that the Board had policies and procedures in place to ensure that expenditures are properly approved by an individual who reviews the work on site to verify that invoices submitted are valid in regard to work completed.

Results: Based on the results of inquiries made and review of status reports to the Board, the School District is monitoring and reviewing construction projects, there is enough documentation of the monitoring, and effective procedures are in place to verify that the design and construction of capital projects adhere to applicable quality control standards.

Objective #7: To determine the effectiveness of financial controls in place to ensure that the receipt and disbursement of tax revenue funds are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Procedures: We discussed financial controls in place with the accounting department. The construction department has an approval process in place whereby all expenditures are verified (goods have been received and/or work has been completed) before an invoice is approved for payment. We obtained and reviewed the twelve (12) monthly financial reports submitted to the Board during the audit period. Included within the reporting package was a period to date and year-to-date summary of information, including receipts and disbursements. Additionally, as described in Objective #1, we reviewed disbursements for proper approval and to verify that the expenditures were related to projects approved as per the SPLOST resolution.

Results: Based on the results of inquiries made, review of status reports and results of our disbursement test, the School District has effective financial controls in place to ensure that the receipt and expenditure of tax revenue funds are in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Objective #8: To determine whether the School District is following the Board approved procurement policies and procedures.

Procedures: In order to test the procurement practices of the SPLOST program, we obtained a copy of Board policy in regard to bids and procurements and held discussions with the CFO and documented our understanding of the process. Per our discussions and review of the general ledger activity it was noted that three (3) contracts were procured during the fiscal year. We then reviewed the procurement process and related documents, denoting evidence that Board approved procurement policies and procedures were followed, for the contract procured on the projects.

Results: Per discussion, review of procurement packages and review of payments made during the year, seven requests for proposal were sent out in the current year. The School District is following the Board approved procurement policies and procedures.

Closing

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Troup County Board of Education and its management and other officials, and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.

Mauldin & Jenkins, LLC

Atlanta, Georgia
March 13, 2020