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Report Highlights

Natchitoches Parish Fire Protection District No. 1

Audit Control # 50180011

Investigative Audit Services • September 2018

Why We Conducted This Audit

On July 14, 2017, Natchitoches Parish President Rick Nowlin wrote to the Louisiana Legislative Auditor concerning complaints he received about the Natchitoches Parish Fire Protection District No. 1's (District) operations. This audit was initiated to determine the validity of those complaints.

What We Found

Prohibited Contractual Agreements

On February 8, 2016, the District paid \$44,900 to Prothro Construction, LLC, a legal entity owned and operated by then-Board of Commissioners (Board) Chairman Joseph Prothro's brothers. In addition, from April 2015 to October 2016, then-Chairman Prothro's and District Fire Chief Charlotte Prothro's sons and/or daughters-in-law performed monthly grass cutting services on District property for which the District paid \$8,550. State law prohibits public servants from contracting and/or participating in transactions involving the governmental entity and their immediate family members. By allowing the District to contract with immediate family members and a legal entity owned by immediate family members, Mr. Prothro and Fire Chief Prothro may have violated state law.

Improper Disposal of Surplus Property

District management improperly disposed of vehicles by trading them in at a heavy truck and equipment vendor and/or selling them to Board members. State law provides that political subdivisions may sell surplus movable property at public auction, through an Internet computer auction, or at a private auction if the property to be sold is appraised at less than \$5,000. By improperly disposing of surplus vehicles, District management may have violated state law. Further, Board members who purchased vehicles from the District may have violated the state's ethics laws. In addition, we found that the District failed to maintain an accurate inventory of its vehicles and may be paying insurance on vehicles the District no longer owns.

District May Have Violated State Law While Contracting for Services

On February 8, 2016, the District paid Prothro Construction, LLC \$44,900 for the renovation of Fire Station 1 in Cloutierville, Louisiana. Although this was a public works project as defined by state law, the District allowed work to be performed without a written contract and failed to require the contractor to provide a surety bond. By allowing a contractor to perform services without a written contract or surety bond, District management may have violated state law.

View the full report, including management's response, at www.la.gov.