COUNTRYSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT, ILLINOIS

MANAGEMENT LETTER

FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED
MAY 31, 2025

600 North Deerpath Drive
Vernon Hills, IL 60061
Phone: 847.367.5511
Fax: 847.367.5521
www.countrysidefire.com

Lauterbach & Amen

668 N. River Road
Naperville, IL 60563
630.393.1483

lauterbachamen.com

November 10, 2025

The Honorable District President
Members of the Board of Trustees
Countryside Fire Protection District
Vernon Hills, Illinois

In planning and performing our audit of the financial statements of the Countryside Fire Protection District (the District), Illinois, for the year ended May 31, 2025, we considered its internal control structure in order to determine our auditing procedures for the purpose of expressing our opinion on the financial statements and not to provide assurance on the internal control structure.

We do not intend to imply that our audit failed to disclose commendable aspects of your system and structure. For your consideration, we herein submit our comments and suggestions which are designed to assist in effecting improvements in internal controls and procedures. Those less-significant matters, if any, which arose during the course of the audit, were reviewed with management as the audit field work progressed.

The accompanying comments and recommendations are intended solely for the information and use of the Board, President and senior management of the Countryside Fire Protection District, Illinois.

We will review the status of these comments during our next audit engagement. We have already discussed many of these comments and suggestions with various District personnel. We would be pleased to discuss our comments and suggestions in further detail with you at your convenience, to perform any additional study of these matters, or to review the procedures necessary to bring about desirable changes.

We commend the finance department for the well prepared audit package and we appreciate the courtesy and assistance given to us by the entire District staff.

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CURRENT RECOMMENDATION

1. IT SECURITY AWARENESS AND MONITORING OF EMERGING RISKS

Comment

Recently, we have noted the increasing importance of information technology (IT) security for local governments. While we did not identify a specific security breach during our auditing procedures, we have noted increased risks to local governments in the following areas of IT security:

- Ransomware and Phishing Attacks – Increasingly targeted at local governments due to limited IT staffing and valuable public data.
- Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) – This is now considered a minimum standard of protection for access to email, financial systems and remote logins.
- Vendor and Third-Party Risk – Cloud service providers, software vendors, and contractors may present risks if not adequately monitored.
- Data Backup and Recovery – Secure, tested backups are critical to minimize downtime and financial loss in the event of an incident.
- Staff Awareness and Training – Many breaches in local government occur due to human error; regular training and simulated testing can help reduce exposure.

Recommendation

We recommend that the District continue to increase awareness around IT security issues by:

- Engaging in ongoing monitoring or cyber security trends affecting local governments.
- Incorporating regular staff training on phishing and other social engineering tactics.
- Periodically reviewing policies for password strength, MFA, and incident response.
- Ensuring vendor contracts address security standards and data protection.
- Testing data backup and recover plans on at least an annual basis.

By increasing awareness and preparedness, the District can reduce the likelihood of a security incident, protect sensitive constituent and financial data, and help to ensure continuity of operations.

Management Response

Management acknowledges this comment and will continue to monitor and strengthen IT security efforts.

PRIOR RECOMMENDATION

1. **DEFICIT NET POSITION**

Comment

Previously and during our current year-end audit procedures, we noted that the governmental activities had a deficit net position:

Government-Wide Statements		2024	2025
Governmental Activities	$	3,814,328	1,505,517

Recommendation

We recommended the District investigate the causes of the deficit and adopt appropriate future funding measures.

Status

This comment has not been implemented and will be repeated in the future.

Management Response

Management acknowledges this comment and will work to identify the underlying factors contributing to the deficit net position on the government-wide statements. We are committed to ensuring that any necessary adjustments are made to stabilize and improve the District's financial health.

UPCOMING STANDARDS

1. GASB STATEMENT NO. 102 CERTAIN RISK DISCLOSURES

In December 2023, the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) issued Statement No. 102, *Certain Risk Disclosures*, which establishes the requirements for disclosing, in the notes to the financial statements, the risks related to a government's vulnerabilities due to certain concentrations or constraints that is essential to their analyses for making decisions or assessing accountability. Governments may be vulnerable to risks from certain concentrations or constraints that limit its ability to acquire resources or control spending. Concentration risk is a lack of diversity related to an aspect of a significant inflow of resources (revenues) or outflow of resources (expenses). Constraint risk is a limitation that is imposed by an external party or by formal action of a government's highest level of decision-making authority. GASB Statement No. 102, *Certain Risk Disclosures* is applicable to the District's financial statements for the year ended May 31, 2026.

2. GASB STATEMENT NO. 103 FINANCIAL REPORTING MODEL IMPROVEMENTS

In April 2024, the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) issued Statement No. 103, *Financial Reporting Model Improvements*, which establishes improvements to key components of the financial reporting model to enhance effectiveness in providing information that is essential for decision making and assessing a government's accountability. The Statement addresses application issues related to management's discussion and analysis, unusual or infrequent items, presentation of the proprietary fund statements of revenues, expenses, and changes in fund net position, major component unit information, and budgetary comparison information. GASB Statement No. 103, *Financial Reporting Model Improvements* is applicable to the District's financial statements for the year ended May 31, 2027.

3. GASB STATEMENT NO. 104 DISCLOSURE OF CERTAIN CAPITAL ASSETS

In September 2024, the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) issued Statement No. 104, *Disclosure of Certain Capital Assets*, which provide users of government financial statements with essential information about certain types of capital assets. This statement establishes requirements for (1) Certain types of capital assets to be disclosed separately in the capital assets note disclosures, and (2) Capital assets held for sale, including additional disclosures for those capital assets. GASB Statement No. 104, *Disclosure of Certain Capital Assets* is applicable to the District's financial statements for the year ended May 31, 2027.

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November 10, 2025

The Honorable District President
Members of the Board of Trustees
Countryside Fire Protection District
Vernon Hills, Illinois

We have audited the financial statements of the governmental activities, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the Countryside Fire Protection District (the District), Illinois for the year ended May 31, 2025. Professional standards require that we provide you with information about our responsibilities under generally accepted auditing standards (and, if applicable, *Government Auditing Standards* and the Uniform Guidance), as well as certain information related to the planned scope and timing of our audit. We have communicated such information to you in our engagement letter. Professional standards also require that we communicate to you the following information related to our audit.

Significant Audit Findings

Qualitative Aspects of Accounting Practices

Management is responsible for the selection and use of appropriate accounting policies. The significant accounting policies used by the District are described in the Note 1 to the financial statements. No new accounting policies were adopted, and the application of existing policies was not changed during the year ended May 31, 2025, except for the implementation of GASB Statement No. 100, *Accounting Changes and Error Corrections* and GASB Statement No. 101, *Compensated Absences*. We noted no transactions entered into by the District during the year for which there is a lack of authoritative guidance or consensus. All significant transactions have been recognized in the financial statements in the proper period with the exception of prior period restatement.

Accounting estimates are an integral part of the financial statements prepared by management and are based on management's knowledge and experience about past and current events and assumptions about future events. Certain accounting estimates are particularly sensitive because of their significance to the financial statements and because of the possibility that future events affecting them may differ significantly from those expected. The most sensitive estimates affecting the governmental activities' financial statements are noted below.

Management's estimates of the:

- Depreciation expense on capital assets is based on estimated useful lives of the underlying capital assets
- Compensated absences are based on management assumptions and estimates related to benefit time usage
- Net pension related accounts are based on estimated assumptions used by the actuary
- Total OPEB related accounts are based on estimated assumptions used by the actuary

The financial statement disclosures are neutral, consistent, and clear.

Difficulties Encountered in Performing the Audit

We encountered no significant difficulties in dealing with management in performing and completing our audit.

Significant Audit Findings - Continued

Corrected and Uncorrected Misstatements

Professional standards require us to accumulate all known and likely misstatements identified during the audit, other than those that are clearly trivial, and communicate them to the appropriate level of management. Any material misstatements detected as a result of audit procedures were corrected by management.

Disagreements with Management

For purposes of this letter, a disagreement with management is a financial accounting, reporting, or auditing matter, whether or not resolved to our satisfaction, that could be significant to the financial statements or the auditor's report. We are pleased to report that no such disagreements arose during the course of our audit.

Management Representations

We have requested certain representations from management that are included in the management representation letter dated November 10, 2025.

Management Consultations with Other Independent Accountants

In some cases, management may decide to consult with other accountants about auditing and accounting matters, similar to obtaining a "second opinion" on certain situations. If a consultation involves application of an accounting principle to the District's financial statements or a determination of the type of auditor's opinion that may be expressed on those statements, our professional standards require the consulting accountant to check with us to determine that the consultant has all the relevant facts. To our knowledge, there were no such consultations with other accountants.

Other Audit Findings or Issues

We generally discuss a variety of matters, including the application of accounting principles and auditing standards, with management each year prior to retention as the District's auditors. However, these discussions occurred in the normal course of our professional relationship and our responses were not a condition to our retention.

Other Matters

We applied certain limited procedures to the required supplementary information (RSI), as listed in the table of contents, that supplements the basic financial statements. Our procedures consisted of inquiries of management regarding 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 did not audit the RSI and do not express an opinion or provide any assurance on the RSI.

Other Matters - Continued

We were engaged to report on the other supplementary information, as listed in the table of contents, which accompanies the financial statements but is not RSI. With respect to this supplementary information, we made certain inquiries of management and evaluated the form, content, and methods of preparing the information to determine that the information complies with the accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, the method of preparing it has not changed from the prior period, and the information is appropriate and complete in relation to our audit of the financial statements. We compared and reconciled the supplementary information to the underlying accounting records used to prepare the financial statements or to the financial statements themselves.

We were not engaged to report on the introductory section and statistical section, which accompany the financial statements but are not RSI. Such information has not been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the basic financial statements, and accordingly, and we do not express an opinion or provide any assurance on it.

Restrictions on Use

This information is intended solely for the use of the Board of Trustees and management of the District and is not intended to be, and should not be, used by anyone other than these specified parties.

We wish to express our gratitude to the Board of Trustees and staff (in particular the Finance Department) of the Countryside Fire Protection District, Illinois for their valuable cooperation throughout the audit engagement.

Lauterbach & Amen, LLP

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