



**WALKER COUNTY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
LAFAYETTE, GEORGIA**

**SPECIAL PURPOSE LOCAL OPTION  
SALES TAX PROGRAM  
FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED  
JUNE 30, 2024**

Compliance and Performance Audit Report

# Walker County Board of Education

## Table of Contents

Audit Summary and Introduction.....	1
Audit Objectives and Audit Scope and Methodology.....	3
Audit Results.....	4
Communication of Audit Findings, Recommendations, and Closing.....	6



Mr. Damon Raines, Superintendent and Members of the  
Walker County Board of Education

Ladies and Gentlemen

We have audited the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) records and operations of the Walker County Board of Education (School District) for the year ended June 30, 2024. Management of the School District is responsible for the School District's compliance with the specified requirements. Our responsibility is to determine the School District's compliance with the specified requirements based on our audit objectives.

### **Audit Summary**

Our performance audit of the School District's Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2024 found the following:

- The School District has appropriately designed internal control procedures over the SPLOST expenditure transaction cycle and those controls have been placed into operation and are being followed.
- The School District has spent the SPLOST funds in accordance with O.C.G.A. §20-2-491 and the SPLOST resolutions passed November 3, 2015 and March 16, 2021 by the voters of Walker County.

### **Introduction**

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.

The Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) is a referendum voted and approved by the Walker County voters in which one percent is added to the local sales tax for the purpose of funding building and renovation projects that would otherwise require financing through increased 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.

The School District works under the direction of the School Board and its superintendent. Projects selected for SPLOST funding are approved by the School Board. During fiscal years 2016 and 2021, the 2017 SPLOST referendum and the 2021 SPLOST referendum were passed by the voters of Walker County. The maximum amount approved to be raised from the 2017 SPLOST and 2021 SPLOST referendums are \$28,080,000.00 and \$31,968,000.00, respectively.

The 2017 SPLOST funds will be used for the following purposes as outlined in the referendum:

“(i) acquisition, construction, and equipping of auxiliary gymnasiums at LaFayette and Ridgeland High Schools; (ii) construction of new roofs for educational and central services buildings and/or facilities; (iii) acquisition and upgrading of technology and computers, text books, and e-books, including expansion of the technology plan to improve student-to-device ratio; (iv) acquisition and equipping of school buses; (v) paving and repairing of parking lots and driveways for educational and central services buildings and/or facilities; (vi) acquisition, construction, and equipping of a new high school; (vii) acquisition and equipping of safety and security equipment for educational and central services buildings and/or facilities, including a potential stop light at the entrance of Saddle Ridge Elementary and Middle School; (viii) construction, renovation, improvements, and equipping of the Career Technical & Agriculture Education (CTAE) labs at LaFayette and Ridgeland High Schools; (ix) acquisition, construction, and equipping of a multi-use athletic facility at Ridgeland High School; (x) acquisition, construction, and equipping of a football field at the LaFayette High School; (xi) renovations, additions, improvements, and equipping of existing educational buildings, properties, and facilities of the school district, including additions, improvements, constructing, and equipping central services facilities; (xii) acquisition of any property, both real and personal, and equipment necessary in connection with the above described capital outlay projects, including energy management systems, heating and air conditioning systems, lighting, and similar equipment; and (xiii) acquisition of real property for future schools, facilities, administrative offices, support services, and other purposes of the Walker County School District.”

The 2021 SPLOST will be used for the following purposes as outlined in the referendum:

“(a) renovations, additions, improvements, and equipping of existing schools; (b) acquisition, construction, and equipping of auxiliary gymnasiums at Chattanooga Valley, LaFayette, Rossville, and Saddle Ridge Middle Schools; (c) acquisition and equipping of school buses and maintenance vehicles; (d) resurfacing and replacement of tennis courts at LaFayette and Ridgeland High Schools; (e) paving and repairing of parking lots and entrance roads; (f) acquisition, construction and equipping of a new high school; (g) acquisition and upgrading of technology, computers, and e-books, including expansion of the technology plan to improve student to device ratio; (h) renovations, improvements, and equipping of existing athletic facilities system-wide; and (i) acquisition of any property, both real and personal, and equipment necessary in connection with the above described capital outlay projects, and for future schools, facilities, administrative offices, support services, and other purposes of the Walker County School District.”

## **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 the maximum benefit from the dollars collected. The specific audit objectives were:

- Determine whether SPLOST funds were spent in accordance with SPLOST Resolutions passed in November 2015 and March 2021.
- Provide for the issuance of periodic reports at least annually with respect to the extent to which expenditures are meeting the goals described in O.C.G.A. §20-2-491.
- Provide for the issuance of public recommendations at least annually for improvements in meeting the goals described in O.C.G.A. §20-2-491.
- 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 project.
- Determine whether management of the School District is following Board approved procurement policies and procedures to ensure to the maximum extent possible that tax funds are expended efficiently and economically.
- Determine that all SPLOST revenue is properly recorded.

## **Audit Scope and Methodology**

We were 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 receipts and expenditure of sales tax proceeds for allowable SPLOST purposes. This audit covers the year of the SPLOST program from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024. From a listing of disbursements made during the specified time frame, we tested 41 individually significant items totaling \$9,043,097.46. In addition, of the remaining population we sampled 27 totaling \$170,144.05. In total, we tested \$9,213,241.51 or 92% of the total SPLOST disbursements for the audit period.

From a listing of journal entries made during the specified time frame, we tested 11 individually significant items totaling (\$421,923.70). In addition, of the remaining population, we sampled 2 of 15 items totaling \$22,892.74. In total, we tested (\$399,030.96) or 100% of the total SPLOST journal entries for the audit period.

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.

### *Planning*

Prior to conducting the audit, we determined mutual expectations in performing the engagement and meeting timelines. 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 (PAR) 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 PAR. We also performed a PAR 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 risk for each identified objective. Depending on the risk assessment, we performed 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 Test 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. Utilizing our understanding of the control environment, we walked through certain internal controls to provide further support for the audit.

### Preparation of a Tailored Audit Program

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

## **Audit Results**

Based on the results of our audit, we conclude that the Walker County School District's SPLOST program is operating in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations and the referendum approved by the County's citizens. The following are the specific results of our audit:

**Objective #1:** Determine whether SPLOST funds were spent in accordance with SPLOST Resolutions passed in November 2015 and March 2021.

**Procedures:** We obtained copies of the SPLOST resolutions as approved by the Board of Education of the School District and the voters of Walker County. Using a list of disbursements for the test period, we tested 41 individually significant items and a nonstatistical random sample of 27 of the remaining 267 items to ensure that spending of SPLOST funding was compliant with the approved activity in the resolutions. In addition, using a list of journal entries for the test period, we tested 11 individually significant items and a nonstatistical random sample of 2 of 15 the remaining items to ensure the validity of expenditure adjustments made to SPLOST projects. We tested each transaction to supporting documentation such as vendor invoices.

**Results:** We found no exceptions as a result of these procedures.

**Objective #2:** Provide for the issuance of periodic reports at least annually with respect to the extent to which expenditures are meeting the goals described in O.C.G.A. §20-2-491.

**Procedures:** We obtained and reviewed the prior year performance audit report to determine if this objective was met in the previous year. In addition, this objective is being met by the publication of this report for the current year.

**Results:** We found no exceptions as a result of these procedures.

**Objective #3:** Provide for the issuance of public recommendations at least annually for improvements in meeting the goals described in O.C.G.A. §20-2-491.

**Procedures:** We obtained and reviewed the prior year performance audit report to determine if this objective was met in the previous year. In addition, this objective is being met by the publication of this report for the current year.

**Results:** We found no exceptions as a result of these procedures.

**Objective #4:** 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 project.

**Procedures:** We obtained an understanding of the monitoring and budget procedures and how the School District ensures projects are completed within project specifications, timelines, and approved budgets. We tested 41 individually significant items and a nonstatistical random sample of 27 of the remaining 267 disbursements to ensure that the School District has policies and procedures in place to ensure that SPLOST expenditures are approved by an individual who reviews the work on site and to ensure that invoices submitted are valid in regard to work completed and appropriate for the SPLOST projects.

**Results:** We found no exceptions as a result of these procedures.

**Objective #5:** To determine whether management of the School District is following Board approved procurement policies and procedures to ensure to the maximum extent possible that tax funds are expended efficiently and economically.

**Procedures:** We obtained a copy of the School District's procurement and bid policies, including construction contracts. We tested 13 individually significant bids and a nonstatistical random sample of 2 of the remaining 13 bids to ensure that all policies set in place by the Board are being followed and SPLOST funds were spent efficiently and economically. We also reviewed board minutes for any new construction contracts and obtained bid documentation for any SPLOST related construction activity to ensure Board policy is being followed.

**Results:** We found no exceptions as a result of these procedures.

**Objective #6:** Determine that all SPLOST revenue is properly recorded.

**Procedures:** We confirmed with the Georgia Department of Revenue the amounts collected for and remitted to the School District.

**Results:** We found no exceptions as a result of these procedures.

**School District Response:** Walker County Board of Education agrees with the report.

### **Communication of Audit Findings and Recommendations**

No matters were reported.

## Closing

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

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg S. Griffin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Greg S. Griffin  
State Auditor

April 22, 2025