

# **Laurel Financial Group, Inc.**

9 Dorchester Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15241

[www.laurelfinancialgroup.com](http://www.laurelfinancialgroup.com)

412-831-7800

## **Form ADV Part 2A**

Brochure updated December 12, 2023

This Brochure provides information about the qualifications and business practices of Laurel Financial Group. If you have any questions about the contents of this Brochure, please contact us at 412-831-7800.

Laurel Financial Group is a Registered Investment Adviser. Registration of an Investment Adviser does not imply any level of skill or training.

Laurel Financial Group is registered through the Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities.

The information in this Brochure has not been approved or verified by the United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) or by the Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities.

Additional information about Laurel Financial Group and its registered representatives is available at:

- [www.adviserinfo.sec.gov](http://www.adviserinfo.sec.gov).
- [www.brokercheck.finra.org](http://www.brokercheck.finra.org)

Laurel Financial Group CRD: 112389

## **Item 2 - Material Changes**

This Item will summarize material changes made to the Brochure from our last annual update. The date of our last annual update will be included.

Per industry regulations, we will ensure that you receive a summary of any material changes to this and subsequent Brochures within 120 days of the close of our business' fiscal year. Our Brochure may be requested, without charge, by contacting us at 412-831-7800.

### **Summary**

There is no material change to this Brochure.

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#### **Item 4 – Advisory Business**

Laurel Financial Group, Inc., established in 1987, is a full-service independent fee-based financial advisory and asset management firm. Wesley R. Nicholson is the founder and president of the firm.

We work with our clients to help them make informed, intelligent decisions concerning the financial issues that are important to them. Focusing primarily on financial planning, investment management, and retirement planning, we help to organize and integrate these areas of our client's lives with other major elements of their financial life, such as estate planning, risk management, education funding, cash-flow & budgeting, debt management, and tax planning.

As of September 30, 2023, Laurel Financial Group had \$79,982,999 of fee-based assets on a discretionary basis, within 454 client accounts. Laurel Financial Group does not manage fee-based accounts on a non-discretionary basis.

As a fiduciary, Laurel Financial Group provides investment advisory services on client account(s) on a discretionary basis, per the client's specified goals and objectives. For advisory accounts, Laurel Financial Group uses industry acceptable asset allocation strategies to formulate client-appropriate portfolios aimed at reducing risk through diversification of various types of investments.

Laurel Financial Group consults with clients for the purpose of acquiring information concerning their; assets, liabilities, present and future foreseeable obligations, present and future income, desired financial goals, tolerance for risk as well as other related information. With this collective information, we determine a suitable investment profile for each individualized client portfolio. Upon written request, a client may impose guidelines and restrictions on investing in certain securities or types of securities.

Additionally, for a fee, Laurel Financial Group provides detailed analysis and financial planning services related to a client's current and future financial needs. Recommendations are based upon information provided by the client. The scope of services and analysis can encompass general financial planning, estate analysis, asset allocation analysis, budget & cash-flow analysis, education planning, retirement planning, fringe benefit analysis, and other related services that are within the realm of the Adviser's expertise.

It is expressly understood and agreed that Laurel Financial Group is not qualified to, and will not, give legal advice to a client, nor will Laurel Financial Group prepare any legal documents for a client.

#### **Item 5 – Fees and Compensation**

Fees are charged by Laurel Financial Group pursuant to the Laurel Financial Group Advisory Agreement engaged by the client and Laurel Financial Group.

Laurel Financial Group charges, for its investment advisory services, an annual asset management percentage-based fee, calculated on the account balance of the assets in the client's managed account.

The maximum annual non-wrap management fee is 2.0%. Asset management fees are negotiable.

The asset-based management fee is paid quarterly, in advance, and calculated as one-quarter of the annual fee based on the account balance, plus any interest and dividend payments designated to be posted to the account, as of the last day of the previous calendar quarter. The fee for the initial quarter during which the account is established shall be prorated based on the number of days that the account is managed. The quarterly fee is deducted automatically from the client account and is shown on the client's quarterly statement. The fee will be payable first from free credit balances, money market funds, or cash equivalents, if any, and second from the liquidation of other holdings, pursuant to the discretionary authority granted by the client to Laurel Financial Group and the advisor. Clients are encouraged to review their account statements and verify all fee deductions from their account(s). Fees for the quarter are not adjusted for inflows and outflows.

Accounts initiated or terminated during a calendar quarter will be charged a prorated fee. Upon termination of any account, any prepaid, unearned fees will be promptly refunded, and any earned, unpaid fees will be due and payable. Any refunds will be deposited directly into the client account by Commonwealth.

An advisory fee is charged on each separately managed client account and may be based on a household value, as agreed to by the client.

Investments utilized within a managed account are purchased and redeemed at Net Asset Value (NAV)/No Load unless stated and disclosed.

Laurel Financial Group also provides General Financial Planning, Estate Analysis, Asset Allocation Analysis, Budget & Cash-flow Analysis, Education Planning, Retirement Planning, Fringe Benefit Analysis, and other related services that are within the realm of the Adviser's expertise. Fees for these services are billed at a rate of \$175 per hour or per a negotiated flat fee. Payment for Financial Planning and/or related services will be billed directly from Laurel Financial Group to the client and are separate from any account asset management fees. Fees are negotiable. Fees are charged in advance. There are no refunds for work already completed. Prorated refunds will be made of fees received in advance on which work has not been completed.

#### Retirement Plan Rollovers (no obligation/conflict of interest)

Laurel Financial Group is a fiduciary under the Investment Advisers Act of 1940, and when we provide investment advice to you regarding your retirement plan account or individual retirement account, we are also fiduciaries within the meaning of Title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act ("ERISA") and/or the Internal Revenue Code ("IRC"), as applicable, which are laws governing retirement accounts.

The way we make money creates some conflicts with your interests, so we operate under a rule that requires us to act in your best interest and not put our own interest ahead of yours. Under this special rule's provision, we must:

- Meet a professional standard of care when making investment recommendations (give prudent advice),
- Never put our financial interests ahead of yours when making recommendations (give loyal advice),
- Avoid misleading statements about conflicts of interest, fees, and investments,
- Follow policies and procedures designed to ensure that we give advice that is in your best interest,
- Charge no more than is reasonable for our services, and
- Give you basic information about conflicts of interest.

Upon termination of employment or retirement, a former employee typically will have four options and may engage in a combination of the following options.

- Leave the assets in the plan (if permitted)
- Transfer the assets to a new employer plan (if permitted)
- Take a distribution (taxes/penalties may apply)
- Transfer the assets to an IRA (Individual Retirement Account)

Each of the above options has advantages and disadvantages. It is important that you understand your options, potential costs, and benefits prior to transferring your assets to an IRA.

Note: The plan document (Summary Plan Description) will detail the plan provisions available to current and former employees. Contact your plan administrator to obtain a copy of the plan document.

We may provide you with recommendations and advice concerning your employer retirement plan or other qualified accounts. We may recommend that you transfer the assets from your employer's retirement plan or other qualified retirement account to an individual retirement account ("IRA") managed by Laurel Financial Group. As a result, Laurel Financial Group and its advisors may earn an asset-based fee. In contrast, a recommendation that a client or prospective client leave his/her plan assets with his/her former employer or roll the assets to a plan sponsored by a new employer will generally result in no compensation to Laurel Financial Group (unless the client engages Laurel Financial Group to monitor and/or manage the account while maintained at the client's employer). Laurel Financial Group has an economic incentive to encourage a client to roll plan assets into an IRA that Laurel Financial Group will manage or to engage Laurel Financial Group to monitor and/or manage the account while maintained at the client's employer.

There are various factors that Laurel Financial Group may consider before recommending a rollover, including but not limited to:

- The investment options available in the plan versus the investment options available in an IRA,
- Fees and expenses in the plan versus the fees and expenses in an IRA,
- The services and responsiveness of the plan's investment professionals versus Laurel Financial Group,
- Protection of assets from creditors and legal judgments,
- Required Minimum Distributions (RMD) and age considerations,
- Employer stock tax consequences, if any.

No client is under any obligation to roll over plan assets to an IRA managed by Laurel Financial Group or to engage Laurel Financial Group to monitor and/or manage the account while maintained at the client's employer.

#### Additional Client Account Expenses

Commonwealth passes on to our clients the securities clearance and settlement fees charged by its clearing broker/dealer that is retained by Commonwealth.

The client shall be responsible for paying all expenses of the transfer, receipt, safekeeping, servicing, and accounting for the client's cash, securities, and other property, including any ticket charges incident to the purchase or sale of client securities. Service fees that apply to the account are outlined in Commonwealth's transaction schedule. This schedule is available on Commonwealth's website at: [www.commonwealth.com/clients/media/Commonwealth\\_Brokerage\\_Fee\\_Schedule.pdf](http://www.commonwealth.com/clients/media/Commonwealth_Brokerage_Fee_Schedule.pdf). In addition, we will supply a copy of this information upon request.

Laurel Financial Group frequently uses mutual funds and exchange-traded funds as part of a client portfolio. Mutual funds and exchange-traded funds charge internal management fees, which would increase the overall cost to the client and are in addition to Laurel Financial Group's management fees.

Mutual funds offer varying classes of shares. As available and as applicable, Laurel Financial Group will purchase the most cost-effective share class available through the Commonwealth clearing platform. Mutual fund and exchange-traded fund's fees are disclosed in a fund's prospectus.

Laurel Financial Group does not receive any portion of the above aforementioned fees or expenses.

#### **Item 6 – Performance-Based Fees and Side-By-Side Management**

Laurel Financial Group does not accept performance-based fees – that is, fees based on a share of capital gains on or capital appreciation of the assets of a client.

#### **Item 7 – Types of Clients**

Laurel Financial Group provides portfolio management services to individuals, small businesses, business owners, corporate pension and profit-sharing plans, and trusts.

#### **Item 8 – Methods of Analysis, Investment Strategies and Risk of Loss**

Investing in securities involves risk of loss that a client should be prepared to bear. Laurel Financial Group does not guarantee any level of account performance, or that an account will be profitable over time.

Whenever a client takes cash and puts it to work in any form of investment, he or she does so with the anticipation of receiving a return on the money. The possibility that an investment will return less than expected is known as "investment risk". There also is more than one type of risk, including market risk, inflation risk, credit risk, liquidity risk, interest rate risk, tax risk, and event risk. Considering these and other risks, Laurel Financial Group and its principals will use its best judgment and its good faith efforts in rendering advice and services to clients. Laurel Financial Group will seek to allocate suitable investments to a client portfolio based upon various factors, including a client's; investment time frame, investment experience, investment knowledge, investment goals, cash-flow stability, etc.

Laurel Financial Group uses traditional asset allocation models as a foundation for structuring portfolios to meet a client's expectations and risk tolerance characteristics. Suitable investments are identified by using various criteria and information, which may include but not limited to; a fund manager's tenure, investment performance over varying market cycles, associated risks relative to a peer group or benchmark, fund expenses, bond credit quality and maturity, dividend history, fund size, fundamental

analysis, technical analysis, third-party reports, economic data, and other criteria and/or information sources necessary to provide clarity of the feasibility of a potential investment. Specific investments are then selected from, but not limited to; stocks, bonds, mutual funds, exchange traded funds, and alternative investments.

Neither Laurel Financial Group nor its Advisers represent, warrant, or imply that the services or methods of analysis used can or will predict future results, successfully identify market tops or bottoms, or insulate a client from losses due to market conditions.

### **Item 9: Disciplinary Information**

Neither Laurel Financial Group nor any of its principals have any information applicable to this Item.

As a registered investment adviser, Laurel Financial Group is required to disclose within this Brochure all material facts regarding any legal or disciplinary events, for a period of ten years from the time of the event, that are material to a client's or prospective client's evaluation of Laurel Financial Group or the integrity of Laurel Financial Group's principals.

### **Item 10 – Other Financial Industry Activities and Affiliations**

The Advisers of Laurel Financial Group are registered representatives of Commonwealth Equity Services, Inc.; DBA Commonwealth Financial Network (hereinafter "Commonwealth") of Waltham, Massachusetts, a FINRA-registered broker/dealer and SEC-registered investment advisor. As such, Advisers of Laurel Financial Group execute securities transactions through Commonwealth.

Laurel Financial Group has chosen to partner with Commonwealth Financial Network ("Commonwealth") to provide certain services, including but not limited to fee billing and account performance reporting, to Laurel Financial Group and our clients. For the services it provides, Commonwealth charges Laurel Financial Group an administrative fee at the same time a client is charged asset management fees. The administrative fee is paid by your advisor and is calculated as a percentage of account assets. The administrative fee covers Commonwealth's maintenance costs associated with performance reporting, account reconciliation, auditing, quarterly statements, compliance, and other related services. Commonwealth offers administrative fee discounts based on Laurel Financial Group's total assets.

Clients of Laurel Financial Group are free to execute securities transactions through a broker/dealer of their own choosing. However, if a client elects to implement asset management services through Laurel Financial Group, then the broker/dealer used must be Commonwealth.

Commonwealth shall provide clients with custodial account statements on at least a quarterly basis detailing assets and account activity, including any transactions and fees charged for that period, as well as positions held in the account at period-end. Clients also receive, from Commonwealth's clearing firm National Financial Services ("NFS"), confirmation of account transactions along with annual tax reporting documentation.

Laurel Financial Group recommends that clients review all statements and confirmations in a timely manner.



Advisors of Laurel Financial Group are licensed life, health, and accident brokers with all appropriate state Departments of Insurance and receive commissions on insurance products sold in addition to any investment advisory or financial planning fees. In such cases, there is no advisory fee associated with insurance products, unless otherwise disclosed.

In addition to offering fee-based advisory services through Laurel Financial Group, principals of Laurel Financial Group can offer securities on a commission or fee basis with Commonwealth.

Our advisors are restricted to offering products and services that have been reviewed and approved for sale to the public through Commonwealth pursuant to FINRA Rule 3280.

### **Item 11: Code of Ethics**

As a fiduciary, Laurel Financial Group and its advisors have a duty of utmost good faith to act solely in the best interest of each client. Laurel Financial Group is committed to the principles expressed by the North American Securities Administration regarding ethics and standards of conduct. Laurel Financial Group will provide a copy of our Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct upon request.

Laurel Financial Group has adopted a Code of Ethics for all supervised persons of the firm describing its high standard of business conduct, and fiduciary duty to its clients. The Code of Ethics includes provisions relating to the confidentiality of client information, a prohibition on insider trading, restrictions on the acceptance of significant gifts and the reporting of certain gifts and business entertainment items, and personal securities trading procedures, among other things. All supervised persons of Laurel Financial Group must acknowledge the terms of the Code of Ethics annually, or as amended.

The Code of Ethics is designed to assure that the personal securities trading activity of principals and employees of Laurel Financial Group will not interfere with making decisions in the best interest of clients. Principal and employee trading are continually monitored under Laurel Financial Group's Code of Ethics to reasonably prevent conflicts of interest between Laurel Financial Group and its clients.

All Laurel Financial Group supervised persons are required to purchase or sell a security for their personal accounts only after trading of that same security has been completed in client accounts. Personal accounts include any account in which a supervised person has beneficial interest.

Laurel Financial Group's clients or prospective clients may request a copy of the firm's Code of Ethics by contacting us at 412-831-7800.

### **Item 12 – Brokerage Practices**

Consistent with its fiduciary obligations, Laurel Financial Group is responsible for identifying and approving a broker/dealer to execute trades and a custodian to safe-keep client accounts. As deemed necessary, Laurel Financial Group's Chief Compliance Officer will locate a more suitable broker/dealer and/or custodian using the following factors: Financial condition, acceptable record keeping, ability to

obtain best price, knowledge of markets, knowledge of securities and industries, commission structure, customer service, reputation, and integrity.

As disclosed previously in this brochure, our advisers are Registered Representatives of Commonwealth Financial Network, a registered broker/dealer, member FINRA and SIPC. As Registered Representatives of Commonwealth, our advisors are subject to FINRA Conduct Rule 3280 which restricts registered representatives from conducting securities transactions away from Commonwealth, unless Commonwealth provides the advisor with written authorization. Therefore, our advisors are limited to conducting securities transactions through Commonwealth and its clearing firm, National Financial Services LLC and Pershing ("NFS"). Custody of client assets are maintained by NFS in street name for the benefit of the client. Clients will be assessed transaction charges according to Commonwealth's then-current transaction schedule. Clients may pay higher or lower transaction rates and other fees than available at other broker/dealers. These fees and expenses are separate and distinct from the fee(s) charged by Laurel Financial Group.

#### No Transaction Fee (NTF) Program

NFS offers an NTF program composed of no-load mutual funds. Participating mutual fund sponsors pay a fee to NFS to participate in this program, and a portion of this fee is shared with Commonwealth. None of these additional payments are paid to Laurel Financial Group or any Laurel Financial Group advisor.

The investment advisor services provided by Laurel Financial Group may cost the client more or less than purchasing similar services elsewhere.

Laurel Financial Group strives to treat all clients in a fair and timely manner. When practical, client trades in the same security are bunched in a single order (a "block"), in an effort, to obtain best execution at the best security price available.

If Laurel Financial Group is responsible for a trading error in a client account that results in a loss, Laurel Financial Group will reimburse the client.

Laurel Financial Group does not participate in soft dollar arrangements. As an independent investment adviser, Laurel Financial Group does not maintain proprietary relations with any vendor.

#### **Item 13: Review of Accounts**

Through its discretionary authority and fiduciary duties Laurel Financial Group is responsible for monitoring and managing client account(s) on an ongoing basis. Laurel Financial Group may buy, sell, or exchange investments within a client account periodically to maintain account asset allocation integrity. Clients are responsible for any, and all, tax consequences resulting from any rebalancing or reallocation of a client account.

The client/adviser relationship is maintained and strengthened through open, clear, and ongoing communication. The client is advised that it is necessary to promptly inform Laurel Financial Group of any changes in the client's financial situation, investment goals or objectives. Failure to notify the Laurel Financial Group of any such changes could result in investment recommendations not meeting the needs of the client. The investment advisory services provided by Laurel Financial Group depend largely on the information provided by the client.

At a minimum, asset management clients will receive annual portfolio reviews conducted by the adviser of record. Client reviews and ongoing client communication can be in the form of written correspondence, personal meetings, phone calls, or Emails. Additionally, clients will receive monthly, quarterly, and or annual statements from Commonwealth Financial Network or other product sponsors. Clients can have web-based, 24/7 secured access to their account(s) through Commonwealth's hosted website at [www.investor360.net](http://www.investor360.net). Through Investor360 clients can view holdings, account allocation, transaction history, statements, and other information. Additionally, clients may receive performance reports and other related reports generated by the Adviser, through the Adviser portal of Investor360. There are no different levels of review.

Clients are encouraged to compare reports from Investor360 with statements received from NFS. If any discrepancies exist, clients should defer to the statements received from NFS.

#### **Item 14: Client Referrals and Other Compensation**

Laurel Financial Group does not compensate brokers or other parties for client referrals.

Laurel Financial Group receives an economic benefit from Commonwealth in the form of the support, products, and services Commonwealth makes available to Laurel Financial Group and other investment advisors whose clients maintain their accounts on Commonwealth's platform. The types of economic benefits our firm and our advisors may receive, include, but are not limited to; investment related research, marketing support, discounted or free attendance to conferences or other events, discounts on computer hardware and software, and other business and administrative discounts.

Laurel Financial Group's access to Commonwealth's products and services is not conditioned on our firm or advisors giving particular investment advice to our clients. We do not select products because of the receipt or potential receipt of any monetary or non-monetary assistance received from Commonwealth or product vendors. While the receipt of products and services is a benefit for you and us, it also can be deemed a conflict of interest. We attempt to mitigate any conflict of interest by abiding by our Code of Ethics which requires us to place your interests first and foremost and engaging in a regular review of our relationship with Commonwealth to ensure the relationship continues to be appropriate in all respects for our firm's clients.

#### **Item 15: Custody**

Although Laurel Financial Group does not maintain physical possession of client funds or securities, we are deemed to have custody of certain client assets in instances where we have written authority to withdraw or transfer assets from client accounts. This includes directing delivery of client assets to the client address of record or designated third party. This authority is given by the client, to Laurel Financial Group, through a Standing Letter of Authorization (SLOA) which can be rescinded by the client, in writing, at any time. Both the amount and number of clients that Laurel Financial Group is deemed to have custody of, coincides with the discretionary assets and number of client accounts listed in Item 4 of this ADV 2A. Laurel Financial Group attests compliance with each of the requirements and conditions listed in the PA Department of Banking & Securities Bureau Position regarding SLOA arrangements.

Assets in a client account are held for safekeeping with the account custodian, National Financial Services (NFS). Securities held in a client account shall always be carried in the name(s) of the designated account

owner(s) and will be evidenced by book entry. Clients hold all ownership rights relative to all account holdings.

Laurel Financial Group must forward checks for deposit, to a client account, made payable to the custodian, within 24 hours of receipt.

Clients are advised to compare any statement received from or through Laurel Financial Group with the statements received direct from the account custodian. If there are any discrepancies, the account custodian statement will prevail.

In accordance with anti-money laundering laws and regulation, Laurel Financial Group is prohibited from accepting cash, money orders, traveler checks, or starter checks in connection with any client account.

### **Item 16: Investment Discretion**

Laurel Financial Group receives discretionary authority, from a client, to select the identity and amount of securities bought, sold, or exchanged within the client account. Discretion is to be exercised in a manner consistent with the stated client investment objectives. The client may impose limitations and restrictions, in writing,

Laurel Financial Group's authority to trade securities may be limited by certain federal securities and tax laws that require diversification of investments and favor the holding of investments once made.

Discretionary authority is granted through the execution of Laurel Financial Group's Investment Advisory Agreement and a Limited Trading Authorization form provided by Commonwealth.

### **Class Action Lawsuits**

As a matter of firm policy, Laurel Financial Group nor its advisors have or will accept the authority to file class action claims on behalf of its clients. This policy reflects Laurel Financial Group's recognition that it does not have the expertise to advise clients regarding participating in class actions. In all cases, clients retain the responsibility for evaluating whether it is prudent to join a class action or opt out.

### **Item 17: Voting Client Securities**

Laurel Financial Group does not vote proxies on behalf of clients. Clients are responsible for receiving and voting proxies for any, and all, securities maintained in a client portfolio.

Laurel Financial Group may answer client questions on proxy matters; however, the decision of how to vote proxies rests with the client. The advisor has a fiduciary duty to disclose to the client any material conflicts of interest.

### **Item 18: Financial Information**

As a registered investment advisory firm, we are required to provide you with certain financial information or disclosures about our financial condition.

- Laurel Financial Group does not require prepayment of any dollar amount, in fees per client, six months or more in advance.
- Laurel Financial Group has no financial commitment that impairs its ability to meet contractual and fiduciary commitments to Clients.
- Laurel Financial Group has not been the subject of bankruptcy proceedings or litigation.

**Item 19: Requirements for State-Registered Advisers**

All Investment Adviser Representatives (“IARs”) of Laurel Financial Group must satisfy, at a minimum, the experience and education requirements set out by the individual states where they intend to conduct business. Oftentimes this will require the IAR to pass the North American Securities Administrators Association, Inc.’s Series 65 or Series 66 Uniform Investment Adviser Law Examinations and other licensing requirements.

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**Item 20:** *The following are brief biographical descriptions of principals of Laurel Financial Group for the previously described advisory services:*

**Wesley R. Nicholson, CFP, AIF**

Born 1956

BS Degree, University of Pittsburgh (1978)

Designations: Certified Financial Planner (1987), Accredited Investment Fiduciary (2010)

Registered Representative and Financial Adviser with FINRA broker dealers since 1983 and Commonwealth Financial Network since 1988

President of Laurel Financial Group since inception

Licenses: Series 7, 63, 65, 24, Life-Health-Accident

**Jack E. Doran II, RFC, AIF**

Born 1962

BS Degree, Business Management, Point Park College (1985)

Designations: Registered Financial Consultant (2003), Accredited Investment Fiduciary (2010)

CFP Professional Education Program, College for Financial Planning (2006)

Registered Representative and Financial Adviser with FINRA broker dealers since 1995 and Commonwealth Financial Network since 1996

Vice President of Laurel Financial Group

Licenses: Series 7, 63, 65, Life-Health-Accident

**Guy C. Filewich, RFC**

Born 1958

BSBA/Finance, University of Pittsburgh (2002)

Designation: Registered Financial Consultant (2009)

Registered Representative and Financial Adviser with FINRA broker dealers since 2004 and with Commonwealth Financial Network since 2008

Licenses: Series 7, 66, Life-Health-Accident

**Mike Allen, RICP**

Born 1990

B.S. Mechanical Engineering, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH (2012)

Registered Representative and Financial Adviser with FINRA broker dealers since 2015 and with Commonwealth Financial Network since 2015

Retirement Income Certified Professional (RICP) designation, 2019

Licenses: Series 7, 24, 66

**Ralph Wagner**

Born 1973

University of Phoenix, Phoenix, AZ - bachelor's 2013

Laurel Financial Group, Financial Adviser, 2023-Present

Commonwealth Financial Network, Financial Adviser and Registered Representative, 2023-Present

PFS Investments Inc., Sales, 2022-2023

Licenses: Series 6, 63, 65, fixed insurance license

## **Explanation of Designations:**

**CFP® - Certified Financial Planner:** The CFP® certification process, administered by the CFP® Board, identifies to the public that those individuals who have been authorized to use the CFP® certification marks in the U.S. have met rigorous professional standards and have agreed to adhere to the principles of integrity, objectivity, competence, fairness, confidentiality, professionalism, and diligence when dealing with clients. CFP® certificants must pass the comprehensive CFP® Certification Examination, pass CFP® Board's *Fitness Standards for Candidates and Registrants*, agree to abide by CFP Board's *Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility* which puts clients' interests first and comply with the *Financial Planning Practice Standards* which spell out what clients should be able to reasonably expect from the financial planning engagement. Additional information about the CFP® designation can be obtained at [www.cfp.net](http://www.cfp.net).

**AIF® - Accredited Investment Fiduciary®:** A professional designation awarded by fi360 that demonstrates the focus on all the components of a comprehensive investment process, related fiduciary standards of care, and commitment to excellence. AIF® designees undergo an initial training program, annual continuing education (6 hours per year), and pledge to abide by the designation's code of ethics. Additional information about the AIF designation can be obtained at [www.fi360.com](http://www.fi360.com).

**RFC® - The Registered Financial Consultant (RFC®)** designation is a certification awarded by the International Association of Registered Financial Consultants (IARFC), a non-profit professional organization. To be eligible, financial practitioners must possess a baccalaureate or graduate degree in financial planning services or hold one of the following professional degrees or designation: AAMS, CFA, CFP, ChFC, CLU, CPA, EA, JD. Alternatively, a candidate may complete a CFP-equivalent course at an accredited institution or an IARFC approved curriculum and passed a written examination. Each applicant must have at least four years of professional experience in the field of financial planning or financial services, meet local licensing requirements, and adhere to the RFC Code of Ethics. The RFC designation requires 40 hours of Continuing Education every year, including two hours of business ethics every two years.

**ChFC® - Chartered Financial Consultant.** The ChFC® is the "Advanced Financial Planning" designation awarded by The American College of Financial Services. Charter holders use the designation ChFC® are qualified to provide comprehensive advanced financial planning for individuals, professionals, and small business owners. The authority to use the ChFC® mark is granted by the Certification Committee of the Board of Trustees of The American College and is contingent on adherence to a set of ethical guidelines.

**RICP® - Retirement Income Certified Professional:** The RICP® designation provides comprehensive instruction on building integrated and comprehensive retirement income plans. A key focus is understanding, choosing, and executing a strategy for generating sustainable income from available resources—whether that means using systematic withdrawals from a portfolio, building an income floor with bonds or annuities, or using a bucket strategy. The program, developed by more than 45 of the nation's top retirement planning experts, provides students with best practices in areas including: Social Security claiming, evaluating, and addressing risks faced in retirement, choosing distributions from employer sponsored plans, Medicare, and other health insurance choices, planning for long-term care needs, choosing appropriate housing, Income tax and legacy planning.



## **Item 21 - Appendix**

### **Definitions**

**Fiduciary** - A person who looks after the assets on the other's behalf is expected to act in the best interests of the person whose assets they oversee. This is known as "fiduciary duty".

**Asset allocation** - An investment strategy that aims to balance risk and reward by apportioning a portfolio's assets per an individual's goals, risk tolerance and investment horizon.

**Diversification** - A risk management technique that mixes a wide variety of investments within a portfolio.

**Securities Exchange Commission (SEC)** - A federal agency which holds primary responsibility for enforcing the federal securities laws and regulating the securities industry, the nation's stock and options exchanges, and other electronic securities markets in the United States.

**Broker-Dealer** - A firm in the business of buying and selling securities operating as both a broker and a dealer depending on the transaction.

**Registered Representative** - A person who works for a brokerage company that is licensed by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and acts as an account executive for clients, trading investment products such as stocks, bonds, and mutual funds.

**Soft Dollar** - A means of paying brokerage firms for their services through commission revenue, as opposed to through normal direct payments (hard dollar fees).

**Proxy** - An agent legally authorized to act on behalf of another party. Shareholders not attending a company's annual meeting may choose to vote their shares by proxy by allowing someone else to cast votes on their behalf.

**Custodian** - A financial institution that has legal responsibility for safeguarding a customer's securities. A custodian may also act as a transfer agent, maintaining records of shareholder transactions and balances.

**Net Asset Value (NAV)** - A term used to describe a mutual fund's price per share or exchange-traded fund's (ETF) per-share value. In both cases, the per-share dollar amount of the fund is calculated by dividing the total value of all the securities in its portfolio, less any liabilities, by the number of fund shares outstanding.

**FINRA (Financial Industry Regulatory Authority)** - A regulatory body responsible for governing business between brokers, dealers, and the investing public.

**Commonwealth Financial Network (CFN)** - A privately held independent broker/dealer based in Waltham, MA and San Diego, California. Commonwealth has approximately 1,800 independent financial planners for whom it serves as a "back office," processing investment transactions on behalf of their clients, and to whom the firm provides resources and consulting services to support the advisors' businesses.

**National Financial Services (NFS)** - A wholly owned subsidiary of Fidelity Investments. Functions as Client account custodian, in addition to performing critical trade processing, clearance, client reporting, and systems work that backs Commonwealth and Laurel Financial Group.



**Fundamental analysis** is a method of evaluating a security that entails attempting to measure its intrinsic value by examining related economic, financial, and other qualitative and quantitative factors. Fundamental analysis attempts to study everything that can affect the security's value, including macroeconomic factors (e.g., the overall economy and industry conditions) and company-specific factors (e.g., financial condition and management). The end goal of performing fundamental analysis is to produce a value that an investor can compare with the security's current price, with the aim of figuring out what sort of position to take with that security (underpriced = buy, overpriced = sell or short). This method of security analysis is considered the opposite of technical analysis.

**Technical Analysis** is a method of evaluating securities by analyzing statistics generated by market activity, such as past prices and volume. Technical analysts do not try to measure a security's intrinsic value. Instead, they use charts and other tools to find patterns that can suggest future activity. A person using technical analysis generally believes that the performance of a stock, rather than the performance of the company itself, has more to do with the company's future stock price.

**PA Department of Banking & Securities - The Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities** is a cabinet-level agency in Pennsylvania. The agency provides oversight of financial institutions and is charged with fostering economic growth while concurrently protecting consumers and investors.