



**MUNICIPAL COURT 05-0-03
ALLEGHENY COUNTY
EXAMINATION REPORT
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2011 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012**

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE - AUDITOR GENERAL

DEPARTMENT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL



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EUGENE A. DePASQUALE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Independent Auditor's Report

The Honorable Daniel P. Meuser
Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue
Harrisburg, PA 17128

We have examined the accompanying statement of receipts and disbursements of Municipal Court 05-0-03, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, for the period January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2012, pursuant to the requirements of Section 401(c) of *The Fiscal Code*, 72 P.S. § 401(c). This Statement is the responsibility of the Municipal Court's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on this Statement based on our examination.

Our examination was conducted in accordance with attestation standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the standards applicable to attestation engagements contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. An examination includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the Statement and performing such other procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances. We believe that our examination provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

We are mandated by Section 401(c) of *The Fiscal Code* to audit the accounts of each Municipal Court to determine whether all moneys collected on behalf of the Commonwealth have been correctly assessed, reported and promptly remitted. *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States include attestation engagements as a separate type of audit. An attestation engagement performed pursuant to *Government Auditing Standards* involves additional standards that exceed the standards provided by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Accordingly, this attestation engagement complies with both *Government Auditing Standards* and Section 401(c) of *The Fiscal Code*.

Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)

In our opinion, the Statement referred to above presents, in all material respects, the operations of the Municipal Court as it pertains to receipts made on behalf of the Commonwealth for the period January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2012, in conformity with the criteria set forth in Note 1.

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we are required to report findings of significant deficiencies in internal control, violations of provisions of contracts or grant agreements, and abuse that are material to the Statement and any fraud and illegal acts that are more than inconsequential that come to our attention during our examination. We are also required to obtain the views of management on those matters. We performed our examination to express an opinion on whether the Statement is presented in accordance with the criteria described above and not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the internal control over reporting on the Statement or on compliance and other matters; accordingly, we express no such opinions.

A control deficiency exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent or detect misstatements on a timely basis. A significant deficiency is a control deficiency, or combination of control deficiencies, that adversely affects the Municipal Court's ability to initiate, authorize, record, process, or report data reliably in accordance with the applicable criteria such that there is more than a remote likelihood that a misstatement of the Municipal Court's Statement that is more than inconsequential will not be prevented or detected by the Municipal Court's internal control. We consider the deficiency described in the finding below to be a significant deficiency in internal control over reporting on the Statement:

- Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures - Recurring.

Independent Auditor's Report (Continued)

A material weakness is a significant deficiency or combination of significant deficiencies that results in more than a remote likelihood that a material misstatement of the Statement will not be prevented or detected by the Municipal Court's internal control. Our consideration of the internal control over reporting on the Statement would not necessarily disclose all matters in the internal control that might be significant deficiencies and, accordingly, would not necessarily disclose all significant deficiencies that are also considered to be material weaknesses. However, we believe that the significant deficiency described above is not a material weakness.

The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, and the Municipal Court and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.



October 28, 2013

EUGENE A. DEPASQUALE
Auditor General

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MUNICIPAL COURT 05-0-03
 ALLEGHENY COUNTY
 STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
 FOR THE PERIOD
 JANUARY 1, 2011 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

Receipts:

Department of Transportation		
Title 75 Fines	\$	778,516
Motor Carrier Road Tax Fines		250
Overweight Fines		2,687
Commercial Driver Fines		6,000
Littering Law Fines		3,755
Child Restraint Fines		4,079
Department of Revenue Court Costs		889,722
Crime Victims' Compensation Bureau Costs		178,610
Crime Commission Costs/Victim Witness Services Costs		127,607
Domestic Violence Costs		50,438
Emergency Medical Service Fines		286,950
CAT/MCARE Fund Surcharges		875,701
Judicial Computer System Fees		491,778
Access to Justice Fees		129,805
Criminal Justice Enhancement Account Fees		16,350
Judicial Computer Project Surcharges		74,633
Constable Service Surcharges		1,193
Miscellaneous State Fines and Costs		85,855
		<hr/>
Total receipts (Note 2)		4,003,929
Disbursements to Commonwealth (Note 3)		<hr/> (4,003,929) <hr/>
Balance due Commonwealth (District Court) per settled reports (Note 4)		-
Examination adjustments		<hr/> -
Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (District Court) for the period January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2012	\$	<hr/> <hr/> -

Notes to the Statement of Receipts and Disbursements are an integral part of this report.

MUNICIPAL COURT 05-0-03
 ALLEGHENY COUNTY
 NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
 FOR THE PERIOD
 JANUARY 1, 2011 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

1. Criteria

The Statement of Receipts and Disbursements provides a summary of receipts and disbursements by category. The categories and the amounts of fines, costs, fees, and surcharges assessed are based on Pennsylvania laws and regulations.

The Statement was prepared in accordance with reporting requirements prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue. Under this method, only the Commonwealth portion of cash receipts and disbursements are presented, revenues are recognized when received, and expenditures are recognized when paid.

2. Receipts

Receipts are comprised of fines, costs, fees, and surcharges collected on behalf of the Commonwealth. These fines, costs, fees, and surcharges represent collections made on traffic, non-traffic, civil, and criminal cases filed with the Municipal Court.

3. Disbursements

Total disbursements are comprised as follows:

District Court checks issued to:

Department of Revenue	\$ 3,947,368
Office of Inspector General	50,686
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts	5,862
Pennsylvania Wine and Spirits	<u>13</u>
Total	<u><u>\$ 4,003,929</u></u>

4. Magisterial District Judges Serving During Examination Period

Various Magisterial District Judges served at Municipal Court 05-0-03 for the period January 1, 2011 to December 31, 2012.

MUNICIPAL COURT 05-0-03
ALLEGHENY COUNTY
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE PERIOD
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Finding - Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures - Recurring

We cited the Municipal Court for inadequate arrest warrant and DL-38 procedures in our last three examination reports, the most recent for the period ending December 31, 2010. However, our current examination found that the municipal court did not correct this issue. Warrants and Requests For Suspension Of Operating Privileges (DL-38s) are used to enforce the collection of monies on traffic and non-traffic cases in which defendants failed to make payments when required. A Warrant of Arrest (AOPC 417) is used to authorize an official to arrest a defendant, to collect fines and costs from the defendant after a disposition, or to collect collateral for a trial. If the defendant does not respond within ten days to a citation or summons, a Warrant of Arrest may be issued. A Request for Suspension of Driving Privileges for Failure to Respond to a Citation or Summons or Pay Fines and Costs Imposed (AOPC 638A) is used to notify the defendant in writing that his/her license will be suspended if he/she fails to respond to the traffic citation or summons. A DL-38 cannot be issued for a parking violation.

Once again, during our testing of warrant procedures, we noted that warrant procedures established by the *Magisterial District Judge Automated Office Clerical Procedures Manual* (Manual) were not always followed. The Magisterial District Judge did not consistently issue warrants when required. We tested 24 instances in which a warrant was required to be issued. Our testing disclosed that ten were not issued timely and two were not issued at all. The time of issuance ranged from 70 days to 341 days.

In addition, of 15 warrants required to be returned or recalled, 7 were not returned or recalled, and 3 were not returned timely. The time of issuance to the time of return ranged from 250 days to 463 days.

Furthermore, we tested 12 instances in which a DL-38 was required to be issued. Our testing disclosed that 11 were not issued timely. The time of issuance ranged from 74 days to 154 days.

The Manual establishes the uniform written internal control policies and procedures for all Municipal Courts.

Warrant Issuance Procedures: The Manual states that on October 1, 1998, new warrant procedures took effect for summary cases. Amendments were made to Pa.R.Crim.P. Rules 430, 431, 454, 455, 456, 460, 461, and 462. To comply with the new changes, the Notice of Impending Warrant (AOPC A418) was created with the purpose of informing the defendant that failure to pay the amount due or to appear for a Payment Determination Hearing will result in the issuance of an arrest warrant. The defendant is also informed that his/her response must be made within ten days of the date of the notice.

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Finding - Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures - Recurring (Continued)

According to Pa.R.Crim.P. Rule 430, a Notice of Impending Warrant may be issued in a post-disposition summary case for any of the following reasons:

- A guilty disposition is recorded and no payment is made or a time payment schedule is not created.
- A guilty disposition is recorded and a previously deposited collateral payment, when applied, does not pay the case balance in full.
- A guilty disposition is recorded and the defendant defaults on a time payment schedule.

According to Pa.R.Crim.P. 430, a warrant SHALL be issued in a summary case for any of the following reasons (a Notice of Impending Warrant is not necessary for the following):

- The defendant has failed to respond to a citation or summons that was served either personally or by certified mail, return receipt requested.
- The citation or summons is returned undeliverable.
- The Magisterial District Judge has reasonable grounds to believe that the defendant will not obey a summons.

Warrant Return Procedures: The Manual states that the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) recommends that those in possession of arrest warrants should be notified to return warrants that have not been served. For summary traffic and non-traffic cases, outstanding warrants should be returned to the Magisterial District Judge's office within 60 days of issuance. Returned warrants can either be recorded in the Magisterial District Judge System (MDJS) as unserved, if the defendant is unable to be located; or they can be recalled for reissue, if the server has not exhausted all means of finding the defendant.

DL-38 Procedures: The Manual states that once a citation is given to the defendant or a summons is issued, the defendant has ten days to respond. If on the eleventh day, the defendant has not responded, 75 Pa.C.S.A. §1533 requires that the defendant be notified that he/she has fifteen days from the date of notice to respond to the citation/summons before his/her license is suspended. In accordance with Section 1533 of the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code, the defendant has 15 days to respond to the defendant's copy of the DL-38. If the defendant does not respond by the fifteenth day, the Magisterial District Judge's office shall notify the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation by issuing the appropriate License Suspension Request (AOPC 638B,D,E).

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Finding - Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures - Recurring (Continued)

In addition, 75 Pa.C.S.A. §1533 also requires a post-disposition DL-38 (AOPC 638B/E) be issued if the defendant neglects to pay fines and costs imposed at the time of disposition, or fails to make a scheduled time payment.

The failure to follow warrant and DL-38 procedures could result in uncollected fines and unpunished offenders. Additionally, the risk is increased for funds to be lost or misappropriated.

This condition existed because the municipal court ignored our prior audit recommendation to review the tickler reports for warrants daily. Adherence to the uniform internal control policies and procedures, as set forth in the Manual, would have ensured that there were adequate internal controls over warrants and DL-38s.

Recommendations

We strongly recommend that the Municipal Court review the tickler reports for warrants and DL-38s daily and take appropriate action as required by the Manual. We further again recommend that the court review warrant control reports and notify police or other officials to return warrants that are unserved for 60 days for summary traffic and non-traffic cases as required by the Manual.

Management's Response

The Municipal Court Administrator responded as follows:

The Pittsburgh Municipal Court 05-0-03 serves as a central court for all criminal, traffic, and non-traffic cases filed by the City of Pittsburgh Police Bureau. During the audit period warrants were served by a group of City Police Officers and the Allegheny County Sheriff's Department. Additionally, the Court began to utilize the services of a constable agency during the middle of this audit period. These groups have been working diligently to serve the warrants but there is an enormous volume of cases. During the audit period 94,466 traffic and non-traffic citations were filed at Pittsburgh Municipal Court. The Court continues to employ a collection agency and is in the process of starting a pilot project with area constables to serve the high volume of warrants.

The new computer system and an increase in staff involved in the issuance of DL-38's has helped to resolve this issue.

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FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS
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Finding - Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures - Recurring (Continued)

Auditor's Conclusion

This is a recurring finding. Although we recognize the court's concerns about volume and staffing, we strongly recommend that the office comply with our recommendations.

MUNICIPAL COURT 05-0-03
ALLEGHENY COUNTY
REPORT DISTRIBUTION
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2011 TO DECEMBER 31, 2012

This report was initially distributed to:

The Honorable Daniel P. Meuser
Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue

The Honorable Zygmunt Pines
Court Administrator of Pennsylvania
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

The Honorable Rich Fitzgerald

Allegheny County Executive of the Board of
Commissioners

The Honorable Chelsa Wagner

Controller

Ms. Claire Capristo

District Court Administrator

Ms. Angharad Stock

Administrator

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at <http://www.auditorgen.state.pa.us>. Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 231 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: news@auditorgen.state.pa.us.