

DISTRICT COURT 38-1-12

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

EXAMINATION REPORT

FOR THE PERIOD

JANUARY 1, 2003 TO DECEMBER 31, 2005

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Independent Auditor's Report

The Honorable Thomas W. Wolf
Secretary
Department of Revenue
Harrisburg, PA 17128

We have examined the accompanying statement of receipts and disbursements (Statement) of District Court 38-1-12, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania (District Court), for the period January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2005, pursuant to the requirements of Section 401(c) of *The Fiscal Code*. This Statement is the responsibility of the District 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 district court to determine whether all moneys collected on behalf of the Commonwealth have been correctly reported and promptly transmitted. *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 District Court as it pertains to receipts made on behalf of the Department of Revenue and other state agencies for the period ended December 31, 2005, in conformity with the criteria set forth in Note 1.

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we are required to report findings of 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 the Statement or on compliance and other matters; accordingly, we express no such opinions. Our examination disclosed certain findings that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards* and those findings, along with the views of management, are described in the Findings and Recommendations section of the report.

We are concerned in light of the District Court's failure to correct a previously reported finding regarding inadequate arrest warrant procedures. The District Court should strive to implement the recommendations and corrective action noted in this examination report. During our current examination, we noted several weaknesses in the internal controls over payments being dropped off after office hours and arrest warrants that need corrective action. These significant deficiencies increase the risk for funds to be lost, stolen, or misappropriated and in uncollected fines and unpunished offenders.

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

June 26, 2007

JACK WAGNER
Auditor General

DISTRICT COURT 38-1-12
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2003 TO DECEMBER 31, 2005

Receipts:

Department of Transportation		
Title 75 Fines	\$	163,218
Overweight Fines		263
Littering Law Fines		213
Child Restraint Fines		341
Department of Revenue Court Costs		138,012
Crime Victims' Compensation Bureau Costs		21,370
Crime Commission Costs/Victim Witness Services Costs		16,333
Department of Public Welfare		
Domestic Violence Costs		6,222
Attend Care Fines		233
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Fines		450
Fish and Boat Commission Fines		11,731
Game Commission Fines		14,863
Emergency Medical Service Fines		46,717
CAT/MCARE Fund Surcharges		152,049
Judicial Computer System Fees		68,788
Access to Justice Fees		11,790
Constable Service Surcharges		12,174
Department of Labor and Industry Fines		223
Miscellaneous State Fines		400
		<hr/>
Total receipts (Note 2)	\$	665,390
Disbursements to Department of Revenue (Note 3)		<hr/> (665,390)
Balance due Department of Revenue (District Court) per settled reports (Note 4)		-
Examination adjustments		<hr/> -
Adjusted balance due Department of Revenue (District Court) for the period January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2005	\$	<hr/> <hr/> -

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

DISTRICT COURT 38-1-12
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2003 TO DECEMBER 31, 2005

1. Criteria

The Statement of Receipts and Disbursements (Statement) has been prepared in accordance with Title 72 P.S. Section 401 (c) of *The Fiscal Code*, which requires the Department of the Auditor General to determine whether all money collected on behalf of the Commonwealth has been remitted promptly and to provide the Department of Revenue with a report to enable them to settle an account covering any delinquency.

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 Department of Revenue and other state agencies. These fines, costs, fees, and surcharges represent collections made on traffic, non-traffic, civil, and criminal cases filed with the District Court.

3. Disbursements

Total disbursements are comprised as follows:

Checks issued to the Department of Revenue	<u>\$ 665,390</u>
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4. Balance Due Department Of Revenue (District Court) For The Period January 1, 2003 To December 31, 2005

This balance reflects the summary of monthly transmittal reports as settled by the Department of Revenue.

5. Magisterial District Judge Serving During Examination Period

John J. Durkin served at District Court 38-1-12 for the period January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2005.

DISTRICT COURT 38-1-12
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2003 TO DECEMBER 31, 2005

Finding No. 1 - Unsecured Payment Drop-Off Utilized By The District Court

Our examination disclosed that monies are being dropped off after office hours and on weekends in the mail slot in the door of the district court.

If the district court accepts payments after office hours, the court should install a locked, secured, drop-off box, which can only be accessed by authorized personnel. Additionally, the court should notify defendants that only payments made by check will be accepted in the drop-off box.

The office was unaware of the potential internal control weakness arising from receiving monies in a mail slot after business hours.

Good internal accounting controls require that all monies collected be adequately safeguarded and deposited in the bank at the end of every day. The *Magisterial District Judge Automated Office Clerical Procedures Manual* (Manual) establishes the uniform written internal control policies and procedures for all district courts. The Manual requires that:

All money, including partial payments received by the Magisterial District Judge office (e.g. cash, checks, and money orders), must be deposited in the bank at the end of every business day. A bank night depository may be used by all (night) courts as well as by any court that cannot get to the bank during banking hours. Money should not be taken home, left in the office overnight, or unattended. The Daily Cash Balancing procedure must be completed every day.

Without a good system of internal control over funds received by the office, the potential is increased that funds could be lost, stolen, or misappropriated.

Adherence to good internal accounting controls and the uniform internal control policies and procedures, as set forth in the Manual, would have ensured that there were adequate internal controls over collections.

Recommendations

We recommend that the district court take measures to ensure that monies are not dropped off after hours and on weekends in the mail slot in the door of the district court. If monies are accepted after office hours, the court should install a locked, secured, drop-off box, which can only be accessed by authorized personnel. Additionally, the court should notify defendants that only checks will be accepted in the drop-off box.

DISTRICT COURT 38-1-12
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2003 TO DECEMBER 31, 2005

Finding No. 1 – Unsecured Payment Drop-Off Utilized By The District Court (Continued)

Management's Response

The Magisterial District Judge responded as follows:

I will have property manager place a locked box inside door since many of our clients can not get to office during day light hours.

DISTRICT COURT 38-1-12
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2003 TO DECEMBER 31, 2005

Finding No. 2 - Inadequate Arrest Warrant Procedures

Warrants 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, or 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.

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. Of our sample testing of 29 warrants required to be issued, 17 warrants were not issued timely and 5 warrants were not issued at all. The time of issuance ranged from 77 days to 379 days.

In addition, of 12 warrants required to be returned or recalled, 6 were not returned or recalled, and 1 was not returned timely. The time of issuance to the time of return was 376 days.

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

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.

DISTRICT COURT 38-1-12
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2003 TO DECEMBER 31, 2005

Finding No. 2 - Inadequate Arrest Warrant Procedures (Continued)

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.

The failure to follow warrant procedures when required could result in uncollected fines and unpunished offenders.

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.

This finding was cited in the prior audit period ending December 31, 2002.

Recommendations

We again recommend that the district court review the tickler reports for warrants 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 Magisterial District Judge responded as follows:

We will again request that staff and constables adhere to warrant procedures and return of warrants.

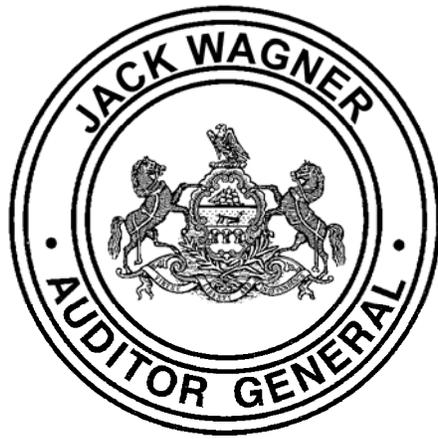
DISTRICT COURT 38-1-12
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
COMMENT
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2003 TO DECEMBER 31, 2005

Comment - Compliance With Prior Audit Recommendation

During our prior audit, we made the following recommendation:

- That the office review the tickler reports for DL-38s daily and take appropriate action as required by the *Magisterial District Judge Automated Office Clerical Procedures Manual*.

During our current examination, we noted that the office complied with our recommendation.



DISTRICT COURT 38-1-12
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
REPORT DISTRIBUTION
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2003 TO DECEMBER 31, 2005

This report was initially distributed to:

The Honorable Thomas W. Wolf
Secretary
Department of Revenue

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

District Court 38-1-12
Montgomery County
2093 East High Street
Pottstown, PA 19464

Michael R. Kehs, Esquire

District Court Administrator

The Honorable John J. Durkin

Magisterial District Judge

The Honorable Thomas Jay Ellis

Chairman of the Board of Commissioners

The Honorable Eric Kretschman

Controller

This report is a matter of public record. Copies of this report may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 318 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120. To view this report online or to contact the Department of the Auditor General, please access our web site at www.auditorgen.state.pa.us.