



DISTRICT COURT 03-2-04
NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
EXAMINATION REPORT
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2005 TO DECEMBER 31, 2007

Independent Auditor's Report

Mr. C. Daniel Hassell
Acting Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue
Harrisburg, PA 17128

We have examined the accompanying statement of receipts and disbursements (Statement) of District Court 03-2-04, Northampton County, Pennsylvania (District Court), for the period January 1, 2005 to December 31, 2007, pursuant to the requirements of Section 401(c) of *The Fiscal Code*, 72 P.S. § 401(c). 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.

Except as discussed in the fourth paragraph, 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 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)

As discussed in Finding No. 2, the traffic and non-traffic citations filed between January 1, 2005 and June 30, 2005 were destroyed and not available for the examination. Without these records, we could not perform our standard examination procedures. As a result, the scope of our examination of the District Court's Statement was limited, and we were unable to satisfy ourselves by other examination procedures.

In our opinion, except for the effects, if any, of the matters noted in the preceding paragraph, 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 Commonwealth for the period ended December 31, 2007, 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 District 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 District Court's Statement that is more than inconsequential will not be prevented or detected by the District Court's internal control. We consider the deficiencies described in the findings below to be significant deficiencies in internal control over the reporting on the Statement:

- Bank Deposit Slips Were Not Validated.
- Failure To Follow *The Supreme Court Of Pennsylvania Administrative Office Of Pennsylvania Courts Record Retention & Disposition Schedule With Guidelines* Procedures.
- Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures.

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 District 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, of the significant deficiencies described above, we consider the first two bulleted deficiencies to be material weaknesses.

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

We are concerned in light of the District Court's failure to correct a previously reported finding regarding inadequate arrest warrant and DL-38 procedures. Additionally, during our current examination, we noted several weaknesses in the internal controls over bank deposit slips and in record retention that need corrective action. These significant deficiencies could result in uncollected fines and unpunished offenders and increase the risk for funds to be lost or misappropriated. The District Court should strive to implement the recommendations and corrective action noted in this examination report.

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.

November 4, 2009

JACK WAGNER
Auditor General



DISTRICT COURT 03-2-04
NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2005 TO DECEMBER 31, 2007

Receipts:

| | | |
|---|------------|------------------|
| Department of Transportation | | |
| Title 75 Fines | \$ 211,388 | |
| Motor Carrier Road Tax Fines | 4,098 | |
| Overweight Fines | 3,675 | |
| Commercial Driver Fines | 2,120 | |
| Littering Law Fines | 1,452 | |
| Child Restraint Fines | 255 | |
| Department of Revenue Court Costs | 102,828 | |
| Crime Victims' Compensation Bureau Costs | 16,773 | |
| Crime Commission Costs/Victim Witness Services Costs | 12,127 | |
| Department of Public Welfare | | |
| Domestic Violence Costs | 2,874 | |
| Attend Care Fines | 63 | |
| Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Fines | 622 | |
| Department of Agriculture Fines | 300 | |
| Fish and Boat Commission Fines | 202 | |
| Game Commission Fines | 2,092 | |
| Emergency Medical Service Fines | 59,066 | |
| CAT/MCARE Fund Surcharges | 182,278 | |
| Judicial Computer System Fees | 59,583 | |
| Access to Justice Fees | 14,062 | |
| Constable Service Surcharges | 4,332 | |
| Firearm Education and Training Costs | 23 | |
| State Police Crime Lab Fees | 116 | |
| | <hr/> | |
| Total receipts (Note 2) | | \$ 680,329 |
| Disbursements to Commonwealth (Note 3) | | <hr/> (680,329) |
| Balance due Commonwealth (District Court) per settled reports (Note 4) | | - |
| Examination adjustments | | <hr/> - |
| Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (District Court) for the period January 1, 2005 to December 31, 2007 | | <hr/> <hr/> \$ - |

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

DISTRICT COURT 03-2-04
NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2005 TO DECEMBER 31, 2007

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 District Court.

3. Disbursements

Total disbursements are comprised as follows:

District Court checks issued to:

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Department of Revenue | <u>\$ 680,329</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------------|

4. Balance Due Commonwealth (District Court) For The Period January 1, 2005 To December 31, 2007

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

5. Magisterial District Judge Serving During Examination Period

Diane S. Repyneck served at District Court 03-2-04 for the period January 1, 2005 to December 31, 2007.

DISTRICT COURT 03-2-04
NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2005 TO DECEMBER 31, 2007

Finding No. 1 - Bank Deposit Slips Were Not Validated

Our review of the district court's accounting records disclosed that the office copy of the bank deposit slip was not validated by the bank. The district court received a validated receipt from the bank, but this only confirmed the total amount deposited and not the actual make up of the deposit (i.e. cash and check mix).

The district court was not aware of the potential internal control weaknesses caused by not having the "cash in" amount validated on the deposit slip.

Good internal accounting controls require that the amount of each check and the total amount of cash deposited are identified on the deposit slip. The office copy of each deposit should be brought to the bank to be validated.

Without a good system of internal control over funds received by the office, the possibility of funds being lost or misappropriated increases significantly.

Recommendation

We recommend that the district court secure the bank's validation on the court's copy of the deposit slip to include the "cash in" amount.

Management's Response

The Senior Magisterial District Judge responded as follows:

Deposit slips have now been given in two parts, one to be stamped by the bank. It will be then be put in our file showing cash deposited.

Auditor's Conclusion

During our next examination we will determine if the office complied with our recommendation.

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NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2005 TO DECEMBER 31, 2007

Finding No. 2 - Failure To Follow The *Supreme Court Of Pennsylvania Administrative Office Of Pennsylvania Courts Record Retention & Disposition Schedule With Guidelines Procedures*

Our examination disclosed that traffic and non-traffic citations issued between January 1, 2005 and June 30, 2005 were not available for examination and have been destroyed in August 2006 by the district court without being in compliance with the procedures described in the *Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts Record Retention & Disposition Schedule with Guidelines* (Schedule).

The Schedule outlines the proper procedures for the destruction of non-permanent court records. Disposal request procedures include:

A request to destroy non-permanent scheduled records must be submitted by the record custodian requesting permission to dispose of the record(s) to the Record Retention Officer utilizing a Unified Judicial System Disposal Log for Non-Permanent Records form adopted by the AOPC as provided in Pa.R.J.A. No. 507. The Record Retention Officer shall review the Records Disposal Log Form for completeness and shall grant written permission to dispose of such non-permanent records upon ascertaining that the applicable retention period as set forth in the schedule has been met. Written approval from the AOPC is not necessary before destroying non-permanent records as identified in the schedule. A log of individual disposition actions involving non-permanent records must be maintained. Copies of the Records Disposal Log Form shall be submitted on an annual basis to the AOPC. (See §4.5 Form Retention)

Although the Schedule identifies traffic and non-traffic citations as records that may be destroyed after three (3) years, the Schedule also states in part:

Records subject to audit must be retained for the periods listed in the schedule and must be audited and all findings resolved before such records may be destroyed. [Emphasis added.]

The failure to maintain these records resulted in an unclear examination trail. Additionally, collections associated with missing cases files and documents could be lost or misappropriated.

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NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2005 TO DECEMBER 31, 2007

Finding No. 2 - Failure To Follow The *Supreme Court Of Pennsylvania Administrative Office Of Pennsylvania Courts Record Retention & Disposition Schedule With Guidelines Procedures (Continued)*

Recommendations

We recommend that the district court comply with the procedures listed in the Schedule.

We further recommend that the district court not destroy citations until after they have been subject to examination by the Department of the Auditor General.

Management's Response

The Senior Magisterial District Judge responded as follows:

We now understand that any files that have not been audited cannot be destroyed.
We had followed our record retention policy given to us from County.

Auditor's Conclusion

During our next examination we will determine if the office complied with our recommendations.

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FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2005 TO DECEMBER 31, 2007

Finding No. 3 - Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures

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.

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 25 instances in which a warrant was required to be issued. Our testing disclosed that eight were not issued timely and nine were not issued at all. The time of issuance ranged from 67 days to 213 days.

In addition, of 16 warrants required to be returned or recalled, 3 were not returned or recalled, and 6 were not returned timely. The time of issuance to the time of return ranged from 263 days to 793 days.

Furthermore, we tested 11 instances in which a DL-38 was required to be issued. Our testing disclosed that eight were not issued timely and three were not issued at all. The time of issuance ranged from 99 days to 1,123 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.

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Finding No. 3 - Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures (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

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NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
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FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2005 TO DECEMBER 31, 2007

Finding No. 3 - Inadequate Arrest Warrant And DL-38 Procedures (Continued)

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).

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.

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.

This finding was cited in the prior audit for the period ending December 31, 2004.

Recommendations

We again recommend that the district court review the tickler reports for warrants and DL-38s daily and take appropriate action as required by the Manual. We further 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 Senior Magisterial District Judge responded as follows:

When I became aware of arrest warrants and DL-38s not being processed timely, the staff and I immediately worked to correct the requirements within a four month period. These requirements are now up to date, and the staff will continue diligently to process the warrants and DL-38s timely.

Auditor's Conclusion

During our next examination we will determine if the office complied with our recommendations.

DISTRICT COURT 03-2-04
NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
REPORT DISTRIBUTION
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2005 TO DECEMBER 31, 2007

This report was initially distributed to:

Mr. C Daniel Hassell
Acting Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue

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

District Court 03-2-04
Northampton County
1404 Walter Street
Bethlehem, PA 18015

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| The Honorable David Tidd | Magisterial District Judge |
| Mr. James N. Onembo | District Court Administrator |
| The Honorable Stephen Barron | Controller |
| The Honorable Ann McHale | President of the Board of Commissioners |

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