



Auditor of Public Accounts
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Harmon Releases Audit of Wolfe County Sheriff's Tax Settlement

FRANKFORT, Ky. – State Auditor Mike Harmon today released the audit of the sheriff's settlement – 2019 taxes for Wolfe County Sheriff Chris Carson. State law requires the auditor to annually audit the accounts of each county sheriff. In compliance with this law, the auditor issues two sheriff's reports each year: one reporting on the audit of the sheriff's tax account, and the other reporting on the audit of the fee account used to operate the office.

Auditing standards require the auditor's letter to communicate whether the sheriff's settlement presents fairly the taxes charged, credited and paid in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. The sheriff's settlement is prepared on the regulatory basis, which is described in the auditor's opinion letter. Regulatory basis reporting for the sheriff's settlement is an acceptable reporting methodology, and this reporting methodology is followed for all 120 sheriff settlements in Kentucky.

The sheriff's financial statement fairly presents the taxes charged, credited and paid for the period April 16, 2019 through May 15, 2020 in conformity with the regulatory basis of accounting.

As part of the audit process, the auditor must comment on noncompliance with laws, regulations, contracts, and grants. The auditor must also comment on material weaknesses involving the internal control over financial operations and reporting.

The audit contains the following comments:

The sheriff's office does not have adequate segregation of duties: The sheriff's office does not have adequate segregation of duties. A deficiency occurs when someone has custody over assets and the responsibility of recording financial transactions. The sheriff has delegated the responsibilities of collecting, depositing, and recording all receipts and preparing/recording all checks to the bookkeeper. In addition, the bookkeeper prepares all bank reconciliations. No effective review or oversight procedures were noted.

The sheriff's failure to adequately separate these duties increases the risk that errors and misstatements can occur, either accidental or intentional, and not be detected in a reasonable time period. If there had been proper oversight or review procedures in place, errors such as unpaid add on fees, commission errors, and an outstanding check not reported properly could have been discovered and corrected. Good internal controls dictate that the same employee should not be handling, recording and reconciling cash receipts. Authorized check signers should be independent of check preparation, cash receiving, and purchasing.

We recommend the sheriff adequately segregate the functions of receiving, recording, and reconciling transactions to separate individuals. If this is not possible due to small staff size, the sheriff can implement and document compensating controls in order to limit the potential impact of inadequate segregation of duties. Examples of these compensating controls include:

- The sheriff or his designee should compare the daily bank deposit to the daily checkout sheet, and then compare the daily checkout sheet to the receipts ledger.
- The sheriff or his designee should compare the monthly financial reports to the receipts and disbursements ledgers for accuracy.
- The sheriff or his designee should periodically compare the amounts due districts per the monthly reports to the payments to the taxing districts.
- The sheriff or his designee should periodically compare the monthly bank reconciliation to the balance in the checkbook and to the ledgers
- All disbursement checks should be signed by two people, with one being the sheriff or his designee.

All compensating controls should be documented by initialing and dating the source documentation.

County Sheriff's Response: The official did not provide a response.

The sheriff did not make daily deposits: The sheriff did not batch receipts daily and make daily deposits. Amounts reported on daily checkout sheets were properly documented and deposited; however, this was not achieved on a daily basis. We tested one week of daily receipts for March 16-20, 2020. We noted that the daily checkout sheet dated March 17 included receipts for March 13 and March 16. No daily checkout sheet was prepared for March 13 or March 16. Likewise, the checkout sheet dated March 19 included receipts dated March 18 and 19, which indicates that receipts are being batched several days at a time and summarized on one checkout sheet.

The bookkeeper was new for 2019 tax collections and was not familiar with all the requirements regarding daily deposits. The sheriff failed to implement proper oversight and review procedures to ensure that receipts were being batched and deposited daily. Failure to deposit receipts daily increases the risk that funds will be lost, stolen, or otherwise misappropriated.

KRS 68.210 gives the state local finance officer the authority to prescribe a uniform system of accounts. The *County Budget Preparation and State Local Finance Officer Policy Manual*, page

64, sets forth the minimum requirements for local officials handling public funds and requires “daily deposits intact into a federally insured banking institution.”

We recommend the sheriff’s office batch receipts daily, prepare a checkout sheet daily, and make daily deposits as required per the uniform system of accounts.

County Sheriff’s Response: The official did not provide a response.

The sheriff’s responsibilities include collecting property taxes, providing law enforcement and performing services for the county fiscal court and courts of justice. The sheriff’s office is funded through statutory commissions and fees collected in conjunction with these duties.

The audit report can be found on the [auditor’s website](#).

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