



TRACI L. JOHNSON
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
FOR THE
COUNTY OF NORTHAMPTON

FOR THE PERIOD
APRIL 1, 2017 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2018

Auditor of Public Accounts
Martha S. Mavredes, CPA
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COMMENTS TO MANAGEMENT

We noted the following matters involving internal control and its operation that has led or could lead to the loss of revenues, assets, or otherwise compromise the Clerk's fiscal accountability.

Properly Collect Probate Fees

Repeat: No

The Clerk and her staff did not properly collect probate fees. In four estates tested, recording fees of \$64 were collected prior to the documents being recorded. The Clerk should collect the recording fees at the time of recording as required by the Code of Virginia.

Retain Waivers and Timesheets

Repeat: No

The Clerk and her staff did not retain proper supporting documentation for attorney payments. Court appointed attorneys may request additional payment in excess of the statutory cap by submitting detailed waiver applications and detailed timesheets for approval by the Chief and Presiding Judges. In all six attorney invoices tested, the Clerk and her staff did not retain the proper documentation. The Clerk should ensure that all waiver applications and detailed timesheets are approved and retained.

Monitor Individual Account Status Report

Repeat: No

The Clerk does not update and remove accounts, when applicable, from administrative review status. Specifically, the Clerk did not review and update 33 accounts listed as 'Appealed' and ten accounts listed as 'Under Review'. Not updating and removing accounts may stop or delay required notification of convictions to the Central Criminal Records Exchange and of delinquent accounts to collections agents, the Department of Taxation's Tax Set-Off Program, and the Department of Motor Vehicles.

The Clerk should update the individual accounts noted above, and review and take appropriate and timely action on all accounts in administrative review status as required by the court's financial system user's guide.

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Martha S. Mavredes, CPA
Auditor of Public Accounts

Commonwealth of Virginia

Auditor of Public Accounts

P.O. Box 1295
Richmond, Virginia 23218

March 18, 2019

The Honorable Traci L. Johnson
Clerk of the Circuit Court
County of Northampton

H. Spencer Murray, Board Chairman
County of Northampton

Audit Period: April 1, 2017 through December 31, 2018
Court System: County of Northampton

We have audited the cash receipts and disbursements of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of this locality for the period noted above. Our primary objectives were to test the accuracy of financial transactions recorded on the Court's financial management system; evaluate the Court's internal controls; and test its compliance with significant state laws, regulations, and policies.

Management's Responsibility

Court management has responsibility for establishing and maintaining internal controls and complying with applicable laws and regulations. Internal control is a process designed to provide reasonable, but not absolute, assurance regarding the reliability of financial reporting, effectiveness and efficiency of operations, and compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Deficiencies in internal controls could possibly lead to the loss of revenues or assets, or otherwise compromise fiscal accountability.

We noted matters involving internal control and its operation necessary to bring to management's attention. These matters are discussed in the section titled Comments to Management. Any response and written corrective action plan to remediate these matters provided by the Clerk are included as an enclosure to this report.

We discussed these comments with the Clerk and we acknowledge the cooperation extended to us by the Clerk and her staff during this engagement.

AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

MSM:vks

cc: The Honorable Glenn R. Croshaw, Chief Judge
Charles Kolakowski, County Administrator
Robyn M. de Socio, Executive Secretary
Compensation Board
Paul F. DeLosh, Director of Judicial Services
Supreme Court of Virginia



Clerk's Office
CIRCUIT COURT OF NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
Commonwealth of Virginia



Oldest Continuous Court Records in America

Hon. W. Revell Lewis III
Resident Judge

Traci L. Johnson
Clerk of Court

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Susie B. Sample
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Lauren M. Brown
Deputies

9 April 2019

Martha S. Mavredes, C.P.A.
Auditor of Public Accounts
Commonwealth of Virginia
101 North 14th Street, 8th Floor
Richmond VA 23219
(via email to Stephanie H. Serbia – Stephanie.serbia@apa.virginia.gov)

Audit Period: April 1, 2017 through December 31, 2018

Dear Ms. Mavredes,

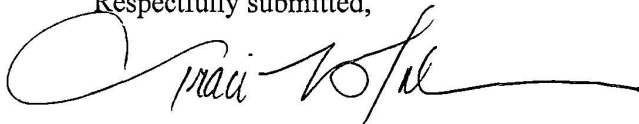
Thank you for the draft copy of my recent audit report and I understand the comments to management. It is no secret that audits are notoriously stressful, and we cannot assume that human errors do not occur. There is no greater relief than to receive a perfect audit, however, when errors are found we can correct them and balance the scales of efficiency and accuracy to their rightful place.

During this audit period, I made mistakes and am thankful to report that they were corrected before my exit meeting. Since that day, I have implemented extra steps to ensure that two reviews occur in the areas that needed attention: 1) properly collecting probate fees and ensuring that all forms are collected for the fees receipted; 2) retaining waiver forms and timesheets from attorneys; and 3) monitoring the individual account status reports daily by the Clerk versus monthly. I was able to isolate reasons for these mistakes and discussed with my staff ways to improve accuracy. I also reviewed the procedures in the manuals to make sure I was not missing additional steps then met with my staff to edify proper procedures. Although the findings were simple fixes, I wanted to make sure that the instructions made sense and flowed smoothly for my staff. I even weighed in with my Commissioner of Accounts so that he too was aware of the corrections in the probate files. All forms have been filed and the individual account status report is clean. Copies of attorneys' timesheets and waivers are now being retained. I believe that the automated program for submission of allowances will help clerks tremendously. Additionally, even though the waiver and timesheet forms say to retain them, I will ask the Supreme Court to add a sentence in the manual that reinforces this. In the future, I assure you these corrective actions will remediate the findings identified in the draft audit report.

I appreciate the courtesy and professionalism that auditors Katherine St. Lawrence and Stephanie Serbia extend to my office. We work well together, and they are always so helpful, not just during the audit but throughout the whole year.

Again, I want to extend my appreciation for the audit process and the balance that is again restored in my office.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Traci L. Johnson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Traci L. Johnson, Clerk
Northampton County Circuit Court