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Auditor of Public Accounts

Commonwealth of Virginia

Auditor of Public Accounts

P.O. Box 1295
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August 15, 2014

The Honorable Richard A. Claybrook, Jr.
Chief Judge
County of Clarke General District Court
53 Court Square, Room 132
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Audit Period: July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013
Court System: County of Clarke
Judicial District: Twenty-sixth

We are performing a statewide audit of the General District Courts. During our review of this court, we conducted certain audit procedures, as we deemed appropriate.

Management of this court is an important part of the court's accountability, since you are responsible for establishing and maintaining internal controls and complying with applicable laws and regulations. During our review, we noted certain matters that required management's attention and corrective action. These matters included:

Properly Bill and Collect Fines and Costs

The Clerk did not properly bill and collect fines and court costs. In 12 of 58 cases tested, we noted the following errors.

- The Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia was billed \$240 in unsubstantiated attorney fees.
- The locality was not appropriately billed for attorney fees totaling \$307.
- Defendants were undercharged costs of \$11 and attorney fees of \$64.
- Defendants were overcharged \$150 for attorney fees.
- A commonwealth fine of \$100 was incorrectly coded as local, representing a potential loss of revenue to the Commonwealth.
- The assessment of costs for one case could not be substantiated because the Clerk could not locate the case file.

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The Clerk should work with her staff to ensure they understand the billing and collection requirements for fines and costs. Further, the Clerk should review the work of her staff to identify and correct potential errors and, if necessary, request additional training from the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia.

Reconcile Bank Account

The Clerk did not reconcile her bank account for up to 11 months. Allowing reconciling items to go unresolved can lead to errors and irregularities going undetected and can increase the risk of loss of funds. Timely and complete reconciliations are an essential internal control. We recommend the Clerk perform monthly bank reconciliations upon receiving the bank statements as required by the Financial Management System User's Guide.

Promptly Record Manual Receipt Collections

The Clerk did not record one of two manual receipts tested, totaling \$146, into the automated system promptly. Delayed entry into the automated system poses an increased risk for fraudulent activity and misappropriation of funds. We recommend the Clerk monitor all manual receipt activity to ensure the timeliness of entry into the automated system.

We acknowledge the cooperation extended to us by the Court during this engagement.

AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

MSM: clj

cc: The Honorable Amy Beth Tisinger, Judge
Monica A. Christian, Clerk
Paul F. DeLosh, Director of Judicial Services
Supreme Court of Virginia