



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

FRANKFORT, Ky. – State Auditor Mike Harmon today released the audit of the sheriff's settlement – 2019 taxes for Owsley County Sheriff Brent Lynch. 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 comment:

The Owsley County Sheriff's Office lacks adequate segregation of duties: This is a repeat finding and was included in the prior year audit report as Finding 2018-001. The sheriff's office lacks adequate segregation of duties. The sheriff's bookkeeper maintains receipts and disbursements ledgers, deposits collections, collects funds from customers, prepares bank reconciliations, and prepares payments to taxing districts.

According to the sheriff, due to his limited number of office personnel he could not segregate the duties over receipts, disbursements, and reconciliations. Since only one person performed these functions, there was limited assurance that financial transactions were accurate, complete, and free of errors or misstatements.

Strong internal controls and procedures are vital to ensure proper segregation of duties. The functions of receiving, recording, depositing, and reconciling cash should be separated whenever possible in order to decrease the risk of undetected errors, misstatements, and fraud.

We recommend the sheriff segregate these duties or implement steps to strengthen internal controls, such as:

- The sheriff could periodically compare daily bank deposit to the daily tax collection printout. Any differences should be reconciled. The sheriff could document this by initialing the bank deposit and the daily tax collection printout.
- The sheriff could compare his daily tax collection printout for each month to his monthly tax collection report for each district. Any differences should be reconciled. The sheriff could document this by initialing the districts monthly tax collection report for the month being examined.
- The sheriff could periodically compare payments made to the taxing districts per the monthly tax collection reports to the check that are actually written. The sheriff could document this by initialing the monthly tax collection report noting that the payment agrees with the check.
- The sheriff could periodically compare the bank reconciliation to the checkbook balance. Any differences should be reconciled. The sheriff could document this by initialing the bank reconciliation and the balance in the checkbook.

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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