



Auditor of Public Accounts
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Harmon Releases Audit of Former Gallatin County Sheriff's Fee Account

FRANKFORT, Ky. – State Auditor Mike Harmon today released the audit of the 2021 financial statement of former Gallatin County Sheriff Josh Neale. 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 financial statement presents fairly the receipts, disbursements and excess fees of the former Gallatin County Sheriff in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. The former sheriff's financial statement did not follow this format. However, the former sheriff's financial statement is fairly presented in conformity with the regulatory basis of accounting, which is an acceptable reporting methodology. This reporting methodology is followed for all 120 sheriff audits in Kentucky.

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 sheriff's office did not have adequate segregation of duties over receipts, disbursements, and bank reconciliations: This is a repeat finding and was included in the prior year audit report as Finding 2020-001. The sheriff's office did not have adequate segregation of duties over the accounting and reporting functions of receipts, disbursements, and bank reconciliations. The former sheriff's bookkeeper collected receipts, posted receipts to the ledger, took deposits to the bank, prepared and signed checks, posted disbursements to the ledger, and completed the bank reconciliations. The former sheriff reviewed invoices and initialed them for the bookkeeper to prepare checks, but he did not compare the invoices to the checks before he signed them, resulting in an

ineffective review or approval of disbursements. The result is a lack of segregation of duties over receipts, disbursements, and bank reconciliations. According to the former sheriff, this condition is a result of a limited budget, which restricts the number of employees the sheriff can hire or delegate duties to.

A lack of segregation of duties could result in undetected misappropriation of assets and inaccurate financial reporting to external agencies such as the Department for Local Government (DLG). The segregation of duties over various accounting functions such as opening mail, preparing deposits, recording receipts and disbursements, and preparing monthly reports, or the implementation of compensating controls is essential for providing protection from asset misappropriation and inaccurate financial reporting. Additionally, proper segregation of duties protects employees in the normal course of performing their daily responsibilities.

We recommend the sheriff's office separate the duties involved in receiving cash, preparing deposits, writing checks, posting to ledgers, preparing monthly bank reconciliations, and comparing financial reports to ledgers. If this is not feasible due to a limited budget, cross checking procedures could be implemented and documented by the individual performing the procedure. Reviews should be evidenced with initials on the daily collection reports, deposit tickets, ledgers, and bank reconciliations.

Former 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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