



Auditor of Public Accounts
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Harmon Releases Audit of Former Whitley County Sheriff's Fee Account

FRANKFORT, Ky. – State Auditor Mike Harmon today released the audit of the 2018 financial statement of former Whitley County Sheriff Colan Harrell. 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 Whitley 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 former Whitley County Sheriff's Office lacked adequate segregation of duties: This is a repeat finding and was included in the prior year audit report as Finding 2017-001. The former Whitley County Sheriff's Office lacked adequate segregation of duties. The former sheriff's bookkeeper collected payments from customers, posted transactions to the receipts ledger, wrote checks, posted checks to the disbursements ledger, and prepared monthly and quarterly reports.

A lack of oversight could result in undetected misappropriation of assets and inaccurate financial reporting to external agencies such as the Department for Local Government (DLG). Per the

former sheriff, the office had a limited number of employees that prevented an adequate segregation of duties over most accounting functions of the office.

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 should be implemented and documented by the individuals performing the procedures.

Former Sheriff's Response: Will inform the current sheriff that procedures need to be put in place on the segregation of duties of the business office.

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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