

DeKalb



County

1300 Commerce Drive, Decatur, Georgia 30030

(404) 371-2977

Fax (404) 371-2055

Department of Finance

Internal Audit and Licensing

Date: July 10, 2009

TO: The Honorable R. Joy Walker, Chief Judge, Recorders Court

FROM: Deputy Director of Finance, Internal Audit and Licensing

SUBJECT: Recorders Court Audit – 2008
Management Letter

General Information

We have completed an audit of the Recorders Court fiscal operations for the period beginning January 01, 2008 and ending December 31, 2008. We have prepared a separate audit report that includes a Statement of Operations for the years ending December 31, 2008 and 2007 compared, and the related opinion. Reportable Conditions and Recommendations herein relate to the operational aspects of the court system.

Purpose & Scope

The purpose of our audit is to (1) determine whether records and reports prepared by the Recorders Court adequately reflect revenues obtained and (2) prepare a statement of operations for the audit year.

The fiscal books, records, daily reports, and other pertinent documents were examined for the year ended December 31, 2008. Internal Audit conducted such audit tests and procedures as were considered necessary under the circumstances.

Issue I

The current SAS system was implemented in August 2006. We understand closed cases/citations were converted into the new system as open. Due to financial constraints, these citations continue to remain open, only being closed as they are discovered in the system. Recorders Court has been negotiating with SAS regarding the cost of closing these citations.

Recommendation I

We recommend that Recorders Court and County Administration discuss what is required to provide the funding necessary to get these citations closed in the SAS system as soon as possible.

Issue II

Citations are picked up from the Police Department (locked room) daily, and are manually input into the SAS system. Citations average about 1,000 per day, and over some weekends could amount to 4,000 citations. Due to budgetary constraints with permanent and temporary staffing, it is getting more difficult to enter citations in a timely manner.

Recommendation II

We recommend that Recorders Court work with the Police Department, IS and SAS to develop interface with the Police APS Electronic Ticketing system, which hopefully will be implemented by yearend. Citation information would be electronically transferred to SAS. This would make operations more efficient, eliminate possible data entry errors, and alleviate staffing issues. Funding should be adequate to implement this interface with all concerns fully discussed and handled appropriately.

Issue III

Previously, Sentinel Offender Services provided probationary services for Recorders Court. Offenders who cannot immediately pay their court fines are placed on probation and allowed to make monthly payments to the County through the service. Checks are remitted to Recorders Court monthly, along with a probation report. Checks are now being deposited and accounted for promptly, however citations remain open until the staff can post the payments and close. The monthly reports contain approximately two thousand entries, which cannot be manually entered in a timely manner. It was thought that the new probation service, Judicial Correction Services, allowed for direct uploading of probationer information into SAS. However, this is still not being done.

Recommendation III

We recommend that Recorders Court implement the interface with the probation company as quickly as possible. This would eliminate the need for manual entry, and cases would be updated in a timely fashion.

Issue IV

In some instances, the Daily Report allocation of the daily total between cash and credit cards did not agree to the source documents. In addition, the amounts due the Jail Fund (10%) and Victim Fund (5%) were reversed on several instances.

Recommendation IV

We recommend that due diligence be taken on the preparation of the Daily Reports to ensure that they are fully and accurately completed.

Issue V

While observing procedures related to Cash Bonds, it was noted that the same individual who obtained Cash Bonds from the Sheriff's Department was responsible for entering data into the Recorders Court system due to shortage of personnel.

Recommendation V

This is an internal control weakness that is characterized as an incompatible function. Staffing should be adequate to provide separation of duties whenever possible.

Comments

Separation of duties

From reviewing operations and speaking with personnel, the following observations are noted. Due to shortage of personnel, several employees were seen to be doing more than one function at a time. This can contribute to a breakdown in following policies and procedures as well as allowing for details to be overlooked or ignored. In addition, for some functions, the new computer system calls for multiple screens to be accessed and completed. Since there is usually a fast pace and high volume of work at Recorders Court, this might contribute to errors in data entry. As in Recommendation V, staffing should be adequate to allow for completion of tasks in an appropriate length of time.

SAS system

It was noted that the present SAS system occasionally generates processing errors and is not providing management with adequate and/or accurate reports. Many operations have to be done manually, because the system is not reliable. This is time consuming and frustrating for the staff. Sometimes mistakes are made.

The County's Information Systems Department is not allowed to maintain the SAS system or even extract data for reports. It is our understanding that SAS requests payment for any corrections or modifications to the system. This is problematic, as inaccurate reports, system errors, etc. have been occurring for three years without resolution. Our auditors could not rely on monthly financial reports, and had to work with daily accounting logs and reports.

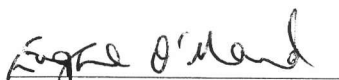
Due to the financial constraints of SAS and their unwillingness to compromise, and also the inability of IS to create more accurate reports from the system, consideration should be given to the purchase of a new system for Recorders Court that will integrate with the Police Electronic Ticketing system.

Citations

Recorders Court estimated it had approximately 309,000 outstanding citations as of December 2008. Of these, 82,514 had outstanding warrants and 17,965 were outstanding parking tickets. Internal Audit had recommended in prior years the use of a collection agency for outstanding citations. Recorders Court was receptive, and contracted with Haggerty & Associates from June 1997 through December 2000. We again recommend the use of a collection agency for outstanding parking tickets, until such time as the revenue generated no longer makes it feasible to continue with the associated costs.

Recorders Court does not have the authority to enforce warrants. We recommend that sufficient law enforcement personnel, such as Police, Deputy Sheriffs, Marshals, be assigned to Recorders Court who would be available to act on the warrants.

Internal Audit appreciates the cooperation obtained from the staff.


Eugene O'Mard

cc: Keith A. Barker, Chief Operating Officer
Dr. Michael J. Bell, Chief Financial Officer
William Z. Miller, Director of Public Safety
Felecia L. Alston, Chief Information Officer
Joyce W. Head, Clerk of the Recorders Court