

**AUDIT REPORT
OF
SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT
JULY 1, 2006 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2007**

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Issued on January 25, 2008

SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT

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SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

During our audit of Scotts Bluff County Court, we noted certain matters involving the internal control over financial reporting and other operational matters that are presented here. These comments and recommendations are intended to improve the internal control over financial reporting or result in operational efficiencies in the areas as follows:

1. ***Segregation of Duties:*** One individual was capable of handling all phases of a transaction from beginning to end.
2. ***Overdue Balances:*** The County Court did not review its overdue balances on an ongoing, timely basis to ensure collection and/or resolution of such balances.

More detailed information on the above items is provided hereafter. It should be noted that this report is critical in nature as it contains only our comments and recommendations on the areas noted for improvement and does not include our observations on any accounting strengths of the County Court.

Draft copies of this report were furnished to the County Court to provide them an opportunity to review the report and to respond to the comments and recommendations included in this report. All formal responses received have been incorporated into this report. Where no response has been included, the County Court declined to respond. Responses have been objectively evaluated and recognized, as appropriate, in the report. Responses that indicate corrective action has been taken were not verified at this time, but will be verified in the next audit.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesy extended to our auditors during the course of the audit.

SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Segregation of Duties

Good internal control includes a plan of organization, procedures, and records designed to safeguard assets and provide reliable financial records. A system of internal control should include proper segregation of duties so no one individual is capable of handling all phases of a transaction from beginning to end.

We noted the office of the County Court had a lack of segregation of duties as one person was capable of handling all aspects of processing transactions from beginning to end. A lack of segregation of duties increases the risk of possible errors or irregularities; however, due to a limited number of personnel, an adequate segregation of duties is not possible without additional cost. Further, personnel are under the direction of both the Nebraska State Court Administrator and the Presiding Judge.

We have noted this comment in previous audits.

We recommend the County Court and the Nebraska State Court Administrator review this situation. As always, the cost of hiring additional personnel versus the benefit of a proper segregation of duties must be weighed.

2. Overdue Balances

Good internal control and sound business practices require overdue balances of the County Court be reviewed on an ongoing, timely basis to determine what action should be taken to collect and/or otherwise resolve those balances.

Of 25 overdue balances tested, 16, totaling \$4,912, did not have subsequent action taken by the County Court to ensure collection and/or resolution of the balances, such as the issuance of warrants and/or suspensions or declaration of certain overdue balances uncollectible. As of September 2, 2006, overdue balances, excluding restitution, totaled \$216,623. As of December 15, 2007, overdue balances, excluding restitution, had increased to \$370,786; an increase of \$154,163, or 71%, in 15 months.

Without regular review of overdue case balances, there is an increased risk overdue balances may either not have proper follow up action taken or the balances may have been previously resolved and should no longer be reflected as being overdue.

We strongly recommend the County Court implement active review of its Overdue Case Account Report to ensure timely collection, and/or resolution, of all overdue balances.

SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(Continued)

2. Overdue Balances (Concluded)

County Court's Response: The Scotts Bluff County Court is aware of our overdue case balances. These balances have been reviewed on a regular basis and warrants for failure to pay have been issued. However, before a warrant is signed, the court file must be thoroughly reviewed to insure that warrants are not issued in error, this has not been possible within the past year due to the fact that the Scotts Bluff County Court does not have sufficient staff to devote to this task. We have made requests for one additional employee and have been advised that there is no money in the budget for additional county court employees. Therefore we have had to prioritize our work and devote time to essential tasks.



NEBRASKA AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mike Foley
State Auditor

Mike.Foley@apa.ne.gov
P.O. Box 98917
State Capitol, Suite 2303
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509
402-471-2111, FAX 402-471-3301
www.auditors.state.ne.us

SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT **INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT**

Ms. Janice Walker, State Court Administrator
Nebraska Supreme Court
State Capitol, Room 1220
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509

We have audited the accompanying financial statement of Scotts Bluff County Court as of and for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2007, as listed in the Table of Contents. The financial statement is the responsibility of the County Court's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial statement based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statement is free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statement. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

As discussed in Note 1, the financial statement was prepared on the basis of cash receipts and disbursements, which is a comprehensive basis of accounting other than generally accepted accounting principles.

Also, as discussed in Note 1, the financial statement presents only the County Court's Agency Funds activity and does not purport to, and does not, present fairly the assets, liabilities, and results of operations of Scotts Bluff County Court for the year then ended in conformity with the cash receipts and disbursements basis of accounting.

In our opinion, the financial statement referred to above presents fairly, in all material respects, the assets and liabilities arising from cash transactions of the Agency Funds of Scotts Bluff County Court as of June 30, 2007, and the related activity for the fiscal year then ended, on the basis of accounting described in Note 1.

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we have also issued our report dated January 17, 2008, on our consideration of Scotts Bluff County Court's internal control over financial reporting and our tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, and other matters. The purpose of that report is to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over financial reporting and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the internal control over financial reporting or on compliance. That report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* and should be considered in assessing the results of our audit.

January 17, 2008


Assistant Deputy Auditor

SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT
GERING, NEBRASKA
STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN ASSETS AND LIABILITIES
ARISING FROM CASH TRANSACTIONS
AGENCY FUNDS

For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2007

| | Balance July 1, 2006 | Additions | Deductions | Balance June 30, 2007 |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| ASSETS | | | | |
| Cash and Deposits | \$ 559,176 | \$ 1,815,360 | \$ 2,063,126 | \$ 311,410 |
| LIABILITIES | | | | |
| Due to State Treasurer: | | | | |
| Regular Fees | \$ 16,791 | \$ 227,429 | \$ 223,778 | \$ 20,442 |
| Law Enforcement Fees | 1,569 | 16,579 | 16,567 | 1,581 |
| State Judges Retirement Fund | 4,476 | 59,006 | 57,331 | 6,151 |
| Court Administrative Fees | 8,094 | 112,588 | 109,376 | 11,306 |
| Legal Services Fees | 5,254 | 64,087 | 62,616 | 6,725 |
| Due to County Treasurer: | | | | |
| Regular Fines | 34,948 | 331,646 | 338,525 | 28,069 |
| Overload Fines | 950 | 23,775 | 19,625 | 5,100 |
| Regular Fees | 5,109 | 42,281 | 44,782 | 2,608 |
| Due to Municipalities: | | | | |
| Regular Fines | 7,793 | 80,882 | 80,958 | 7,717 |
| Regular Fees | 1,688 | 9,036 | 10,381 | 343 |
| Trust Fund Payable | 472,504 | 848,051 | 1,099,187 | 221,368 |
| Total Liabilities | \$ 559,176 | \$ 1,815,360 | \$ 2,063,126 | \$ 311,410 |

The accompanying notes are an integral part of the financial statement.

SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT
NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENT
For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2007

1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

A. Reporting Entity

The Scotts Bluff County Court is established by State Statute and is administratively operated through the Court Administrator's Office of the Nebraska Supreme Court, which is part of the State of Nebraska reporting entity. The Statement of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions of the County Court reflects only the Agency Funds activity of the County Court; the receipts, and their subsequent disbursement to the appropriate entities for which they were collected. The financial statement does not reflect the personal services expenses of the County Court, which are paid by the Nebraska Supreme Court, or the operating expenses, which are paid by Scotts Bluff County.

B. Basis of Accounting

The accounting records of the County Court Agency Funds are maintained, and the Statement of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions has been prepared, on the cash receipts and disbursements basis of accounting. Under this basis of accounting, fines, fees, and receipts relating to trust funds are shown as additions to assets and as an increase in the related liability when received. Likewise, disbursements are shown as deductions to assets and a decrease in the related liability when a check is written. This differs from Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) which requires the accrual basis of accounting. Under GAAP, Agency Funds would be reported in the Statement of Net Assets. Agency Funds are not reported in the Statement of Changes of Fiduciary Net Assets. Agency Funds are used to report resources held by the reporting government in a purely custodial capacity. Agency Funds typically involve only the receipt, temporary investment, and remittance of fiduciary resources to individuals, private organizations, or other governments.

2. Deposits and Investments

Funds held by the County Court are deposited and invested in accordance with rules issued by the Supreme Court as directed by Neb. Rev. Stat. Section 25-2713 R.R.S. 1995. Funds are generally consolidated in an interest-bearing checking account; however, the County Court may order certain trust funds to be invested separately. Any deposits in excess of the amount insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation are required by Neb. Rev. Stat. Section 77-2326.04 R.R.S. 2003 to be secured either by a surety bond or as provided in the Public Funds Deposit Security Act.

SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT
NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENT
(Continued)

2. Deposits and Investments (Concluded)

The carrying amounts and bank balances of total deposits, consisted of a checking account and a certificate of deposit, were as follows:

| | Total Cash and Deposit <u>Carrying Amount</u> | <u>Cash Amount</u> | Deposit <u>Carrying Amount</u> | <u>Bank Balance</u> |
|---------------|---|--------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| June 30, 2007 | \$ 311,410 | \$ 1,000 | \$ 310,410 | \$ 316,120 |

These funds were entirely covered by federal depository insurance or by collateral securities pledged to the County Court and held by a Federal Reserve Bank, or by a Bank or trust company in this State other than the depository bank.



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P.O. Box 98917
State Capitol, Suite 2303
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509
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**SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT
REPORT ON INTERNAL CONTROL OVER FINANCIAL REPORTING AND ON
COMPLIANCE AND OTHER MATTERS BASED ON AN AUDIT OF FINANCIAL
STATEMENTS PERFORMED IN ACCORDANCE WITH
*GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS***

Ms. Janice Walker, State Court Administrator
Nebraska Supreme Court
State Capitol, Room 1220
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509

We have audited the financial statement of Scotts Bluff County Court as of and for the year ended June 30, 2007, and have issued our report thereon dated January 17, 2008. The report was modified to emphasize that the financial statement presents only the Agency Funds of Scotts Bluff County Court prepared on the basis of cash receipts and disbursements. We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

Internal Control Over Financial Reporting

In planning and performing our audit, we considered Scotts Bluff County Court's internal control over financial reporting as a basis for designing our auditing procedures for the purpose of expressing our opinion on the financial statement, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the County Court's internal control over financial reporting. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on the effectiveness of the County Court's internal control over financial reporting.

Our consideration of the internal control over financial reporting was for the limited purpose described in the preceding paragraph and would not necessarily identify all deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting that might be significant deficiencies or material weaknesses. However, as discussed below, we identified a certain deficiency in internal control over financial reporting that we consider to be a significant deficiency.

A control deficiency exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent or detect misstatements on a timely basis. A significant deficiency is a control deficiency, or combination of control deficiencies, that adversely affects the entity's ability to initiate, authorize, record, process, or report financial data reliably in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles such that there is more than a remote likelihood that a misstatement of the entity's financial statements that is more than inconsequential will not be prevented or detected by the entity's internal control. We consider the following deficiency described in the Comments Section of the report to be a significant deficiency in internal control over financial reporting: Comment Number 1 (Segregation of Duties).

A material weakness is a significant deficiency, or combination of significant deficiencies, that results in more than a remote likelihood that a material misstatement of the financial statements will not be prevented or detected by the County Court's internal control.

Our consideration of the internal control over financial reporting was for the limited purpose described in the first paragraph of this section and would not necessarily identify all deficiencies in the internal control that might be significant deficiencies and, accordingly, would not necessarily disclose all significant deficiencies that are also considered to be material weaknesses. However, we believe the significant deficiency described above is a material weakness.

Compliance and Other Matters

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether Scotts Bluff County Court's financial statement is free of material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws and regulations, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of financial statement amounts; however, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit and, accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

We also noted a certain additional matter that we reported to the management of Scotts Bluff County Court in the Comments Section of this report as Comment Number 2 (Overdue Balances).

The County Court's written response to the findings identified in our audit are described in the Comments Section of the report. We did not audit the County Court's response and, accordingly, we express no opinion on it.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of management, the Supreme Court, others within the Court, and the appropriate Federal and regulatory agencies; however, this report is a matter of public record and its distribution is not limited.



Assistant Deputy Auditor

January 17, 2008