



NEBRASKA AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Charlie Janssen
State Auditor

Charlie.Janssen@nebraska.gov
PO Box 98917
State Capitol, Suite 2303
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509
402-471-2111, FAX 402-471-3301
auditors.nebraska.gov

March 2, 2021

John Stroy, Chairperson
Village of Murdock
PO Box 308
Murdock, NE 68407

Dear Chairperson Stroy:

The Nebraska Auditor of Public Accounts (APA) has reviewed the audit waiver request received from the Village of Murdock (Village) for the fiscal year ending 2020. **That request has been approved.**

While performing, pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 84-304 (Cum. Supp. 2020), the preliminary examination necessary to determine whether the audit waiver should be allowed or further audit work would be required, the APA noted certain internal control or compliance matters, or other operational issues, within the Village.

The following information is intended to improve internal controls or result in other operational efficiencies.

Comments and Recommendations

1. Lack of Dual Signatures

The APA obtained the bank statements for the Village's accounts from its fiscal year 2020 audit waiver request. From these statements, the APA noted that eight of the Village checks written during the examination period contained only one signature. An example of such checks is shown below.

VILLAGE OF MURDOCK
BOX 308
MURDOCK, NE 68407

11838
78125/1948
03

3-2-20 Date

Pay to the Order of Island Renewal \$ 2387.00
Just the way and three hundred eighty seven and 00/100 Dollars

CORN GROWERS STATE BANK
MURDOCK, NEBRASKA 68407

VILLAGE CHAIRMAN
VILLAGE TREASURER

For garage service

000011838 03/06/2020 2387.00

State statute requires Village checks to be signed by both the Board Chairperson and the Village Clerk. Specifically, Neb. Rev. Stat. § 17-711 (Cum. Supp. 2020) provides the following:

All warrants drawn upon the city treasurer of a city of the second class or village treasurer must be signed by the mayor or chairperson of the village board of trustees and countersigned by the city clerk or village clerk, stating the particular fund to which the same is chargeable, the person to whom payable, and for what particular object. No money shall be otherwise paid than upon such warrants so drawn. Each warrant shall specify the amount included in the adopted budget statement for such fund upon which it is drawn and the amount already expended of such fund.

Good internal control and sound accounting practices require procedures to ensure that Village checks contain the statutorily required endorsements. Without such procedures, there is an increased risk of not only failure to comply with State statute but also the loss and/or misuse of Village funds.

A similar issue was identified by the APA in a prior review and was disclosed to the Village in the APA's letter dated September 12, 2019, which can be found on the APA's website.

We recommend the Board implement procedures to require dual signatures, from the Board Chairperson and the Village Clerk, on all Village checks, as required by law.

2. Lack of Claim Purpose

During our comparison of the Village's bank account details to claims approved by the Board, the APA noted that the claims listed in the Board's official proceedings lacked descriptions of their respective purposes.

The following is an example of the approved claims listing provided by the Village for August 8, 2020:

The following bills were approved for payment; St of NE Dept. of Revenue-336.19; U.S. Treasury-836.01; St of NE Dept. Revenue-90.72; Windstream-333.04; J. Barnes-1187.42; Postmaster-83.40; Constellation Energy-42.27; OPPD-960.33; Ashland Disposal-2387.00; Black Hills Energy-14.97; St. of NE PHE Lab-15.00; Todd Valley Heating & Plumbing-134.56; Lee Enterprises-39.86; Stock Seed-17.40; J. Faubion-150.00; C. Wilson-225.00; K. McHugh-70.00; Cass Co. RWD#2-5103.75; Young & White Law Offices-462.50; League of NE Municipalities-551.00.

Neb. Rev. Stat. § 19-1102 (Cum. Supp. 2020) requires publication of the Board's official proceedings, which must include, among other things, the purpose of each claim allowed, as follows:

It shall be the duty of each city clerk or village clerk in every city or village having a population of not more than one hundred thousand inhabitants as determined by the most recent federal decennial census or the most recent revised certified count by the United States Bureau of the Census to prepare and publish the official proceedings of the city council or village board of trustees within thirty days after any meeting of the city council or village board of trustees. The publication shall be in a legal newspaper in or of general circulation in the city or village, shall set forth a statement of the proceedings of the meeting, and shall also include the amount of each claim allowed, the purpose of the claim, and the name of the claimant, except that the aggregate amount of all payroll claims may be included as one item. Between July 15 and August 15 of each year, the employee job titles and the current annual, monthly, or hourly salaries corresponding to such job titles shall be published. Each job title published shall be descriptive and indicative of the duties and functions of the position. The charge for the publication shall not exceed the rates provided for in section 23-122.

(Emphasis added.) Good internal control and sound accounting practices require procedures to ensure that the Board's official proceedings describe the purpose of each claim allowed. Without such procedures, there is an increased risk of not only failure to comply with statutory publication requirements but also a lack of transparency regarding the nature of public expenditures.

We recommend the Board implement procedures to ensure the purpose of each claim allowed is included in the Board's official proceedings and published in accordance with State statute.

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The preliminary planning work that resulted in this letter was designed primarily on a test basis and, therefore, may not bring to light all existing weaknesses in the Village's policies or procedures. Nevertheless, our objective is to use the knowledge gained during the performance of that preliminary planning work to make comments and suggestions that we hope will prove useful to the Village.

This communication is intended solely for the information and use of the Village and its management. It is not intended to be, and should not be, used by anyone other than those specified parties. However, this letter is a matter of public record, and its distribution is not limited.

If you have any questions, please contact **Dakota Christensen** at **402-499-8702** or **dakota.christensen@nebraska.gov**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Avery". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mark Avery, CPA
Assistant Deputy Auditor