



NEBRASKA AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

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Sam Brown, Chairperson
West Union Township Custer County
82009 Road 448
Sargent, NE 68874

Dear Chairperson Brown:

The Nebraska Auditor of Public Accounts (APA) has reviewed the audit waiver request received from the West Union Township Custer County (Township) for the fiscal year ending 2021. **That request has been approved.**

While performing, pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 84-304 (2021 Neb. Laws, LB 528, § 51), the preliminary examination necessary to determine whether further audit work would be required or the audit waiver should be allowed, the APA noted certain internal control or compliance matters, or other operational issues, within the Township.

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

Comments and Recommendations

1. Audit Waiver Balance

The APA obtained the monthly statements for the Township's bank accounts from its fiscal year 2021 audit waiver request. From those statements, the APA noted that the June 30, 2021, bank balance did not reconcile to the ending book balance reported on the fiscal year 2021 audit waiver as of June 30, 2021. After accounting for three outstanding checks as of June 30, 2021, the balance on the audit waiver exceeded the reconciled bank balance by \$4,478.45. The Township failed to provide a reconciliation as of June 30, 2021, or documentation to fully explain this variance.

The reconciliation performed by the APA is shown below.

Account/Description	Balance/Amount
Bank Balance as of June 30, 2021	\$ 71,556.03
Less O/S Check: Check #160 (dated 6/20/2021; cleared 7/2/2021)	\$ (26,463.64)
Less O/S Check: Check #161 (dated 6/20/2021; cleared 7/7/2021)	\$ (1,100.00)
Less O/S Check: Check #162 (dated 6/20/2021; cleared 8/9/2021)	\$ (7,500.00)
Reconciled Bank Balance	\$ 36,492.39
Book Balance from 21-22 Budget (Page 2, Column 2, Line 30)	\$ 40,970.84
Variance	\$ (4,478.45)

Sound accounting practices and good internal controls require procedures to ensure the Township performs a periodic reconciliation between the bank and book balances. Furthermore, sound accounting practices and good internal controls require that balances reported on the audit waiver request are accurate.

Without such procedures, there is not only an increased risk of theft, loss, or misuse of Township funds, but also a lack of transparency of the financial position of the Township.

We recommend the Township review its records and determine if the book balance reported on its audit waiver request is accurate. If the Township determines the balance on the audit waiver is inaccurate, the balance should be corrected in a timely manner and revisions are submitted to the APA. Furthermore, we recommend the Township implement procedures ensure a periodic reconciliation between the bank and book balances is performed, and any discrepancies are resolved in a timely manner.

2. Payments Not Approved

The APA obtained a copy of the September 16, 2020, and September 20, 2021, meeting minutes for the Township Board. Those minutes fail to reflect the Board’s approval of any Township expenditures. The APA inquired if the Township met during the fiscal year to approve claims prior to payment; however, no response to that inquiry was provided.

Nebraska law requires the Township Board approve all claims. In particular, Neb. Rev. Stat. § 23-255 (Reissue 2012) states the following, in relevant part:

All claims and charges against the town, duly audited and allowed by the town board, shall be paid by order so drawn.

(Emphasis added.) Properly discharging the above statutory duties necessarily entails the Board’s approval of all expenditures of Township funds prior to the actual disbursement.

As a public body, moreover, the Board is subject to the provisions of the Open Meetings Act, which is set out at Neb. Rev. Stat. § 84-1407 (Reissue 2014) et seq. Per Neb. Rev. Stat. § 84-1413(1) (2021 Neb. Laws, LB 83, § 13) public bodies, including Township Boards, are required to “keep minutes of all meetings,” showing, among other things, “the substance of all matters discussed.”

Furthermore, a good internal control plan and sound business practices require procedures to ensure that the Board approves all expenditures and business transactions of the Township prior to payment. Those same procedures should ensure also that the Board documents such approval in its meeting minutes, specifying the name of each payee, the exact amount of any disbursement, and the specific purpose of the payment.

Without such procedures, there is an increased risk for not only failure to comply with State statute but also loss or misuse of public funds.

We recommend the implementation of procedures to ensure the Board approves all expenditures of Township funds prior to payment, and such approval is documented adequately in the Board’s meeting minutes.

3. Lack of Dual Signatures

The APA obtained the monthly statements for the Township’s bank accounts from its fiscal year 2021 audit waiver request. From those statements, the APA noted that all Township checks written during the examination period contained only one signature. An example of such checks is shown below.



Nebraska law requires both the Clerk and the Chairperson of the Township Board to sign all checks approved by the Board. In particular, Neb. Rev. Stat. § 23-255 (Reissue 2012) states, in relevant part, the following:

The town clerk shall draw and sign all orders upon the town treasurer for all money to be disbursed by the township, and all warrants upon the county treasurer for money raised for town purposes, or apportioned to the town by the county or state, and present the same to the chairman of the board, to be countersigned by him, and no warrant shall be paid until so countersigned.

(Emphasis added.) In addition, good internal controls and sound accounting practices require procedures to ensure that Township checks contain the statutorily required endorsements.

Without such procedures, there is an increased risk for not only failure to comply with State statute but also loss or misuse of public funds.

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

4. Expenditures in Excess of Budget

For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2021, actual expenditures exceeded the adopted budget by \$26,006. No amendment was filed with our office for these additional expenditures.

Neb. Rev. Stat. § 13-510 (Reissue 2012) states, in relevant part, the following:

No expenditure during any fiscal year or biennial period shall be made in excess of the amounts indicated in the adopted budget statement, except as authorized in section 13-511, or by state law. Any officer or officers of any governing body who obligates funds contrary to the provisions of this section shall be guilty of a Class V misdemeanor.

Neb. Rev. Stat. § 13-511 (Cum. Supp. 2020) sets out the procedures for amending the adopted budget accordingly.

When expenditures are made in excess of the amounts budgeted with no appropriation adjustments by the Board to address those excesses, the Township is noncompliant with State statute, further increasing the risk for loss and/or misuse of funds.

We recommend the Board implement procedures for monitoring closely its budget status on an ongoing basis to avoid expenditures that exceed the amount budgeted and amending the budget as required when such excess expenditures are unavoidable.

5. Negative Bank Balance

While examining the Township bank statements, the APA noted that the Township's checking account had a negative balance two times during the fiscal year 2021. The following table shows the periods the bank balance was negative and the largest negative balance during the period noted. During the fiscal year 2021, the Township incurred a \$15 overdraft fee associated with the negative bank balances. This overdraft fee was later credited by the bank.

Period	Largest Negative Balance
08/03/2020 - 08/18/2020	\$ 1,779.11
08/31/2020 - 09/10/2020	\$ 3.30

Good internal controls and sound business practices require procedures to ensure that funds are available in the Township's bank account prior to payment. Without such procedures, unnecessary fees can occur.

We recommend the Board implement procedures to ensure funds are available in the bank account prior to payment.

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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 Township'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 Township.

This communication is intended solely for the information and use of the Township 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,



Mark Avery, CPA
Assistant Deputy Auditor