



NEBRASKA AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

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November 12, 2021

Wayne Houchin Jr., Chairperson
Belle Prairie Township Fillmore County
307 Road 13
Strang, NE 68444

Dear Chairperson Houchin Jr.:

The Nebraska Auditor of Public Accounts (APA) has reviewed the audit waiver request received from the Belle Prairie Township Fillmore 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.

Comment and Recommendation

Payments Not Approved

The APA obtained a copy of the September 9, 2021, meeting minutes for the Township Board. Those minutes fail to reflect the Board's approval of any Township expenditures. According to the Township, the Board did not meet during the fiscal year to approve any Township expenditures.

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.

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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