



NEBRASKA AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

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Jim Crawford, Chairperson
Village of Phillips
706 East Street
Phillips, NE 68865

Dear Chairperson Crawford:

The Nebraska Auditor of Public Accounts (APA) has reviewed the audit waiver request received from the Village of Phillips (Village) for the fiscal year ending 2021. **That request has been approved.**

While performing, pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 84-304 (Supp. 2021), 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 Claim Purpose

During our comparison of the Village's bank account details to claims approved by the Board, the APA observed meeting minutes dated January 5, 2021, and 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 January 5, 2021:

Aurora News Register/P	\$105.36
Ball Insurance Services	\$925.68
Black Hills Energy/G,S	\$230.78
Blue Cross/Blue Shield/H I	\$1,305.52
Fire Dpt./T & AD	\$902.80
Hamilton County Treasurer/T	\$47.44
Hamilton Telephone Co.	\$103.68
Heartland Disposal/S	\$1,719.85
Home Federal/M D	\$100.00
IIMC/M	\$175.00
Menards/S	\$58.28
Miller Monroe Farrell	\$4,201.25
National Life Co./L I	\$47.54
NE. Dpt. Of Revenue/S&UT	\$801.68
NE. Fire Sprinkler/AFSI	\$210.00
Sam's Club/YM	\$50.77
Southern Power District/ E	\$282.00
Crawford, J.	\$75.00
Fry, J.	\$60.00
Ziola, M	\$60.00
Bergmark, D	\$60.00
Dana, L	\$60.00
Svehla Law Offices, P. C./VA	\$300.00
Visa/S	\$492.15

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.

2. Payment of Unapproved Claims

During our comparison of the Village's bank account details to claims approved by the Board, the APA identified the following checks, totaling \$1,549.54, which were paid but not included on the claims listing to be approved by the Board.

Details of the unapproved payments are included in the table below:

Name/Vendor	Check Date	Amount	Check #
IRS	1/8/2021	\$ 1,499.54	EFT
[Illegible] Leigh Alexander	1/15/2021	\$ 50.00	153
Total		\$ 1,549.54	

Neb. Rev. Stat. § 17-614(1) (Supp. 2021) sets out the proper method for the appropriation or payment of money by the Village, as follows:

All ordinances and resolutions or orders for the appropriation or payment of money shall require for their passage or adoption the concurrence of a majority of all members elected to the city council in a city of the second class or village board of trustees.

(Emphasis added.) Good internal control requires procedures to ensure that all claims are approved by the Board prior to payment and are adequately documented in the meeting minutes of the month in which they are approved. Without such procedures, there is an increased risk for the loss or misuse of Village funds.

We recommend the Board implement procedures to ensure all claims are approved by the Board prior to payment and are adequately documented in the meeting minutes of the month in which they are approved.

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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,



Mark Avery, CPA
Assistant Deputy Auditor