



NEBRASKA AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

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Ed North, Chairperson
O'Neill Rural Fire District 3
P.O. Box 915
O'Neill, NE 68763

Dear Chairperson North:

The Nebraska Auditor of Public Accounts (APA) has reviewed the audit waiver request received from the O'Neill Rural Fire District 3 (District) for the fiscal year ending 2022. **That request has been approved.**

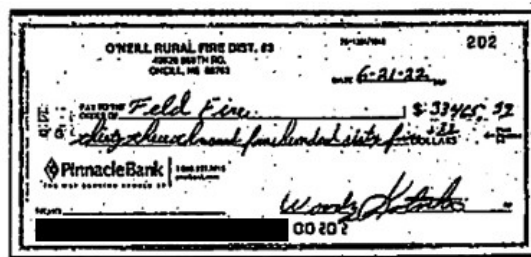
While performing, pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 84-304 (Cum. Supp. 2022), the preliminary examination necessary to determine whether further audit work would be required or the audit waiver should be allowed, the APA noted certain internal control or compliance matters, or other operational issues, within the District.

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 monthly statements for the District's bank accounts from its fiscal year 2022 audit waiver request. From those statements, the APA noted that all District checks written during the examination period contained only one signature. An example of such checks is shown below.



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Additionally, the APA observed the August 26, 2022, meeting minutes for the Board of Directors (Board) of the District. During this meeting, the Board decided to continue to require only one signature on all checks. An excerpt from the August 26, 2022, meeting minutes is shown below.

Pass made a motion to not require Dual signature on checks issued and to continue to only require a single check signature by secretary treasurer, Tim Secord All in favor.

However, Nebraska law requires both the Secretary-Treasurer and the President of the District to sign all checks approved by the Board. In particular, Neb. Rev. Stat. § 35-511 (Reissue 2016) states that those checks “shall bear the signature of the secretary-treasurer and the countersignature of the president of such district.”

In addition, good internal controls and sound accounting practices require procedures to ensure that District 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.

A similar issue was identified by the APA in prior reviews and was disclosed to the District in the APA’s letters dated November 23, 2020, and January 12, 2022, which can be found on the APA’s website. However, it does not appear this issue was corrected after the APA’s notification.

We recommend the Board implement procedures to require dual signatures, from both the Secretary-Treasurer and the President, on all District checks, as required by law.

2. Cashier’s Checks

While reviewing the bank statements obtained as part of the District’s fiscal year 2022 audit waiver request, the APA noted that two cashier’s checks, totaling \$138,522, were issued by the bank on June 16, 2022. According to the District’s Chairperson, the District intended to purchase certificates of deposit from Edward Jones; however, Edward Jones would not accept the checks as they were public funds. The cashier’s checks were then deposited back into the District’s bank account on November 10, 2022. The checks were held by the District outside of a bank account for 147 days.

Good internal controls require procedures to ensure that District funds are held in a secure bank account. Without such procedures, there is an increased risk of loss, misuse, or theft of public funds.

We recommend the District implement procedures to ensure that District funds are held in a secure bank account.

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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 District’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 District.

This communication is intended solely for the information and use of the District 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