

**ATTESTATION REPORT  
OF  
THURSTON COUNTY COURT  
JANUARY 1, 2021, THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2022**

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**Issued on June 12, 2023**

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*We will maintain a professionally prepared staff, utilizing up-to-date technology, and following current Government Auditing Standards.*

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THURSTON COUNTY COURT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
<b><u>Comment Section</u></b>	
Comment and Recommendation	1
<b><u>Financial Section</u></b>	
Independent Accountant's Report	2 - 3
Financial Schedules:	
Schedule of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions - Custodial Funds - For the Calendar Year Ended December 31, 2022	4
Schedule of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions - Custodial Funds - For the Calendar Year Ended December 31, 2021	5
Notes to Financial Schedules	6

THURSTON COUNTY COURT

**COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATION**

During our examination of the Thurston County Court, we noted a certain deficiency that is presented here. The following comment is required to be reported in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* and is considered to be a material weakness.

This comment and recommendation is intended to improve the internal control over financial reporting or result in operational efficiencies in the following area:

**Segregation of Duties**

Good internal control includes a plan of organization, procedures, and documentation designed to safeguard assets and to provide reliable financial records. A system of internal control should include a proper segregation of duties, so no one individual is capable of handling all phases of a transaction from beginning to end.

We noted that the office of the County Court lacked a sufficient segregation of duties, as one person was capable of handling all aspects of processing transactions from beginning to end. Additionally, staff could create and issue orders affixed with the Judge's signature in the JUSTICE (Judicial User System to Improve Court Efficiency) application without formal documentation to support that the Judge approved the order. That same staff had access to court receipts and were able to record non-monetary transactions (e.g., waiving fines) in JUSTICE.

A lack of segregation of duties increases the risk of possible errors or irregularities; however, due to a limited number of personnel, an adequate segregation of duties may not be possible without additional cost. Further, personnel are under the direction of both the Nebraska State Court Administrator and the Presiding Judge.

We have included this comment in previous examinations.

We recommend the County Court and the Nebraska State Court Administrator review this situation. As always, the cost of hiring additional personnel versus the benefit of a proper segregation of duties must be weighed. We also recommend the Supreme Court implement procedures to ensure that each Judge's approval of orders is formally documented.

*County Court Response: Thurston County is a one-person court, so segregation of duties is not viable option. We do have our internal accounting specialist who does do audit of Thurston County on a scheduled basis and reviews our records.*

It should be noted that this report is critical in nature, as it contains only our comment and recommendation on the area noted for improvement and does not include our observations on any accounting strengths of the County Court.

Draft copies of this report were furnished to the County Court to provide management with an opportunity to review the report and to respond to the comments and recommendations included in this report. All formal responses received have been incorporated into this report. Responses have been objectively evaluated and recognized, as appropriate, in the report. Responses that indicate corrective action has been taken were not verified at this time, but they will be verified in the next examination.



# NEBRASKA AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

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## THURSTON COUNTY COURT

### INDEPENDENT ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT

Thurston County Court  
Pender, Nebraska 68047

We have examined the accompanying Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions of the Thurston County Court as of and for the calendar years ending December 31, 2021, and December 31, 2022. The County Court's management is responsible for the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions based on the accounting system and procedures set forth in Note 1. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions based on our examination.

Our examination was conducted in accordance with attestation standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the standards applicable to attestation engagements contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the examination to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions are based on the accounting system and procedures set forth in Note 1, in all material respects. An examination involves performing procedures to obtain evidence about the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions. The nature, timing, and extent of the procedures selected depend on our judgment, including an assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions, whether due to fraud or error. We believe that the evidence we obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

We are required to be independent and to meet our ethical responsibilities in accordance with relevant ethical requirements relating to the engagement.


In our opinion, the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions for the calendar years ending December 31, 2021, and December 31, 2022, are based on the accounting system and procedures prescribed by the Nebraska Supreme Court, as set forth in Note 1, in all material respects.

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we are required to report all deficiencies that are considered to be significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in internal control; noncompliance with provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, or grant agreements that have a material effect on the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions; fraud that is material, either quantitatively or qualitatively, to the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions; and any other instances that warrant the attention of those charged with governance. We are also required to obtain and report the views of management concerning the findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as well as any planned corrective actions. We performed our examination to express an opinion on whether the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions are presented in accordance with the criteria described above and not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the internal control over the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities

Arising from Cash Transactions or on compliance and other matters; accordingly, we express no such opinions. Our examination disclosed a certain finding that is required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*, and that finding, along with the views of management, is described in the Comment Section of the report.

The purpose of this report is to express an opinion on the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions, as described in paragraph one above. Accordingly, this report is not suitable for any other purpose. This report is a matter of public record, and its distribution is not limited.

May 30, 2023



Mike Foley  
Auditor of Public Accounts  
Lincoln, Nebraska

THURSTON COUNTY COURT  
PENDER, NEBRASKA  
**SCHEDULE OF CHANGES IN ASSETS AND LIABILITIES**  
**ARISING FROM CASH TRANSACTIONS**  
**CUSTODIAL FUNDS**

For the Calendar Year Ended December 31, 2022

	Balance January 1, 2022	Additions	Deductions	Balance December 31, 2022
<b>ASSETS</b>				
Cash and Deposits	\$ 24,194	\$ 120,590	\$ 111,700	\$ 33,084
<b>LIABILITIES</b>				
Due to State Treasurer:				
Regular Fees	\$ 864	\$ 12,709	\$ 12,035	\$ 1,538
Law Enforcement Fees	65	777	793	49
State Judges Retirement Fund	425	5,639	5,655	409
Court Administrative Fees	850	9,587	9,499	938
Legal Services Fees	297	3,449	3,517	229
Due to County Treasurer:				
Regular Fines	1,095	18,072	18,576	591
Overload Fines	-	450	450	-
Regular Fees	142	11,829	11,935	36
Petty Cash Fund	50	-	-	50
Municipality Fines	-	175	125	50
Trust Fund Payable	20,406	57,903	49,115	29,194
Total Liabilities	\$ 24,194	\$ 120,590	\$ 111,700	\$ 33,084

The accompanying notes are an integral part of the Schedule.

THURSTON COUNTY COURT  
PENDER, NEBRASKA  
**SCHEDULE OF CHANGES IN ASSETS AND LIABILITIES**  
**ARISING FROM CASH TRANSACTIONS**  
**CUSTODIAL FUNDS**

For the Calendar Year Ended December 31, 2021

	Balance January 1, 2021	Additions	Deductions	Balance December 31, 2021
<b>ASSETS</b>				
Cash and Deposits	\$ 20,933	\$ 100,162	\$ 96,901	\$ 24,194
<b>LIABILITIES</b>				
Due to State Treasurer:				
Regular Fees	\$ 728	\$ 11,073	\$ 10,937	\$ 864
Law Enforcement Fees	57	798	790	65
State Judges Retirement Fund	302	4,724	4,601	425
Court Administrative Fees	1,434	7,134	7,718	850
Legal Services Fees	252	3,519	3,474	297
Due to County Treasurer:				
Regular Fines	780	22,976	22,661	1,095
Overload Fines	-	150	150	-
Regular Fees	920	1,869	2,647	142
Petty Cash Fund	50	-	-	50
Municipality Fines	50	200	250	-
Trust Fund Payable	16,360	47,719	43,673	20,406
Total Liabilities	\$ 20,933	\$ 100,162	\$ 96,901	\$ 24,194

The accompanying notes are an integral part of the schedule.



THURSTON COUNTY COURT  
**NOTES TO FINANCIAL SCHEDULES**

For the Calendar Years Ending December 31, 2021, and December 31, 2022

**1. Criteria**

**A. Reporting Entity**

The Thurston County Court is established by State statute and is administratively operated through the Court Administrator's Office of the Nebraska Supreme Court, which is part of the State of Nebraska reporting entity. The Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions of the County Court reflect only the Custodial Funds activity of the County Court, including the receipts and their subsequent disbursement to the appropriate entities for which they were collected. The Schedules do not reflect the personal services expenses of the County Court, which are paid by the Nebraska Supreme Court, or the operating expenses, which are paid by Thurston County.

**B. Basis of Accounting**

The accounting records of the County Court Custodial Funds are maintained, and the Schedules of Changes in Assets and Liabilities Arising from Cash Transactions have been prepared, based on the accounting system and procedures prescribed by the Nebraska Supreme Court. Under this system of accounting, fines, fees, and receipts relating to trust funds are shown as additions to assets and as an increase in the related liability when received or collected. Likewise, disbursements are shown as deductions to assets and as a decrease in the related liability when a check is written.

**2. Deposits and Investments**

Funds held by the County Court are deposited and invested in accordance with rules issued by the Supreme Court, as directed by Neb. Rev. Stat. § 25-2713 (Reissue 2016). Funds are generally consolidated in an interest-bearing checking account; however, the County Court may order certain trust funds to be invested separately. Any deposits in excess of the amount insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation are required by Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-2326.04 (Reissue 2018) to be secured either by a surety bond or as provided in the Public Funds Deposit Security Act.