

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

Recorder of Deeds/ Register of Wills/ Clerk of Orphans' Court Lycoming County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2019

February 2021



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL**

The Honorable C. Daniel Hassell
Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue
Harrisburg, PA 17128

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Recorder of Deeds/Register of Wills/Clerk of Orphans' Court, Lycoming County, Pennsylvania (County Officer), for the period January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2019, pursuant to the requirements of Sections 401(b) and 401(d) of *The Fiscal Code*, 72 P.S. § 401(b) and § 401(d).

The objective of the audit was to determine whether all moneys collected on behalf of the Commonwealth have been correctly assessed, reported, and promptly remitted and to provide a report to the Department of Revenue to allow the Department of Revenue to state and settle the County Offices' account. Our audit was limited to areas related to the objective identified above and was not conducted, nor was it required to be, in accordance with Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

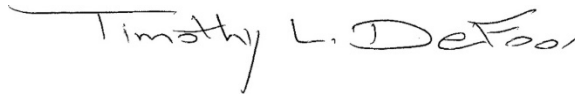
The County Offices are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the County Offices comply with state laws and regulations applicable to the collection of moneys on behalf of the Commonwealth, including whether they have been correctly assessed, reported, and promptly remitted. The County Offices are also responsible for complying with those laws and regulations. It is our responsibility to perform procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objective. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, for the period January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2019, the County Offices, in all significant respects, complied with state laws and regulations applicable to the collection of moneys on behalf of the Commonwealth, including whether they have been correctly assessed, reported, and promptly remitted.

This report includes summaries of the County Offices' receipts and disbursements of funds collected on behalf of the Commonwealth (summaries). We obtained data representing the County Offices' receipts and disbursements from the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, which obtains data from each of the Commonwealth's recorder of deeds, register of wills, and clerk of orphans' court offices, and used the data to create the summaries in the format required by the Department of Revenue. We also evaluated the accuracy of the data as part of our audit to conclude on the County Offices' compliance with certain state laws and regulations as described in the previous paragraph. Any adjustments that we considered necessary based on our audit work are disclosed in the *Audit Adjustments* line of the summaries; however, the scope of our audit does not include the issuance of an opinion on the accuracy of the amounts reported in the summaries.

The purpose of this report is to determine whether all moneys collected on behalf of the Commonwealth have been correctly assessed, reported, and promptly remitted. This report is not suitable for any other purposes.

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the County Offices. We appreciate the courtesy extended by the Recorder of Deeds/Register of Wills/Clerk of Orphans' Court, Lycoming County, to us during the course of our audit. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Bureau of County Audits at 717-787-1363.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy L. DeFoor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the left of the first letter.

Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General

January 26, 2021

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RECORDER OF DEEDS/REGISTER OF WILLS/
CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
LYCOMING COUNTY
BACKGROUND
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2016 TO DECEMBER 31, 2019

The Department of Auditor General is mandated by Article IV, Section 401(b) and (d) of *The Fiscal Code* (Act of April 9, 1929, P.L.343, No. 176), to audit the accounts of each county officer to determine whether all moneys collected on behalf of the Commonwealth have been correctly assessed, reported, and promptly remitted.

Recorder of Deeds receipts consist of monies collected on behalf of the Commonwealth. These include monies collected for the following taxes and fees:

- The Pennsylvania Realty Transfer Tax is a documentary stamp tax of 1 percent on the value of the interest in real property transferred by deed.
- Writ Taxes of \$.50 imposed on various types of documents and a \$10 tax on notary public commissions processed through the office.
- Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees of \$35.50 imposed on all petitions for grant of letters, and first filings in petitions concerning adoptions, incompetents' estates, minors' estates, and inter vivos trusts. Effective October 30, 2017, Act 40 and Act 44 increased the fee to \$40.25.

Register of Wills receipts consist of monies collected on behalf of the Commonwealth less commissions on these monies. These include monies collected for the following taxes and fees:

- Inheritance Taxes filed with the Register of Wills.
- Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees represent a \$35.50 fee imposed on all petitions for grant of letters, and first filings in petitions concerning adoptions, incompetents' estates, minors' estates, and inter vivos trusts. Effective October 30, 2017, Act 40 and Act 44 increased the fee to \$40.25.

RECORDER OF DEEDS/REGISTER OF WILLS/
CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
LYCOMING COUNTY
BACKGROUND
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2016 TO DECEMBER 31, 2019

Clerk of Orphans' Court receipts consist of monies collected on behalf of the Commonwealth. These include monies collected for the following taxes, surcharges, and fees:

- Marriage License Tax of \$.50 on all marriage licenses filed with the Clerk of Orphans' Court.
- Marriage License Application Surcharge of \$10 imposed on all marriage license applications.
- Marriage License Declaration Fees of \$13 imposed for the issuance of a marriage license or declaration of which the Commonwealth's portion \$10.
- Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees represent a \$35.50 fee imposed on all petitions for grant of letters, and first filings in petitions concerning adoptions, incompetents' estates, minors' estates, and inter vivos trusts. Effective October 30, 2017, Act 40 and Act 44 increased the fee to \$40.25.

Total disbursements for the audit period are comprised as follows:

Recorder Of Deeds

Realty Transfer Taxes

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| Deposits into the Department of Revenue's cash management account | <u>\$ 13,643,416</u> |
|--|----------------------|

The Recorder of Deeds participates in the Department of Revenue's cash management system for Realty Transfer Taxes. Under this system, the "Agent" deposits Realty Transfer Tax collections to a local account approved and established in the name of the Department of Revenue, thereby eliminating the need for the agent to issue a check to disburse these taxes. This balance reflects a summary of monthly transmittal reports as settled by the Department of Revenue. The balance does not reflect adjustments disclosed by our audit.

RECORDER OF DEEDS/REGISTER OF WILLS/
 CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
 LYCOMING COUNTY
 BACKGROUND
 FOR THE PERIOD
 JANUARY 1, 2016 TO DECEMBER 31, 2019

Writ Taxes And Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees

Recorder of Deeds checks issued to:

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Department of Revenue | \$ <u>2,018,262</u> |
|-----------------------|---------------------|

This balance reflects a summary of monthly transmittal reports as settled by the Department of Revenue.

Register Of Wills

Inheritance Taxes

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| Deposits into the Department of Revenue's cash management account | \$ 29,498,068 |
| Credits issued by the Department of Revenue | 23,053 |
| Checks issued to the Department of Revenue for Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees | <u>19,170</u> |
| Total | \$ <u>29,540,291</u> |

The Register of Wills participates in the Department of Revenue's cash management system for Inheritance Taxes. Under this system, the "Agent" deposits Inheritance Tax collections to a local account approved and established in the name of the Department of Revenue, thereby eliminating the need for the agent to issue a check to disburse these taxes. This balance reflects a summary of monthly transmittal reports as settled by the Department of Revenue. The balance does not reflect adjustments disclosed by our audit.

Clerk Of Orphans' Court

Clerk of Orphans' Court checks issued to:

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Department of Revenue | \$ <u>117,956</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------------|

This balance reflects a summary of monthly transmittal reports as settled by the Department of Revenue. The balance does not reflect adjustments disclosed by our audit.

RECORDER OF DEEDS/REGISTER OF WILLS/
CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
LYCOMING COUNTY
BACKGROUND
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2016 TO DECEMBER 31, 2019

Kathy Rinehart served as Recorder of Deeds/Register of Wills/Clerk of Orphans' Court during the period January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2019.

The summaries of receipts and disbursements provide a summary of receipts and disbursements by category. The categories and the amounts of taxes, fees, and surcharges assessed are based on Pennsylvania laws and regulations.

The summaries were prepared in accordance with reporting requirements prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue. Under this method, only the Commonwealth portion of cash receipts and disbursements are presented, revenues are recognized when received, and expenditures are recognized when paid.

Audit Adjustment - Recorder of Deeds - Realty Transfer Tax Summary

The audit adjustment of \$19,753 represents a prior audit balance of \$22,392 due the county that was claimed in June 2017 and the correction of a non-sufficient funds check in the amount of \$2,639 was credited twice.

Audit Adjustment - Register of Wills - Inheritance Tax Summary

The audit adjustment of \$1,900 represents Realty Transfer Tax fees that were incorrectly deposited into the Inheritance Tax account. This error was corrected in March 2016.

Audit Adjustment - Clerk of Orphans' Court

During our prior audit, January 1, 2013 to December 31, 2015, we determined that there was a balance due the County of \$45. This credit was claimed in March 2016.

RECORDER OF DEEDS
LYCOMING COUNTY
REALTY TRANSFER TAXES
SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2016 TO DECEMBER 31, 2019

Receipts:

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Realty Transfer Taxes | \$ 13,663,169 |
| Disbursements to Commonwealth | <u>(13,643,416)</u> |
| Balance due Commonwealth (County) per settled reports | 19,753 |
| Audit adjustments | <u>(19,753)</u> |
| Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (County) for the period January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2019 | <u><u>\$ -</u></u> |

RECORDER OF DEEDS
 LYCOMING COUNTY
 WRIT TAXES AND JUDICIAL COMPUTER SYSTEM/ACCESS TO JUSTICE FEES
 SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
 FOR THE PERIOD
 JANUARY 1, 2016 TO DECEMBER 31, 2019

Receipts:

| | | |
|---|----|--------------------|
| Writ Taxes | \$ | 42,088 |
| Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees | | <u>1,977,437</u> |
| Total Receipts | | 2,019,525 |
| Commissions | | <u>(1,263)</u> |
| Net Receipts | | 2,018,262 |
| Disbursements to Commonwealth | | <u>(2,018,262)</u> |
| Balance due Commonwealth (County) per settled reports | | - |
| Audit adjustments | | <u>-</u> |
| Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (County) for the period January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2019 | \$ | <u><u>-</u></u> |

REGISTER OF WILLS
 LYCOMING COUNTY
 SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
 FOR THE PERIOD
 JANUARY 1, 2016 TO DECEMBER 31, 2019

Receipts:

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Inheritance Taxes | \$ 29,519,221 |
| Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees | <u>19,170</u> |
| Total Receipts | 29,538,391 |
| Disbursements and credits to Commonwealth | <u>(29,540,291)</u> |
| Balance due Commonwealth (County) per settled reports | (1,900) |
| Audit adjustments | <u>1,900</u> |
| Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (County) for the period January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2019 | <u><u>\$ -</u></u> |

CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
 LYCOMING COUNTY
 SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
 FOR THE PERIOD
 JANUARY 1, 2016 TO DECEMBER 31, 2019

Receipts:

| | | |
|---|----|------------------|
| Marriage License Taxes | \$ | 1,343 |
| Marriage License Application Surcharges | | 26,850 |
| Marriage License Declaration Fees | | 26,850 |
| Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees | | <u>62,958</u> |
| Total Receipts | | 118,001 |
| Disbursements to Commonwealth | | <u>(117,956)</u> |
| Balance due Commonwealth (County) per settled reports | | 45 |
| Audit adjustments | | <u>(45)</u> |
| Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (County) for the period January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2019 | \$ | <u><u>-</u></u> |

RECORDER OF DEEDS/REGISTER OF WILLS/
CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
LYCOMING COUNTY
SUMMARY OF PRIOR AUDIT RECOMMENDATION
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2016 TO DECEMBER 31, 2019

Summary Of Prior Audit Recommendation

During our prior audit, we recommended that the office:

- Establish and implement an adequate system of internal controls over the bank account.

During our current audit, we noted that the office complied with our recommendation.

RECORDER OF DEEDS/REGISTER OF WILLS/
CLERK OF ORPHANS' COURT
LYCOMING COUNTY
REPORT DISTRIBUTION
FOR THE PERIOD
JANUARY 1, 2016 TO DECEMBER 31, 2019

This report was initially distributed to:

The Honorable C. Daniel Hassell
Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue

The Honorable H. Geoffrey Moulton, Jr.
Court Administrator of Pennsylvania
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Courts
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

The Honorable David Huffman
Recorder of Deeds/Register of Wills/ Clerk of Orphans' Court

The Honorable Krista B. Rogers
Controller

The Honorable Scott Metzger
Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at www.PaAuditor.gov. Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 229 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: news@PaAuditor.gov.