



Commonwealth of Virginia

Walter J. Kucharski, Auditor

**Auditor of Public Accounts
P.O. Box 1295
Richmond, Virginia 23218**

May 21, 2003

The Honorable Phillip V. Daffron
Chief Judge
City of Colonial Heights General District Court
P.O. Box 144
Chesterfield, VA 23832

The Honorable Harold W. Burgess, Jr.
Chief Judge
City of Colonial Heights Juvenile and
Domestic Relations District Court
PO Box 520
Chesterfield, VA 23832

As part of our audit of the Virginia District Court System, we have audited the cash receipts and disbursements of the City of Colonial Heights District Court for the period April 1, 2002 through March 31, 2003.

Our primary objectives were to test the accuracy of financial transactions recorded on the Court's financial management system; evaluate the Court's internal controls; and test its compliance with significant state laws, regulations, and policies. However, our audit was more limited than would be necessary to provide assurance on the internal controls or on overall compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

The results of our tests found the Court properly stated, in all material respects, the amounts recorded and reported in the financial management system; and no material weaknesses in the internal controls. However, we noted noncompliance with state laws, regulations, and policies that the Clerk needs to address as described below.

Properly Assess Court Costs

The Clerk does not consistently assess proper court costs in criminal and traffic cases in accordance with the Code of Virginia. We noted assessment errors in 12 of 40 cases tested. In one case, the Clerk incorrectly assessed the tried in absence fee when the defendant had actually been present in Court. In 11 cases, the Clerk failed to assess various fees totaling \$216 as required by the Code of Virginia. Assessment errors arise from either the Clerk's oversight in charging the wrong fee or the Clerk's unfamiliarity with recently implemented local fees. The Clerk should exercise more diligence when assessing court costs, especially when there are new fines or costs going into effect.

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Properly Reconcile Bank Account

The Clerk does not properly reconcile the monthly bank account statements to the Court's financial records. The Clerk fails to properly document or resolve differences between the bank statement and system cash balances. Monthly bank reconciliations are essential for determining the proper recording of all transactions, detecting errors, and identifying and resolving differences between the bank balance and the system's cash balance. When the Clerk cannot reconcile the bank account to the system cash balance, she should immediately seek assistance from the Supreme Court

We discussed these comments with the Clerk on May 21, 2003 and we acknowledge the cooperation extended to us by the Court during this engagement.

AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

WJK/cam

cc: The Honorable Thomas L. Murphey, Judge
The Honorable Thomas L. Vaughan, Judge
The Honorable Bonnie C. Davis, Judge
Donna M. Slade, Clerk
Don Lucido, Director of Technical Assistance
Supreme Court of Virginia
LeAnn Lane, Court Analyst
Supreme Court of Virginia