

Audit Report

**Office of the Clerk of Circuit Court
St. Mary's County, Maryland**

May 2009



OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AUDITS
DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES
MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Karl S. Aro
Executive Director

DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AUDITS
MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Bruce A. Myers, CPA
Legislative Auditor

May 13, 2009

Delegate Steven J. DeBoy, Sr., Co-Chair, Joint Audit Committee
Senator Verna L. Jones, Co-Chair, Joint Audit Committee
Members of Joint Audit Committee
Annapolis, Maryland

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We have audited the Office of the Clerk of Circuit Court for St. Mary's County, Maryland for the period beginning November 1, 2005 and ending March 1, 2009. The Office performs various functions for the public, including maintaining various legal records, recording certain real estate documents, collecting related fees and taxes, and issuing certain licenses.

Our audit did not disclose any findings that warrant mention in this report.

We wish to acknowledge the cooperation extended to us by the Office during the course of this audit.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce A. Myers, CPA
Legislative Auditor

Background Information

Agency Responsibilities

The Office performs a variety of functions for the public such as filing, docketing, and maintaining various legal records; recording documents involving title to real estate; collecting fees, commissions, and taxes; and issuing certain licenses. In performing these functions, the Office collects funds on behalf of the State, St. Mary's County and its incorporated town, and others, and subsequently distributes the funds collected to the applicable entities.

Financial Information

According to the State's accounting records, the Office's fiscal year 2008 revenues totaled \$17,906,925. These revenues were distributed in the following manner:

- \$13,541,353 was distributed to St. Mary's County and its incorporated town;
- \$653 was distributed to others; and
- \$4,364,919 (the remaining amount) represented revenues available to the State for purposes specified in various provisions of State law.

The Office's fiscal year 2008 operating expenses, which were paid primarily from a general fund appropriation, totaled \$1,363,536.

The Office also maintained custody of certain trust funds that, according to its records, had balances totaling \$650,765 as of February 28, 2008.

Findings and Recommendations

Our audit did not disclose any significant deficiencies in the design or operation of the Office's internal control. Nor did our audit disclose any significant instances of noncompliance with applicable laws, rules, or regulations. Another less significant finding was communicated to the Office that did not warrant inclusion in this report.

A draft copy of this report was provided to the Office. Since there are no recommendations in this report, a written response was not necessary.

Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology

We have audited the Office of the Clerk of Circuit Court for St. Mary's County, Maryland for the period November 1, 2005 and ending March 1, 2009. The audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

As prescribed by the State Government Article, Section 2-1221 of the Annotated Code of Maryland, the objectives of this audit were to examine the Office's financial transactions, records and internal control, and to evaluate its compliance with applicable State laws, rules, and regulations.

In planning and conducting our audit, we focused on the major financial-related areas of operations based on assessments of materiality and risk. Our audit procedures included inquiries of appropriate personnel, inspections of documents and records, and observations of the Office's operations. We also tested transactions and performed other auditing procedures that we considered necessary to achieve our objectives. Data provided in this report for background or informational purposes were deemed reasonable, but were not independently verified.

Our audit did not include certain support services provided to the Office by the Administrative Office of the Courts. These support services (such as payroll, processing of invoices, and maintenance of budgetary accounting records) are included within the scope of our audits of the Judiciary.

The Office's management is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal control. Internal control is a process designed to provide reasonable assurance that objectives pertaining to the reliability of financial records, effectiveness and efficiency of operations including safeguarding of assets, and compliance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations are achieved.

Because of inherent limitations in internal control, errors or fraud may nevertheless occur and not be detected. Also, projections of any evaluation of internal control to future periods are subject to the risk that conditions may change or compliance with policies and procedures may deteriorate.

Our reports are designed to assist the Maryland General Assembly in exercising its legislative oversight function and to provide constructive recommendations for improving State operations. As a result, our reports generally do not address activities we reviewed that are functioning properly.

AUDIT TEAM

Matthew L. Streett, CPA, CFE
Audit Manager

Laura J. Hilbert, CFE
Senior Auditor

Kingsley M. Ndi
Staff Auditor