



County of Chester
Office of the Controller
Internal Audit Department

Independent Auditor's Report
For the Years Ended
December 31, 2019 and 2018

County of Chester
Office of the Prothonotary

Independent Auditor's Report

Margaret Reif, Controller

County of Chester
Office of the Prothonotary
Annual Financial Statement Audit
As of December 31, 2019 and 2018

Debbie Bookman, Prothonotary
Office of the Prothonotary
Chester County Justice Center
201 West Market Street, Suite 1425
West Chester, PA 19380-0989

County of Chester

Office of the Prothonotary

For the Years Ended December 31, 2019 and 2018

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Debbie Bookman, Prothonotary
Office of the Prothonotary
Chester County Justice Center
201 West Market Street, Suite 1425
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Independent Auditor's Report

Report on the Financial Statements

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of the Office of the Prothonotary (*Prothonotary*), which comprises the statements of assets and liabilities arising from cash transactions as of December 31, 2019 and 2018, and the related statements of cash receipts, disbursements and cash balances for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with the cash basis of accounting described in Note 1; this includes determining that the cash basis of accounting is an acceptable basis for the preparation of the financial statements in the circumstances. Management is also responsible for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatements, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to annually audit the accounts of every row office within the County and to report the results of such audits to the Chester County Commissioners, the Chester County Court of Common Pleas, the Auditor General of Pennsylvania, and to the governing body of each political subdivision which is entitled to receive funds collected on its behalf by the *Prothonotary*.

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the assets and liabilities arising from cash transactions of the *Prothonotary* as of December 31, 2019 and 2018, and its cash receipts, disbursements and cash balances for the years then ended in accordance with the cash basis of accounting described in Note 1.

Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 of the financial statements, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial statements are prepared on the cash basis of accounting, which is a basis of accounting other than accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. Our opinion is not modified with respect to this matter.

Other Matter

In accordance with Government Auditing Standards, Internal Audit has also issued a separate report dated December 14, 2020 on our evaluation of the *Prothonotary's* internal control over financial reporting and on our tests of compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, policies and/or procedures. That report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with Government Auditing Standards and is to be read in conjunction with this report in considering the results of our audit.



Margaret Reif
Controller

December 14, 2020

County of Chester

Office of the Prothonotary

Statements of Assets and Liabilities – Cash Basis

December 31, 2019 and 2018

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
<u>Assets</u>		
Cash - Operating	\$ 151,077	\$ 141,710
Cash - Escrow Account	839,730	2,391,066
Cash - Automation Fund	334,017	309,002
Cash - E-Filing Account	49,835	34,163
Petty Cash/Change Funds	390	390
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Assets	\$ 1,375,049	\$ 2,876,331
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
<u>Liabilities</u>		
County of Chester	\$ 114,595	\$ 110,524
Commonwealth of PA	23,757	19,306
Administrative Office of PA Courts	-	250
Restricted Funds - Escrow Deposits	842,063	2,393,167
Restricted Funds - Automated Fund	338,872	314,276
Restricted Funds - E-Filing	55,372	38,418
Petty Cash/Change Funds	390	390
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Liabilities	\$ 1,375,049	\$ 2,876,331
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

County of Chester

Office of the Prothonotary

Statements of Receipts, Disbursements
and Cash Balances – Cash Basis
Operating Account

For the Years Ended December 31, 2019 and 2018

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
<u>Receipts</u>		
Fees	\$ 2,197,772	\$ 2,122,098
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Receipts	2,197,772	2,122,098
<u>Disbursements</u>		
County of Chester	1,705,512	1,663,627
Commonwealth of PA	414,751	379,996
Automation Fund	64,346	64,565
Receipt Deposit Distributions	2,609	2,242
Overpayment Refunds	855	1,356
Office of the Sheriff	332	168
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Disbursements	2,188,405	2,111,954
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Cash Increase (Decrease)	9,367	10,144
Cash, Beginning of Year	141,710	131,566
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Cash, End of Year	\$ 151,077	\$ 141,710
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

County of Chester

Office of the Prothonotary

Statements of Receipts, Disbursements
and Cash Balances – Cash Basis
Escrow Account

For the Years Ended December 31, 2019 and 2018

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
<u>Receipts</u>		
Escrow Deposits	\$ 446,082	\$ 542,165
	<u>446,082</u>	<u>542,165</u>
Total Receipts	446,082	542,165
<u>Disbursements</u>		
Escrow Refunds	<u>1,997,418</u>	<u>3,711,338</u>
	<u>1,997,418</u>	<u>3,711,338</u>
Total Disbursements	1,997,418	3,711,338
Cash Increase (Decrease)	(1,551,336)	(3,169,173)
Cash, Beginning of Year	<u>2,391,066</u>	<u>5,560,239</u>
Cash, End of Year	<u>\$ 839,730</u>	<u>\$ 2,391,066</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

County of Chester

Office of the Prothonotary

Statements of Receipts, Disbursements
and Cash Balances – Cash Basis
Automation Account

For the Years Ended December 31, 2019 and 2018

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
<u>Receipts</u>		
Automation Fee Deposits	\$ 64,346	\$ 64,565
Interest	4,228	1,992
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Receipts	68,574	66,557
 <u>Disbursements</u>		
Salary	43,559	33,983
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Disbursements	43,559	33,983
 Cash Increase (Decrease)	 25,015	 32,574
Cash, Beginning of Year	309,002	276,428
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Cash, End of Year	<u>\$ 334,017</u>	<u>\$ 309,002</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

County of Chester

Office of the Prothonotary

Statements of Receipts, Disbursements
and Cash Balances – Cash Basis
E-Filing Account

For the Years Ended December 31, 2019 and 2018

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
<u>Receipts</u>		
Fees	\$ 51,243	\$ 44,248
Interest	429	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Receipts	51,672	44,248
<u>Disbursements</u>		
Computer Maintenance	<hr/> 36,000	<hr/> 36,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Disbursements	36,000	36,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Cash Increase (Decrease)	15,672	8,248
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Cash, Beginning of Year	34,163	25,915
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Cash, End of Year	<u>\$ 49,835</u>	<u>\$ 34,163</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

County of Chester

Office of the Prothonotary

For the Years Ended December 31, 2019 and 2018

Notes to Financial Statements

Note 1 - Summary of Significant Accounting Principles

Basis of Accounting

The books and records of the *Prothonotary* are maintained on the cash basis of accounting. Consequently, receipts are recognized when received rather than when assessed or otherwise due and disbursements are recognized when paid rather than when the obligation is incurred. Accordingly, the accompanying statements do not present the assets, liabilities, receipts, disbursements, and cash balance in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

Background and Reporting Entity

The *Prothonotary* acts as a conduit for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the County of Chester, related political subdivisions, and the citizens it serves. Consequently, the *Prothonotary's* cash balance at any point in time represents undisbursed funds to one (or all) of these parties with the exception of the Prothonotary Automation Fund, as explained below. For financial statement purposes, these undisbursed funds are included as a liability of the *Prothonotary*.

The actual operating expenses of the *Prothonotary* are paid by the County of Chester. These costs include the salaries and wages of office employees, fringe benefits, postage, telephone, office supplies, computer/LAN use, and furniture and equipment. These costs are not included in the audited Statements of Cash Receipts, Disbursements, and Cash Balance.

Prothonotary Automation Fee Fund

The *Prothonotary* established a new fund in May 2003, as permitted by the Commonwealth. This fund is under the sole custody of the *Prothonotary*. Pennsylvania House Bill No. 1715, Session of 1997, authorized the collection of a fee not to exceed \$5.00 for the initiation of any action or legal proceeding. Funds collected are to be deposited into a special *Prothonotary* automation fee fund, and are to be used solely for the purpose of automation and continued automation update of the *Prothonotary*. The office maintains a separate checking account for these funds, and the funds are designated on the balance sheet in a separate liability account. Although the funds are for use at the sole discretion of the Prothonotary for purposes of automating the office, County procurement procedures must still be adhered to when making purchases with the funds in this special account.

County of Chester

Office of the Prothonotary

For the Years Ended December 31, 2019 and 2018

Notes to Financial Statements

Note 1 - Summary of Significant Accounting Principles (continued)

Related Party Transaction

Under Pennsylvania Law, the *Prothonotary* functions as a collection agent and depository for the County of Chester, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Department of Revenue, and the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts. Additionally, the *Prothonotary* functions as an escrow agent for litigants pursuant to a court order or the rules of court. Once a case has been settled, if interest has been earned on deposited funds, the Court of Common Pleas instructs the *Prothonotary* via court order whether the County is to retain the interest or if the interest is to be paid out to a party of the case. If interest is to be paid out, a poundage fee of 3% on the first \$1,000, and 1% on the remaining balance is charged on the principal amount, and is payable to the County. The exception to this directive is with landlord/tenant cases; by law, the awarding party must always receive any interest earned on funds deposited with the *Prothonotary*, and poundage is never deducted from those funds.

Prothonotary E-Filing Account

The *Prothonotary* established a new e-filing account in January 2016. This account holds e-filing fees that are collected by the County, using the payment processing company Heartland. The fees collected are \$20.00 (initial filings) and \$5.00 (secondary filings). After Heartland receives their commission, the remaining funds are transferred into the e-filing holding account. On a periodic basis the funds in this holding account will be paid over to the County's Department of Computer and Information Systems in order to cover software maintenance expenditures.

Note 2 – Elected Official

Matt Holliday served as Prothonotary for the period January 3, 2016 to January 5, 2020.

Debbie Bookman now serves as Prothonotary for the period beginning January 6, 2020 to current.



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December 14, 2020

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201 West Market Street, Suite 1425
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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Independent Auditor's Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting and on Compliance and Other Matters

In planning our audit of the financial statements of the Office of the Prothonotary (*Prothonotary*) as of and for the years ended December 31, 2019 and 2018, in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America, we considered the *Prothonotary's* internal control over financial reporting as a basis for designing our audit procedures for the purpose of expressing our opinion on the financial statements, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the *Prothonotary's* internal control over financial reporting. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on the effectiveness of the *Prothonotary's* internal control over financial reporting.

Our consideration of internal control over financial reporting was for the limited purpose described in the preceding paragraph and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting that might be significant deficiencies or material weaknesses and therefore, there can be no assurance that all significant deficiencies or material weaknesses have been identified.

A deficiency in internal control exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct misstatements on a timely basis. A material weakness is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control, such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the *Prothonotary's* financial statements will not be prevented, or detected and corrected on a timely basis. A *significant deficiency* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the *Prothonotary's* financial statements are free of material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws and regulations, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of

financial statement amounts. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

Independent Auditor's Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting and on Compliance and Other Matters

We noted certain matters that we reported to management of the *Prothonotary* in a separate letter dated December 14, 2020, regarding segregation of duties, cash, cash receipts, cash disbursements, voided disbursements, and escheats.

This report is intended for the information of the Chester County Commissioners, the Chester County Court of Common Pleas, the Auditor General of Pennsylvania, and all other political affiliates served by the *Prothonotary*. This report is, however, a matter of public record, and its distribution is not limited.



Margaret Reif
Controller

County of Chester

Office of the Prothonotary

For the Years Ended December 31, 2019 and 2018

Summary of Exit Conference

An exit conference was not warranted for the audit of the Office of the Prothonotary. Debbie Bookman has accepted the audit report and management letter as presented.