

Audit Report

Maryland Tax Court

December 2016



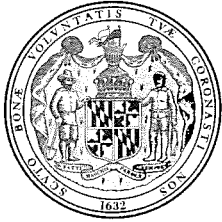
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AUDITS
DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES
MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

For further information concerning this report contact:

Department of Legislative Services
Office of Legislative Audits
301 West Preston Street, Room 1202
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
Phone: 410-946-5900 · 301-970-5900
Toll Free in Maryland: 1-877-486-9964
Maryland Relay: 711
TTY: 410-946-5401 · 301-970-5401
E-mail: OLAWebmaster@ola.state.md.us
Website: www.ola.state.md.us

The Office of Legislative Audits operates a Fraud Hotline to report fraud, waste, or abuse involving State of Maryland government resources. Reports of fraud, waste, or abuse may be communicated anonymously by a toll-free call to 1-877-FRAUD-11, by mail to the Fraud Hotline, c/o Office of Legislative Audits, or through the Office's website.

The Department of Legislative Services does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, creed, marital status, national origin, race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability in the admission or access to its programs, services, or activities. The Department's Information Officer has been designated to coordinate compliance with the nondiscrimination requirements contained in Section 35.107 of the Department of Justice Regulations. Requests for assistance should be directed to the Information Officer at 410-946-5400 or 410-970-5400.



DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AUDITS
MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Warren G. Deschenaux
Executive Director

Thomas J. Barnickel III, CPA
Legislative Auditor

December 1, 2016

Senator Guy J. Guzzone, Co-Chair, Joint Audit Committee
Delegate C. William Frick, Co-Chair, Joint Audit Committee
Members of Joint Audit Committee
Annapolis, Maryland

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We have conducted a fiscal compliance audit of the Maryland Tax Court (MTC) for the period beginning February 20, 2013 and ending October 2, 2016. MTC's primary purpose is to provide the final administrative hearings for appeals of taxing authority decisions within the State, including the Comptroller of Maryland, Property Tax Assessments Appeals Boards, and local collectors.

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

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

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas J. Barnickel III, CPA
Legislative Auditor

Background Information

Agency Responsibilities

The Maryland Tax Court (MTC) provides the final administrative hearings for appeals of taxing authority decisions within the State. Decisions of the Comptroller of Maryland, Property Tax Assessment Appeals Boards, local collectors, and other taxing authorities may be appealed to MTC. Decisions of MTC may be appealed to the Circuit Court. MTC consists of five judges appointed by the Governor for six-year terms. According to the State's records, during fiscal year 2016, MTC had eight authorized positions and expenditures totaling approximately \$594,000.

Status of Finding From Preceding Audit Report

Our audit included a review to determine the status of the finding contained in our preceding audit report dated May 9, 2013. We determined that MTC satisfactorily addressed this finding.

Findings and Recommendations

Our audit did not disclose any significant deficiencies in the design or operation of MTC's internal control. Our audit also did not disclose any significant instances of noncompliance with applicable laws, rules, or regulations. Less significant findings were communicated to MTC that did not warrant inclusion in this report.

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

Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology

We have conducted a fiscal compliance audit of the Maryland Tax Court (MTC) for the period beginning February 20, 2013 and ending October 2, 2016. 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 MTC'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 significance and risk. The areas addressed by the audit included contract procurements and disbursements, residential property appeals, and payroll. We also determined the status of the finding contained in our preceding audit report.

To accomplish our audit objectives, our audit procedures included inquiries of appropriate personnel, inspections of documents and records, observations of MTC's operations, and tests of transactions. Generally, transactions were selected for testing based on auditor judgment, which primarily considers risk. Unless otherwise specifically indicated, neither statistical nor non-statistical audit sampling was used to select the transactions tested. Therefore, the results of the tests cannot be used to project those results to the entire population from which the test items were selected.

We also performed various data extracts of pertinent information from the State's Financial Management Information System (such as revenue and expenditure data) and the State's Central Payroll Bureau (payroll data). The extracts are performed as part of ongoing internal processes established by the Office of Legislative Audits and were subject to various tests to determine data reliability. We determined that the data extracted from these sources were sufficiently reliable for the purposes the data were used during this audit. We also extracted data from MTC's database for the purpose of testing residential property appeals. We performed various tests of the relevant data and determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes the data were used during the audit. Finally, we performed other auditing procedures that we considered necessary to achieve our objectives. The reliability of data used in this report for background or informational purposes was not assessed.

MTC'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

Bekana Edossa, CPA, CFE
Audit Manager

Edward A. Rubenstein, CPA
Senior Auditor