



COUNTY OF LUZERNE  
P E N N S Y L V A N I A  
ESTABLISHED 1786  
OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER

Huntington Township  
Tax Collection  
Compliance Audit

For  
The Period

January 1, 2014  
Thru  
December 31, 2014

Date: October 8, 2015

Fieldwork by:

Nancy L. DeFluri  
Martin G. Moughan

Michelle A. Bednar  
Luzerne County Controller

LUZERNE COUNTY  
HUNTINGTON TOWNSHIP AUDIT  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2014 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2014

This report was distributed to:

Mr. Robert Lawton	Luzerne County Manager
The Honorable Michelle A. Bednar	Luzerne County Controller
Ms. Linda McCloskey Houck	Luzerne County Council Chair
Brian Swetz	Director of Budget and Finance
Linda Sitler	Huntington Twp. Tax Collector

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at <http://www.luzernecounty.org>, found under Audit Reports on the Luzerne County Controller's section of the website. A hardcopy is also available for review at the Luzerne County Controller's Office.

Media questions about this report may be directed to the Luzerne County Controller's Office at 20 North Pennsylvania Blvd., Suite 213, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701 or via e-mail to [Controllers.Office@luzernecounty.org](mailto:Controllers.Office@luzernecounty.org)

Real Estate Tax Collectors  
Linda Sitler  
Huntington Township

The largest source of revenue that funds Luzerne County government is the real estate property tax. This tax is collected by the independently elected tax collector for each municipality. The name of the municipal collector who is being audited at this time is found above. The rate of taxation for Luzerne County is called the 'millage', currently the tax millage is 5.456 (mils), in other words, for every \$1,000 in assessed value of a property the tax is \$5.45 point 6 cents.

The tax collector receives Real Estate Tax payments from individuals, banks and businesses and periodically submits payments and collection journals to the County, the Municipality and the School District. (School District Taxes are billed separately)

If a taxpayer does not pay their Real Estate Taxes by December 31, they become delinquent, and the Tax Collector may no longer accept payment from the taxpayer. Collection of delinquent taxes becomes the duty of Northeast Revenue who runs the Tax Claim Department in the Luzerne County Courthouse.

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Your municipal tax collector is elected to a four year term and is responsible for collecting various taxes that vary by municipality. (Per capita, street lights, Fire Hydrants, County, Municipal and School real estate, etc.) The tax collector must have been a resident of the municipality for one year before the election, and must continue to reside there throughout their term. The municipal tax collector and their appointed deputy must be bonded. (Insured)

The newly elected tax collector must be sworn in by taking an oath of office and is required by act 164 to successfully complete six hours of Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits annually to be considered "Qualified", as defined by the Act.

  
Michelle A. Bednar, Controller

**Objective:**

The objective of this audit is to determine if the Huntington Township Tax Collector properly records, reports and remits property tax revenue to the Luzerne County Treasurer's Office.

**Scope:**

The Luzerne County Controller's Office strives to objectively and systematically evaluate functions, procedures and activities to ensure that each are executed in the best, most efficient way. Our reviews are tailored to the unique circumstances of each office, and we work with management to ensure accountability and direction.

**Methodology:**

The Controller's Office reviewed deposits, withdrawals, receipted tax bills and DECD reports of collections. We listed amounts paid from the tax bills in an excel spreadsheet and compared the results to the monthly deposits.

**Finding:**

It was observed that the Tax Collectors copy of the paid tax bills did not include the check number of the remittance check.

From the Tax Collectors Manual: Chapter X, Tax Receipts, Third paragraph.

*The tax collector must keep a record of each receipt on the bill or stub, with the same information given in the receipt. Duplicate receipts should include the name of the person paying, **number of the check** and should be stamped with the word "copy."*

**Recommendation:**

The tax collector should mark the receipt that is retained by the tax collector with the check number used to pay the County/Municipal tax.

**Finding:**

There was a change in banking institutions in March of 2014. PNC Bank check#1200 for \$640.29 was made payable to Huntington Township. The check stub description says, "Huntington Township County/Municipal Account, Close Acct."

For every one dollar collected the County gets 92.3 cents, and the Municipality gets 7.7 cents. **In other words, the split is 92.3% County and 7.7% Municipality.**

The distribution of the remaining balance of the PNC account should have been split as described above, and the County should have received \$590.92, and the Municipality \$49.37.

**Recommendation:**

The tax collector should recover the County portion of check #1200 from Huntington Township and remit \$590.92 to the County of Luzerne.

Please return this signed sheet with your response as prescribed below to:

Luzerne County Controller  
Audit Response  
200 North River Street  
Wilkes Barre PA 18711

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I agree with the findings of the Luzerne County Controllers Office.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Linda Sitler, Huntington Township Tax Collector

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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I disagree with the findings of the Luzerne County Controllers Office, and will respond in writing within the 14 days as outlined in the Luzerne County Home Rule Charter.

  
Linda Sitler, Huntington Township Tax Collector

10-10-15  
Date

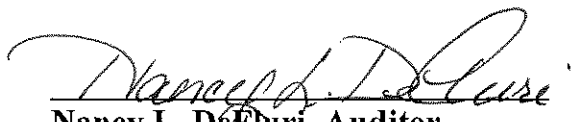
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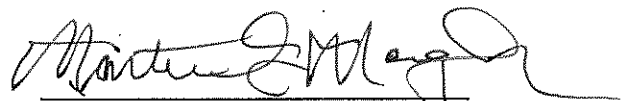
**Luzerne County Home Rule Charter: Section 3.08 (C.) 3.**

*The audited entity shall respond in writing, specifying agreement with the audit findings and/or recommendations or the reasons for disagreement with the findings and/or recommendations, along with any plans and timetable for implementing remedies. The response shall be provided to the Controller within 14 days after the audited entity's receipt of the draft audit. The Controller shall include the audited entity's response in his/her final audit report.*

**Fourteen Days from the Audit date is: October 22, 2015**

  
Michelle A. Bednar, Controller

  
Nancy L. DeFluri, Auditor

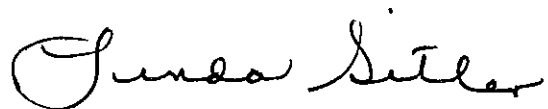
  
Martin G. Moughan, Auditor

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN;

THE AMOUNT OF \$640.29 WAS TRANSFERRED INTO A NEW ACCOUNT AT FIRST KEYSTONE COMMUNITY BANK DUE TO PNC INSTALLING A NEW POLICY OF CHARGING FEES TO TAX COLLECTOR ACCOUNTS. IT WAS NOT AN INTEREST BEARING ACCOUNT AND SERVICES HUNTINGTON TWP AND ALSO LUZERNE COUNTY.

LINDA SITLER, TAX COLLECTOR

HUNTINGTON TOWNSHIP

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Sitler". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name and title.



**COUNTY OF LUZERNE**  
P E N N S Y L V A N I A  
ESTABLISHED 1786  
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**Huntington Township Tax Collection**

The Luzerne County Controller's Office acknowledges receipt of the audit response from the Huntington Township Tax Collection Office. The finding(s) contained in the attached audit report have been adequately addressed.