



COUNTY AUDIT DEPARTMENT

REPORT #431

January 2, 2025

An Audit of:

CLERK'S CASH CONTROLS

AUDIT FY 2024



Cindy Stuart
CLERK OF COURT & COMPTROLLER
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

January 2, 2025

Dear Clerk Stuart:

The Audit Team has completed an audit of the Clerk's Cash Controls for FY 2024 (**Audit Report #431, dated January 2, 2025**). The purpose of this Report is to furnish management with an independent, objective analysis, and information concerning the activities reviewed. It is not an appraisal or rating of management.

Although the Audit Team exercised due professional care in the performance of this audit, this should not be construed to mean that unreported noncompliance or irregularities do not exist. The deterrence of fraud and/or employee abuse is ultimately the responsibility of management. Audit procedures alone, even when carried out with professional care, do not guarantee that fraud or abuse will be detected.

We greatly appreciate all of the cooperation and professionalism displayed by the Directors and personnel of the Clerk's service locations during this audit.

As always, if you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Heidi Pinner

Heidi Pinner, CIA CISA CFE CRMA
Chief Audit Executive, Clerk of Court & Comptroller



WOMAN-LED



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2

BACKGROUND INFORMATION..... 2

OBJECTIVE..... 3

SCOPE..... 3

OVERALL EVALUATION 3

OPINION..... 4

AUDITED BY 4

AUDIT COMMENT 1 5

AUDIT COMMENT 2 7

AUDIT COMMENT 3 9

AUDIT COMMENT 4 11

AUDIT COMMENT 5 13

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

One of the key responsibilities of the Hillsborough County Clerk of Court & Comptroller (Clerk’s Office) is managing the financial operations of the court and official records, including collecting fines, fees, and court costs. The Clerk’s Office has multiple service locations where court-related costs are remitted: Plant City Courthouse, Brandon Regional Service Center, the Customer Service Center located in the Edgecomb Courthouse, and Official Records located in the Pat Collier Frank Courthouse.

Cash recyclers are utilized by cashiers for day-to-day operations at each of the service locations. These machines function as the depository safe and tracking system by automatically counting and sorting the cash deposited and to re-dispense or recycle that cash for future shifts. This process is represented in the graphic below. Cameras are also located inside the cash storage area (recon room) and throughout each service location. Direct access to the currency stored inside the cash and coin compartments in the recycler is restricted to management with a dual access control.

Each location is assigned a change fund which is a set amount of money kept on hand and is used for making change as needed or for use when cash recyclers are malfunctioning or need replenishing. The change fund, sealed cash, and check deposits are all stored in a secured location at each site and picked up by an armored courier service the following business day. Each cash custodian is responsible for the safekeeping, proper use, and management of the change funds. The Clerk’s Accounting Department maintains an approved list of change funds issued and cash drawer amounts for all Clerk’s locations that process cash transactions.



OBJECTIVE

The objective of the audit is to assess whether or not the Clerk's Office has adequate controls in place for processing cash collections, reconciling cash amounts, handing money, physically securing funds, and preparing bank deposits.

SCOPE

The audit was conducted in conformance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*. These Standards require that County Audit plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for the audit comments and conclusions based on the audit objectives. County Audit believes that the evidence obtained provides this reasonable basis.

The Audit Team selected all Clerk's cashiering locations to assess cash controls. The following locations were included in the audit scope:

- Customer Service Center – Edgecomb Courthouse
- Official Records – Pat Collier Frank Courthouse
- Plant City Courthouse
- Brandon Regional Service Center
- Board Records & Value Adjustment Board

The Audit Team conducted numerous interviews with management at each location. The Audit Team also conducted site visits, cash counts, and reviewed opening and closing reports for each location. Physical security controls were also evaluated.

OVERALL EVALUATION

PROCESS STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES

- Opening & closing procedures are effective at ensuring sound cash handling and reporting practices.
- Physical security measures for the change fund and cash recyclers are satisfactory.
- Only management has the system access needed to perform transaction voids.
- Management has an effective process to reconcile and account for change funds and cash collections.
- Posters of courier service staff photos are located throughout the offices reducing the risk of unauthorized access.

CONTROL IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES/RISKS

- The Clerk Cashier Training Manual is out of date and does not reflect current procedures.
- Manager PIN numbers to directly access cash recycler cash compartments have never been changed.
- Transaction void request forms do not show the dollar amount of the void.
- Surveillance camera improvements could enhance overall security.

Full testing results are included on page 6 of this Report.

OPINION

Control Maturity Levels



The overall control environment relative to the management of the Clerk’s cash controls is at a managed maturity level. This rating signifies that management has implemented proactive cash controls and monitoring methods, showing a robust level of operational effectiveness.

An exit conference was conducted with management via e-mail during late December, 2024 and early January, 2025. Other minor concerns not included in this Report were communicated to management and/or corrected during fieldwork.

AUDITED BY

Heidi Pinner, CIA, CISA, CFE, CRMA, Chief Audit Executive
Ben Everett, CPA, CIA, CFE, CISA, Audit Manager
Mary Bennett, CFE, Internal Auditor

AUDIT COMMENT 1: DOWNTOWN CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTER

CASH COUNT

TWO CASH RECYCLERS, CHANGE FUND, & FIVE CASHIER DRAWERS WERE VERIFIED

RECON ROOM REQUIRES BADGE ACCESS

CASH RECYCLER ACCESS PIN NUMBER NOT CHANGED

The Downtown Customer Service Center has implemented satisfactory controls to ensure the proper handling of cash, collections, and deposits.

The objective was to determine whether or not the Downtown Customer Service Center had adequate cash controls in place.

Background

The Customer Service Center is located on the 1st floor of the Edgecomb Courthouse. The Customer Service Center processes transactions for a variety of services including traffic tickets, restraining orders, family court, guardianship /probate, criminal and civil court cases, juvenile delinquency, and child support payments. The site is equipped with two cash recyclers. The primary recycler functions as the main unit and is configured in a parent-child relationship with the secondary recycler.

Test Procedure

The Audit Team visited the Customer Service Center and performed observations of the daily opening and closing cashiering process as well as conducting interviews with managers and staff. The Audit Team obtained copies of the end of day reports, void request forms, bank deposit slips, and armored courier manifest forms. Figures from the end of day reports were compared and re-calculated by the Audit Team for accuracy. Three void request forms were reviewed for accuracy and management approval. The Audit Team completed cash counts of both cash recyclers and five randomly selected cashier cash drawers prior to the close of business. The Audit Team assessed management’s access to the camera system and their physical security controls to secure the cash.

RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS**TESTING RESULTS:**

- ✓ There were no overages/shortages found for the cash drawers and change fund tested.
- ✓ Two cash recyclers were counted, with a \$0.33 overage in one and no discrepancy in the other.
- ✓ There were no differences found during the testing of end of day reports.
- ✓ Appropriate supporting documentation was maintained for deposit records.
- ✓ All void request forms were approved by management.
- ✓ Any cashier shortages/overages by the end of the day were recorded during cash drawer reconciliations and the Clerk's Accounting Department was informed of shortages/overages.

CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTER CASH CONTROL OBSERVATIONS:

- The cash recyclers are counted annually by the Director and the cash custodian.
- The change fund is stored in the safe and is counted by the management team daily.
- Void request forms are approved by management when a transaction void is necessary.
- Photos of the armored courier staff members are posted to identify authorized couriers.
- Cash drawers automatically open and lock upon close for each transaction.
- The recon room is kept locked with electronic access controls.
- Management has live access to one camera located in the recon room.
- Other cameras located throughout the recon and service areas cannot be accessed directly by management.
- The cash recycler PIN is not changed when there is a change in management.
- Only members of management have the combination to the safe.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS:

The Clerk's Cashier Training Manual was originally published in March 2012 and updated in April 2022. The training manual does not include procedures regarding cash recyclers. The Audit Team spoke with the Director of the Customer Service center and was informed that the Clerk's Cashier Training Manual is being updated. The additional change fund stored in the safe is accessed infrequently and therefore may not need to be counted every day.

When a cashier needs to void a transaction, they must prepare a void request form in the cashiering software. The cashier fills in several prompts to enter the details of the void. However, the software lacks a prompt to enter the dollar amount of the void. This results in the final generated void request form not showing the dollar amount that was voided.

As a result of the parent/child configuration of the two cash recyclers, when the primary cash recycler experiences technical issues and is out of service, the secondary recycler becomes inoperable as well.

AUDIT COMMENT 2: OFFICIAL RECORDS

CASH COUNT

**ONE CASH
RECYCLER AND
THREE CASH
DRAWERS
VERIFIED**

**ACCESS TO
OFFICE CAMERA
FOOTAGE FOR
30 DAYS**

**CHANGE FUND
SECURE**

**CASH RECYCLER
ACCESS PIN
NUMBER NOT
CHANGED**

Official Records has implemented satisfactory controls to ensure the proper handling of cash, collections, and deposits.

The objective was to determine whether or not Official Records had adequate cash controls in place.

Background

The Clerk is the County Recorder, responsible for recording all official records of Hillsborough County. The Recording Department indexes and maintains archives of all Official Records. Official Records responsibilities also include issuing marriage licenses, performing marriage ceremonies, and serving as an official passport application acceptance agent. Official records are accessible online or through public access terminals. The Official Records Department processes payments for marriage licenses, passports, home solicitation permits, recordings, and tax deeds.

Test Procedure

The Audit Team performed observations of the daily opening and closing cashing process and conducted interviews with managers and staff. The Audit Team obtained copies of the end of day reports, bank deposit slips, and courier manifests. Figures from the end of day reports obtained from Clerk’s Accounting were recalculated by the Audit Team for accuracy. The Audit Team completed cash counts of the cash recycler and three randomly selected cashier drawers. The Audit Team assessed management’s access to the camera system and the physical security controls to secure the cash.

RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS

TESTING RESULTS:

- ✓ No overages/shortages were observed for the change fund and cash drawers tested.
- ✓ A \$0.25 shortage was observed for the cash recycler.
- ✓ No differences were found during the review and recalculation of the end of day reports.

OFFICIAL RECORDS CASH CONTROL OBSERVATIONS:

- Cash drawers are manually operated via a lock and key system for security.
- The cash recycler is counted quarterly by the Director and the cash custodian.
- The change fund is counted by the cash custodian daily.
- Anytime the change fund is accessed, an Exchange Fund Log is filled out.
- The change fund is secured when not in use with access limited to management.
- Cash drawer reconciliations are performed after each shift to identify any cashier shortages/overages.
- Clerk's Accounting is informed of all shortages/overages.
- Management has access to live camera feeds and footage for 30 days.
- Cash drawers and cash counting machines are not in view of the cameras. Customer service counters are in view, but not close-up.
- The cash recycler PIN is not changed when there is a change in management.
- Spare keys for the cash drawers are securely stored.
- The recon room is kept locked and requires a badge to access.
- Photos of the armored courier staff members are posted to identify authorized couriers.

AUDIT COMMENT 3: PLANT CITY COURTHOUSE

**CASH RECYCLER,
CHANGE FUND,
&
THREE CASHIER
CASH DRAWERS
WERE VERIFIED**

**CASH RECYCLER
ACCESS PIN
NUMBER NOT
CHANGED**

The Plant City Courthouse has implemented satisfactory controls to ensure the proper handling of cash, collections, and deposits.

The objective was to determine whether or not the Plant City Courthouse had adequate cash controls in place.

Background

The Plant City Courthouse processes payments from customers for various court and official records services including marriage licenses, passport applications, recording, traffic tickets, and criminal/civil cases. Different software systems are used to handle court transactions and official records transactions.

Test Procedure

The Audit Team performed observations of the daily opening and closing cashiering process, and conducted interviews with managers and staff. The Audit Team obtained copies of the end of day reports, bank deposit slips, and courier manifests. Figures from the end of day reports obtained from Clerk’s Accounting were re-calculated by the Audit Team for accuracy and management approval. The Audit Team completed cash counts of the cash recycler and three randomly selected cashier drawers. The Audit Team observed management’s access to the camera system and the physical security controls to secure cash.

RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS

TESTING RESULTS:

- ✓ No overages/shortages were observed in the change fund, cash recycler, or cash drawers tested.
- ✓ The end of day reconciliations and reports were verified with no discrepancies.
- ✓ Appropriate supporting documentation was maintained for deposit records.

PLANT CITY CASH CONTROL OBSERVATIONS:

- Cash drawers utilized by cashiers who process courts transactions automatically open when a transaction is processed and automatically lock when the cash drawer is closed.
- Cash drawers utilized by cashiers who process official records transactions are manually operated and equipped with a lock and key system for security.
- The cash recycler and change fund is counted monthly by the cash custodian.
- Plant City and Brandon Regional Service Center management staff has the combination to the safe at Plant City.
- Management has access to live camera feeds and footage as far back as 30 days.
- Only the cameras near two of the customer service counters have an unobstructed view of the counter and cash drawers. Three out of four cash counting machines are in view of cameras.
- The management PIN number to access cash stored in the cash recycler is not changed when there is a change in management.
- Photos of the armored courier staff members are posted to identify authorized couriers.
- Spare keys for the cash drawers are kept in the safe.
- The recon room requires a PIN code to access.

AUDIT COMMENT 4: BRANDON REGIONAL SERVICE CENTER

**CASH RECYCLER
&
THREE CASHIER
CASH DRAWERS
WERE VERIFIED**

**RECON ROOM IS
SECURED**

**CASH RECYCLER
ACCESS PIN
NUMBER NOT
CHANGED**

The Brandon Regional Service Center has implemented satisfactory controls to ensure the proper handling of cash, collections, and deposits.

The objective was to determine whether or not the Brandon Regional Service Center had adequate cash controls in place.

Background

The Brandon Regional Service Center (BRSC) processes payments for various courts and official records transactions for services including marriage licenses, passport applications, recording, traffic tickets, and criminal/civil cases. Separate software systems are used to handle court transactions and official records transactions. The official records cashiers and the courts cashiers are located in separate offices within the building. The official records office is situated near the front of the building, while the courts office is located further down the hall. Although the recon room is located within the official records office, it is also used by the courts staff.

Test Procedure

The Audit Team performed observations of the daily opening and closing cashiering process, and conducted interviews with managers and staff. The Audit Team obtained copies of the end of day reports, bank deposit slips, and courier manifests. Figures from the end of day reports obtained from Clerk’s Accounting were re-calculated by the Audit Team for accuracy. The Audit Team completed cash counts of the cash recycler and three randomly selected cashier drawers. The Audit Team assessed management’s access to the camera system and the physical security controls to secure the cash.

RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS

TESTING RESULTS:

- ✓ No overages/shortages were observed for the change fund or the three cash drawers tested.
- ✓ There was a \$0.05 overage for the cash recycler.

- ✓ There were no discrepancies noted during the review and re-calculation of end of day reports.
- ✓ Appropriate supporting documentation was maintained for deposit records.

BRANDON SERVICE CENTER CASH CONTROLS OBSERVATIONS:

- Cash drawers utilized by cashiers who process courts transactions automatically open when a transaction is processed and automatically lock when the cash drawer is closed.
- Cash drawers utilized by cashiers who process official records transactions are manually operated and equipped with a lock and key system for security.
- The cash recycler is counted annually during year-end by the Director of Branch Locations and Call Center and the cash custodian.
- The change fund is counted every other day by a member of the Brandon Regional Service Center management team.
- Brandon Regional Service Center and Plant City Courthouse management staff have the combination to the safe.
- Management has access to live camera and footage as far back as 30 days.
- All 13 customer service counters located in the Brandon official records and courts offices are in view of the cameras.
- The spare keys for the cashier cash drawers are kept in the safe.
- The cash recycler PIN is not changed when there is a change in management.
- Photos of the armored courier service staff members are posted to identify authorized couriers.
- The recon room requires a badge and PIN code to access.

AUDIT COMMENT 5: BOARD RECORDS

**BOARD RECORDS
CASHIERING**

**EMPLOYEE BUS
PASSESS**

**CERTIFIED
COPIES**

Board Records has implemented satisfactory controls to ensure the proper handling of cash, collections, and deposits.

The objective was to determine whether or not Board Records had adequate cash controls in place.

Background

The Board Records & Value Adjustment Board Department is located in the County Center building and is not equipped with a cash recycler. Board Records produces and distributes the official minutes from County meetings and archives the information presented during those meetings. These include the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), the Metropolitan Planning Organization, and Code Enforcement.

The Value Adjustment Board conducts hearings for property owners who are contesting the assessment of their property or believe they have been improperly denied an exemption, property classification, or tax deferral. Property owners are charged a \$15 petition fee. Certified copies of documents are available for purchase. The Value Adjustment Board also handles discounted bus pass sales for County employees. Employees are required to provide a recent pay stub and sign the County Subsidized Bus Pass Purchase Agreement.

Test Procedure

Due to the immateriality of cash transactions processed at Board Records, the Audit Team performed a limited review of their cash handling process. The Audit Team visited Board Records and conducted a walk-through of the cash handling process with the staff.

RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS

Board Records utilizes a change fund which is split up and assigned to several staff members. Daily cash collections are recorded on paper forms and carbon copies of receipts provided to customers are retained.

BOARD RECORDS CASH CONTROL OBSERVATIONS:

- At the end of each day, a different staff member counts the cash, reconciles it to the paper forms, and adds their initials.
- Once a week, the Director re-counts the funds, compares them to the paper form totals, and prepares the bank deposit to be picked up by the armored courier company.
- To purchase discounted bus passes, employees must sign the Subsidized Bus Pass Purchase Agreement annually and show their most recent pay stub.
- The change funds are stored overnight in a secure location.
- Two supervisors and the director can access the safe.
- Staff keep their assigned change fund locked during the day.
- The bank deposit is placed into a separate drop safe for which Board Records does not have the PIN code.
- Bus passes must be activated online by Board Records at the time of sale to prevent unauthorized use.
- The Subsidized Bus Pass Purchase Agreement being used has outdated language from fiscal year 2012, including how much funding was provided by the Board of County Commissioners for that year.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL CASH SITES

Management should implement the following:

1. Ensure the management PIN number for accessing cash recyclers is changed whenever there is a change in management.
2. Work with the cash recycler vendor and/or Clerk's IT to reconfigure the parent-child relationship between the two cash recyclers at the Customer Service Center so that the second machine will continue to function if the first one goes down.
3. Collaborate with Clerk's IT to reconfigure the void request form so that the dollar amount of the void can be entered and saved on the void request form.
4. Work in collaboration with Clerk's Accounting to update the Cashier's Training Manual. Re-assess how often change funds need to be re-counted now that the use of cash recyclers has reduced the need to access the change funds during daily operations.
5. Obtain the current Subsidized Bus Pass Purchase Agreement document and implement a process to update it each year for customers to sign at Board Records.
6. Consider future surveillance camera improvements as funds allow, such as software access to every camera, the direct ability to export video clip files and screenshots, and adding additional cameras for a better close-up view of each cashiering workstation or other frequent cash-handling areas such as bill counting machines.

CLIENT RESPONSE:

Concur

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN(S):

1. *PINs for management in all locations are to be updated immediately and will be changed whenever there is change in management.*
2. *Since November, courts have been working with IT and the cash recycler vendor on various enhancements and new machine options. This is particularly important as the Tampa machines are end of life as of October 2025. We will continue to proceed in our current direction and ensure that one machine is no longer dependent on the other.*
3. *Collaboration will begin with the Courts, Clerk's Accounting, and IT to enhance the void form to include the dollar amount of the void.*
4. *Courts and the Accounting department have been discussing updates to the cashier manual. Assignments related to these updates will be distributed evenly. Cash funds will*

now be counted bi-monthly, totaling six times a year, at all court locations. Official Records and Board Records/VAB met with Court Analytics and Reporting regarding the Cashier Training manual. The draft of the manual includes the new cash recycler process. The change fund is not accessed regularly, and Official Records (Tampa) is amenable to a weekly change fund count, rather than daily.

5. *Board Records will work with County Human Resources to update the current form and plan to review at the beginning of each fiscal year for possible update.*
6. *Courts will work with IT to create a plan for adding more security cameras to ensure that all workstations and cash recyclers are monitored at all Court locations. Official Records (Tampa) is amenable to increasing video surveillance, but as mentioned, the increase would be contingent on Clerk's IT's budget for surveillance improvements. The department's priority would be adding cameras for bill counting machines. Unsure about any privacy or software restrictions for exporting footage.*

TARGET COMPLETION DATE(S):

1. *January 10, 2025.*
2. *By September 2025, based on fund availability.*
3. *Collaboration to begin immediately, implementation by March 2025.*
4. *Cash funds to be counted bi-monthly starting January 2025. Cashier Manual to be updated by March 2025.*
5. *February 28, 2025.*
6. *By September 2025, based on fund availability.*