



# THOMAS A. SCHWEICH

## Missouri State Auditor

August 13, 2014

Honorable Terry Stevens  
New Madrid County Sheriff  
New Madrid County Jail  
Courthouse Square  
New Madrid, MO 63869

This letter communicates the results of our review of the handling of inmate monies and personal property by the New Madrid County Sheriff's office. This review was initiated during the Auditor's Follow-Up Team to Effect Recommendations (AFTER) program when a \$500 cash bond was determined to be missing, and additional concerns related to the handling of inmate monies and personal property were identified. The State Auditor evaluated the information provided and determined the concerns met the criteria for activating the Auditor's Swift Assessment Program (ASAP)<sup>1</sup> on February 20, 2014. The objectives of our review were to evaluate the Sheriff's internal controls over the handling of inmate monies and personal property, determine if inmate monies and personal property were returned to the inmates upon release from custody, and determine the extent of inmate monies and personal property missing from the Sheriff's office. The Follow-Up Report on Audit Findings - New Madrid County Sheriff, Report No. 2014-054, was issued in August 2014.

### **Methodology**

Our methodology included obtaining an understanding of procedures and records related to handling of inmate monies and personal property items from inmate arrest to inmate release; reviewing inmate arrest records, case files, and other pertinent documents; interviewing various personnel of the Sheriff's office, as well as certain external parties; and testing selected transactions.

### **Background**

The Sheriff's office does not have written policies or procedures related to handling inmate monies and personal property, but provided us with a description of procedures and records utilized to account for inmate monies and personal property. According to Sheriff's office personnel, monies and property surrendered by inmates during the booking process are recorded on an arrest record and the inmate and the jailer verify the amount of money/description of property by signing the arrest record. The jailer then enters information, including inmate name, date of birth, age, race, arresting officer, booking and release date and time, warrant information, and monies and property surrendered, into the Sheriff's computerized

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<sup>1</sup> The State Auditor activates the ASAP when there is substantial, credible evidence to believe there is:

- (1) Fraud, violations of state or federal law, rule or regulation, or significant misappropriation, mismanagement, or waste of public resources; or
- (2) Significant risk of loss of confidence of the people in their government due to fiscal abuse or mismanagement; and
- (3) The need for immediate action to preserve relevant evidence and/or prevent continued harm.

booking system. Inmate monies and personal property are placed in an envelope and amounts are recorded on the outside of the envelope, and the envelopes are placed inside a locker or safe in the booking area of the jail. Upon an inmate's release or transfer, monies and property are returned to the inmate, and the inmate and releasing officer sign the original arrest record in a different location on the form. In addition, the inmate signs a release receipt generated from the computerized booking system, which is attached to the arrest record, to document the return of monies and personal property.

## **Results and Conclusions**

Arrest records prepared during the booking process were not always signed by the inmate or jailer. Some arrest records indicated monies were received; however, the release receipt indicated no monies were returned to the inmate. Arrest records and release receipts contained conflicting information related to inmate monies and property and there was no explanation for the differences. Some arrest records were incomplete and inaccurate. For example, some arrest records documented monies received as "yes," "no," or "don't know" instead of providing the amount; the date of arrest denoted on another arrest record was after the date of release; and another arrest record showed the date of birth of an inmate as May 3, 2039. Sheriff's office and jail personnel do not periodically compare inmate arrest records to the computerized booking system, and we identified some inmate arrest records that were not entered into the Sheriff's computerized booking system.

Numerous jailers, deputies, and the Office Manager have access to the lockers and safe where inmate monies and property were held. Release receipts were not always attached to arrest records and could not be located, some release receipts were not signed by the inmate, and some release receipts listed two different amounts of monies being released (one amount on a trust fund balance line item and another amount on the confiscated balance line item). Some arrest records and release receipts documented that inmate monies or personal property could not be found in the safe and were not returned to the inmate, and some arrest records documented inmate complaints that monies and property were not returned. No explanation or documentation was provided by the Sheriff related to these alleged missing monies and personal property items.

Due to incomplete information and unexplained discrepancies in records reviewed, we sent confirmations to some former inmates to verify whether monies and personal property items were returned upon their release. Based on the inmate records and corresponding information learned from returned confirmations, we identified \$1,457 of inmate monies and some personal property items (cell phones and rings) that were surrendered during the arrest and booking process but are unaccounted for and appear to be missing. Arrest records pertaining to the 2 cell phones and 2 rings contained comments indicating monies and property were missing, and 1 confirmation returned provides consistent information regarding an unreturned cell phone. Records reviewed indicate various jailers and deputies were involved in the booking and release process and had access to inmate monies and property items; therefore, we cannot conclude as to who is responsible for the missing monies and property.

On July 10, 2014, the County Commission approved closing the county jail for reasons unrelated to this review; the remaining prisoners were transferred to another county jail; and July 25, 2014, was the last day of employment for jail employees. The County Clerk indicated the County Commission will reevaluate the status of the jail during the 2015 budget process.

**Recommendations**

The Sheriff should further investigate the missing inmate monies and personal property items and take necessary action to recover as appropriate. If the Sheriff and County Commission re-open the jail, the Sheriff should develop a system to properly account for all inmate monies and personal property items surrendered during the booking process and held until inmate release.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Schweich  
State Auditor

The following auditors participated in the preparation of this letter:

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