

Criminal Warrant Process Follow-Up Audit August 2010

Patrice Randle, City Auditor
Craig Terrell, Assistant City Auditor
Roshan Jayawardene, Internal Auditor



City Auditor's Office

August 27, 2010

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

I am pleased to present the City Auditor's Office follow-up to the Criminal Warrant Process Audit released in August 2009. The purpose of the follow-up audit was to determine the implementation status of prior audit recommendations.

Management concurred with three of the four recommendations presented in our original report. Our follow-up audit results indicate that management implemented all four of the recommendations, fully implementing two recommendations and partially implementing the remaining two recommendations.

We would like to thank Municipal Court, Police and Information Technology Department staff for their assistance provided during the audit.

Patrice Randle, CPA
City Auditor

c: Jim Holgersson, City Manager
Fiona Allen, Deputy City Manager
Gilbert Perales, Deputy City Manager
Trey Yelverton, Deputy City Manager
Theron Bowman, Arlington Police Chief
Louis Carr, Director of Information Technology
David Preciado, Municipal Court Services Director

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Criminal Warrant Process Follow-Up Audit



Office of the City Auditor
Patrice Randle, CPA
City Auditor

Project #10-07

August 27, 2010

Executive Summary

*Two recommendations
were fully implemented*

*Two recommendations
were partially
implemented*

Fully Implemented

- *Reduction in citations awaiting warrants*
- *Complaints prepared within 45 days*

Partially Implemented

- *Improved compliance with State Collection Improvement Program*
- *Reconciliation of newly-issued warrants*

The City Auditor's Office has completed a follow-up to the August 2009 Criminal Warrant Process Audit. The follow-up 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. The objective of the follow-up was to determine the implementation status of prior audit recommendations.

Management concurred with three of the four recommendations presented in the initial Criminal Warrant Process audit. The City Auditor's Office noted that two of the four recommendations were fully implemented and two were partially implemented. Management fully implemented recommendations related to additional staffing resources needed to reduce pending warrants and introduced an automated process to generate complaints within 45 days from the citation date.

Partial implementations include compliance with the State Collection Improvement Program. Additional documentation is now maintained on defendants seeking payment programs and extensions. However, the City Auditor's Office noted instances where collection applications required by the State's Collection Program were not on file.

The Arlington Police Department's (APD) Warrant Unit is in the process of implementing the Incode Warrant Management module. Incode's Warrant Management module will allow Warrant Unit staff to collect on past due citations directly within Incode rather than transferring warrant data to a Microsoft Access database. Incode is the municipal court software recently implemented at the City of Arlington.

Audit Scope and Methodology

The City Auditor's Office reviewed activity related to warrants issued between December 1, 2009 and July 30, 2010. Only warrants processed after the implementation of Incode were included in the review.

- Examined warrant creation process
- Interviewed Information Technology staff regarding Incode's reporting process
- Interviewed Municipal Court staff that process warrants
- Interviewed APD Warrant Unit staff that service warrants issued by the municipal court
- Generated multiple warrant-related Incode reports for analysis and reconciliation
- Validated data listed in Incode reports

Status of Prior Audit Recommendations

Recommendation:

The Municipal Court Services Director should request authorization for staff overtime needed to decrease the warrant backlog. Operational efficiencies gained from implementing Incode should be considered when determining the appropriate amount of overtime requested. While the APD Warrant Unit may not be able to process the additional number of warrants generated, additional revenue may be recognized since the warrants will at least be captured on NCIC. Also, the planned implementation of OmniBase, a program that prevents driver's license renewals for individuals with outstanding warrants, may also result in additional revenue.

Management's Response:

Concur. The current budget year is at an end and a request for additional overtime will be submitted in the 2011 budget year to accommodate warrant backlog. In the meantime, anticipated efficiencies gained through the Incode software implementation will be leveraged to begin reducing the backlog.

Target Date: April 2010

Responsibility: David Preciado, Municipal Court Director

Implementation Status:

Fully Implemented. Municipal Court staff has dedicated additional resources to process warrants, increasing the warrant volume for citations issued since implementation of Incode. However, the Municipal Court is still processing warrants for citations issued prior to the implementation of Incode. The approximate number of citations awaiting warrants is listed in the table below, by the original citation issuance year. Because a citation may include multiple violations, the total warrant count exceeds the total citation count.

Calendar Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 (Jan – Nov)	Since Incode (Dec 2009-Apr2010)
Total # of Citations	26,001	10,922	6,770	5,635	17,540	1,322
Total # of Warrants	41,922	16,383	8,383	6,819	25,672	1,797

Source: Incode Municipal Court software and Information Technology Department

The probability of collection on warrants for citations issued prior to 2008 is low. The Municipal Court, therefore, plans to concentrate on issuing warrants for citations issued in calendar years 2008 and 2009.

Recommendation:

The Municipal Court Services Director should ensure that complaints and warrants for arrest are prepared as close as possible to the 45-day desired cycle. This can be accomplished by more closely matching the resources needed to process complaints with the resources needed to issue warrants.

Management's Response:

Concur. The warrant department has modified the complaint issuance process to allow for the timely issuance of both complaints and warrants. It will take approximately four months to work through the current complaint inventory. The transition to Incode software will allow for the timely processing of the warrant. The new process will require a 45-day lead time.

Target Date: January 15, 2010

Responsibility: Katy Tagg, Court Support Services Supervisor

Implementation Status:

Fully Implemented. Implementation of Incode has enabled Municipal Court staff to issue complaints for warrants within 45 days from the citation date.

Recommendation:

The Municipal Court Services Director, in conjunction with the Deputy Chief of Police over the Operations Support Division, should require weekly reconciliations of newly issued warrants that have been uploaded from the municipal court software to APD. Reconciling items should then be researched and resolved.

Management's Response:

Do Not Concur. Current staff and resource shortages will not allow for the development of a programmatic solution to this problem. The new Warrant Management module in INCODE will eliminate the need for this reconciliation since both the Court staff and Warrant staff will have access to the same warrant data. There will be no transfer from one program to another.

Target Date: December 2009

Responsibility: David Preciado, Municipal Court Director

Audit Comment:

Since the City Auditor's Office did not determine whether the warrant transfer error was due to JEMS or Access, reconciliation is recommended until the Warrant Management module is actually implemented. Management indicated that the Warrant Management module will not be a part of the initial Incode implementation.

Implementation Status:

Partially Implemented. The Incode Warrant Management module was implemented in June 2010. The APD Warrant Unit is unable to use the warrant module due to lack of user codes to process

warrants. The City's Information Technology Department is currently in the process of allocating and testing codes to be used by the APD Warrant Unit.

Warrant data is still transferred to APD's Microsoft Access database. Warrants that are collected are removed from the Access database once monthly statistics are run. The City Auditor's Office was, therefore, unable to reconcile Incode warrant totals to those shown in the Access database. APD's intention to use the warrant module directly would negate the need to use the Access database and thus the need to reconcile records.

Recommendation:

The Municipal Court Director should require that Extension Applications for time payment plans are properly completed and retained as required by the City's Collection Improvement Program.

Management's Response:

Concur. Judicial cooperation will be sought to create a policy that will allow the court to deny an applicant for a payment plan if the submitted documentation is not fully completed. The granting of a payment plan is a judicial function, not a ministerial function allowed by the Clerk of the Court.

Target Date: October 2009

*Responsibility: David Preciado, Municipal Court Director
Stewart Milner, Chief Judge*

Implementation Status:

Partially Implemented. The City Auditor's Office noted that Municipal Court staff has increased the volume of collection applications and extensions, in order to comply with the State Collection Improvement Program. A sample of 72 citations in extension and payment plan categories was reviewed for compliance. Collection program applications were not found for 18% of the citations in the sample. There were no exceptions related to extension agreements. An extension agreement and a collection application are required in order to comply with the State Collection Improvement Program.