



COUNTY OF LEHIGH
OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER

LEHIGH COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER
17 SOUTH SEVENTH STREET
ALLENTOWN, PA 18101-2400
(610) 782-3082 FAX: (610) 871-2897

GLENN ECKHART
COUNTY CONTROLLER

JOHN A. FALK
DEPUTY CONTROLLER

TO: Final Report Distribution
FROM: Glenn Eckhart, County Controller *G. E.*
DATE: September 10, 2013
RE: Audit of County of Lehigh Real Estate Tax Collections

We have completed an audit of the *Statement of Final Settlement*, Lehigh County Real Estate Tax Duplicate, for the tax year ended December 31, 2012. Our report number 13-48 is attached.

The result of our audit is the amount of 2012 taxes (\$105,521,422) the fiscal officer was responsible for was collected or otherwise accounted for.

Attachment

AUDITS/REAL ESTATE TAX COLLECTIONS OF BLK

COUNTY OF LEHIGH, PENNSYLVANIA

REAL ESTATE TAX COLLECTIONS

*Statement of Final Settlement
2012 Lehigh County Real Estate Tax Duplicate
and Controller's Opinion*

REPORT NO. 13-48

COUNTY OF LEHIGH, PENNSYLVANIA
REAL ESTATE TAX COLLECTIONS

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COUNTY OF LEHIGH, PENNSYLVANIA
REAL ESTATE TAX COLLECTIONS

Background

As of January 1, 2006, in accordance with Lehigh County Ordinance No. 2003-154, the county fiscal officer was vested with the billing and collecting of all county real estate taxes. Previous collection responsibilities were divided between the tax collectors and the county fiscal officer. Tax payments are mailed to a central lockbox, paid in person at the Lehigh County Government Center, paid in person at any Lehigh Valley Wells Fargo Bank branch, or paid by mortgage service companies. Collection and payment results supplied by the office of fiscal affairs are reflected below:

	Tax Years			
	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
<u>Collection Method:</u>				
Lockbox	43%	58%	56%	55%
Electronic Transfers	28%	30%	30%	30%
Wachovia Bank Branches	15%	0%*	0%*	0%*
Government Center	<u>14%</u>	<u>12%</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>15%</u>
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
<u>Payment Method:</u>				
Lump Sum Payments	95%	95%	95%	95%
Installment Payments	<u>5%</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>5%</u>
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>

*In 2010, Wells Fargo elected to mail county tax payments to the lockbox rather than process collections at the Lehigh Valley bank branches.

In tax year 2012, a one-time expiring tax credit was granted in the amount of \$4,370,000.



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Brian L. Kahler, Fiscal Officer
Office of Fiscal Affairs
Lehigh County Government Center
17 South Seventh Street
Allentown, PA 18101-2400

We have audited the accompanying Statement of Final Settlement of Lehigh County Real Estate Tax Duplicate, for the tax year ended December 31, 2012 as listed in the Table of Contents. The financial statements are the responsibility of the office of fiscal affairs' management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the Statement of Final Settlement based on our audit.

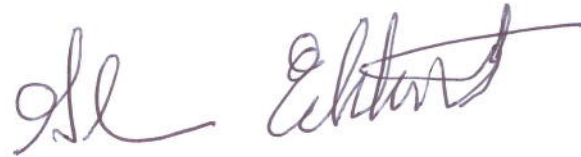
We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the generally accepted government auditing standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

As discussed in Note 1, the financial statements were prepared on the basis of cash receipts and disbursements, which is a comprehensive basis of accounting other than generally accepted accounting principles.

Also, as discussed in Note 1, the financial statements present only the Lehigh County real estate tax duplicate financial activity and does not purport to, and does not, present fairly the assets, liabilities, and results of operations of the County of Lehigh for the tax year ended December 31, 2012 in conformity with the cash receipts and disbursements basis of accounting.

In our opinion, the Statement of Final Settlement referred to above presents fairly, in all material respects, the financial activity arising from cash transactions of the Lehigh County real estate tax duplicate for the tax year ended December 31, 2012, on the basis of accounting described in Note 1.

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we have also issued our report dated September 9, 2013 on our consideration of the office of fiscal affairs' management's internal control over financial reporting and our tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, and other matters. The purpose of that report is to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over financial reporting and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the internal control over financial reporting or on compliance. That report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* and should be considered in assessing the results of our audit.

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Glenn Eckhart', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Glenn Eckhart
County Controller

September 9, 2013
Allentown, Pennsylvania

xc: Board of Commissioners
Matthew T. Croslis, County Executive
Thomas S. Muller, Director of Administration

COUNTY OF LEHIGH, PENNSYLVANIA
 BRIAN L. KAHLER, FISCAL OFFICER
 REAL ESTATE TAX COLLECTIONS

Statement of Final Settlement
Lehigh County Real Estate Tax Duplicate
For the Tax Year Ended December 31, 2012
 (NOTE 1)

Original Amount to be Collected Net of One Time Expiring Tax Credit	\$ 105,456,979
Additional Amounts to be Collected (Interim Billings)	403,620
Assessment Letter Changes (Additions, Deletions and Refunds)	<u>(339,177)</u>
<i>Amount for which Fiscal Officer is Responsible</i>	<u>\$ 105,521,422</u>
Amount Collected From Taxpayers	\$ 101,587,327
<i>Add: Discounts</i>	1,809,863
<i>Less: Penalties</i>	<u>(309,367)</u>
Amount Collected at Gross Net of One Time Expiring Tax Credit	
Value of Tax Bills	103,087,823
Amount of Unpaid Taxes at Gross Net of One Time Expiring Tax	
Credit Value to be collected by the Tax Claim Bureau	2,503,848
Refunds at Gross Value Net of One Time Expiring Tax Credit	
Made by County Fiscal Office	<u>(70,249)</u>
<i>Amount Accounted for by Fiscal Officer</i>	<u>\$ 105,521,422</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of this statement.

COUNTY OF LEHIGH, PENNSYLVANIA
BRIAN L. KAHLER, FISCAL OFFICER
REAL ESTATE TAX COLLECTIONS

*Notes to Statement of Final Settlement
For the Tax Year Ended December 31, 2012*

1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

A. Reporting Entity

The County of Lehigh Real Estate Tax Duplicate's financial activity is a part of the County of Lehigh's reporting entity, included in the operating fund and is subject to annual financial audit by external auditors. This report is only for internal audit purposes.

B. Basis of Accounting

The accounting records of the County of Lehigh and the Statement of Final Settlement are maintained on the cash receipts and disbursements basis of accounting. Under this basis of accounting, revenue is recognized when cash is received and expenditures are recognized when paid. This differs from Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) which requires the accrual basis of accounting.



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We have audited the financial statements of Lehigh County Real Estate Tax Duplicate for the tax year ended December 31, 2012 and have issued our report thereon dated September 9, 2013. We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the generally accepted government auditing standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

In planning and performing our audit, we considered the office of fiscal affairs' internal control over financial reporting as a basis for designing our auditing procedures for the purpose of expressing our opinion on the Statement of Final Settlement, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the office of fiscal affairs internal control over financial reporting. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on the effectiveness of the office of fiscal affairs internal control over financial reporting.

A deficiency in internal control exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent or detect misstatements on a timely basis. A significant deficiency is a deficiency, or combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention to those charged with governance.

A material weakness is a deficiency, or combination of deficiencies, in internal control, such that there is reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the entity's financial statements will not be prevented or detected and corrected on a timely basis.

Our consideration of internal control over financial reporting was for the limited purpose described in the first paragraph of this section and would not necessarily identify all deficiencies in internal control that might be significant deficiencies or material weaknesses. We did not identify any deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting that we consider to be material weaknesses, as defined above.

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the office of fiscal affairs financial statements are free of material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of financial statement amounts. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of management and other affected county offices and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties. However, this report is a matter of public record and its distribution is not limited.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Glenn Eckhart', written in a cursive style.

Glenn Eckhart
County Controller

September 9, 2013
Allentown, Pennsylvania