

# COMPLIANCE AUDIT

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## Recorder of Deeds Lancaster County, Pennsylvania For the Period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2023

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October 2025



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Department of the Auditor General

Timothy L. DeFoor • Auditor General



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**TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR  
AUDITOR GENERAL**

The Honorable Pat Browne  
Secretary  
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue  
Harrisburg, PA 17128

We have conducted a compliance audit of the Recorder of Deeds, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania (Office), for the period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2023, pursuant to the requirements of Sections 401(b) and 401(d) of *The Fiscal Code*, 72 P.S. § 401(b) and § 401(d).

The objective of the audit was to determine whether all money collected on behalf of the Commonwealth have been correctly assessed, reported, and promptly remitted and to provide a report to the Department of Revenue to allow the Department of Revenue to state and settle the Office's account. Our audit was limited to areas related to the objective identified above and was not conducted, nor was it required to be, in accordance with Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

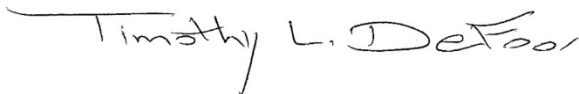
The Office is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance of compliance with state laws and regulations applicable to the collection of moneys on behalf of the Commonwealth, including whether they have been correctly assessed, reported, and promptly remitted. The Office is also responsible for complying with those laws and regulations. It is our responsibility to perform procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objective. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, for the period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2023, the Office, in all significant respects, complied with state laws and regulations applicable to the collection of moneys on behalf of the Commonwealth, including whether they have been correctly assessed, reported, and promptly remitted.

This report includes a summary of the Office's receipts and disbursements of funds collected on behalf of the Commonwealth (summary). We obtained data representing the Office's receipts and disbursements from the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, which obtains data from each of the Commonwealth's recorder of deeds offices and used the data to create the summary in the format required by the Department of Revenue. We also evaluated the accuracy of the data as part of our audit to conclude on the Office's compliance with certain state laws and regulations as described in the previous paragraph. Any adjustments that we considered necessary based on our audit work are disclosed in the *Proposed Audit Adjustments* line of the summary; however, the scope of our audit does not include the issuance of an opinion on the accuracy of the amounts reported in the summary.

The purpose of this report is to determine whether all moneys collected on behalf of the Commonwealth have been correctly assessed, reported, and promptly remitted. This report is not suitable for any other purposes.

The contents of this report were discussed with the Office's management. We appreciate the courtesy extended to us by the Office during the course of our audit. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Bureau of County Audits at 717-787-1363.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Timothy L. DeFoor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending from the left side of the first name.

Timothy L. DeFoor  
Auditor General  
September 18, 2025

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RECORDER OF DEEDS  
LANCASTER COUNTY  
BACKGROUND  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2023

The Department of Auditor General is mandated by Article IV, Section 401(b) and (d) of *The Fiscal Code* (Act of April 9, 1929, P.L.343, No. 176), to audit the accounts of each county officer to determine whether all moneys collected on behalf of the Commonwealth have been correctly assessed, reported, and promptly remitted.

Recorder of Deeds receipts consist of moneys collected on behalf of the Commonwealth. These include moneys collected for the following taxes and fees:

- The Pennsylvania Realty Transfer Tax is a documentary stamp tax of 1 percent on the value of the interest in real property transferred by deed.
- Writ Taxes of \$.50 imposed on various types of documents and a \$10 tax on notary public commissions processed through the office.
- Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees represent a \$40.25 fee imposed for each filing of deeds in any form, mortgages, mortgage assignments, mortgage releases, mortgage satisfaction pieces, installment sales agreements, leases for a term of 30 years or longer, and easements.

Total disbursements for the audit period are as follows:

Realty Transfer Taxes

Deposits into the Department of Revenue's  
cash management account

\$ 128,477,388

The Recorder of Deeds participates in the Department of Revenue's cash management system for Realty Transfer Taxes. Under this system, the "Agent" deposits Realty Transfer Tax collections to a local account approved and established in the name of the Department of Revenue, thereby eliminating the need for the agent to issue a check to disburse these taxes. This balance reflects a summary of monthly transmittal reports as provided by the Department of Revenue. The balance does not reflect adjustments disclosed by our audit.

RECORDER OF DEEDS  
LANCASTER COUNTY  
BACKGROUND  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2023

Writ Taxes And Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees

Recorder of Deeds checks issued to:

|                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Department of Revenue | <u>\$ 9,491,859</u> |
|-----------------------|---------------------|

This balance reflects a summary of monthly transmittal reports provided by the Department of Revenue.

Ann M. Hess, Esquire, served as Recorder of Deeds during the period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2023.

The summaries of receipts and disbursements provide a summary of receipts and disbursements by category. The categories and the amounts of taxes and fees assessed are based on Pennsylvania laws and regulations.

The summaries were prepared in accordance with reporting requirements prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue. Under this method, only the Commonwealth portion of cash receipts and disbursements are presented, revenues are recognized when received, and expenditures are recognized when paid.

Proposed Audit Adjustment - Realty Transfer Taxes

The \$3.00 proposed audit adjustment represents a prior audit credit taken for the period January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2019.

RECORDER OF DEEDS  
LANCASTER COUNTY  
REALTY TRANSFER TAXES  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2023

Receipts:

|                                                                                                   |                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Realty Transfer Taxes                                                                             | \$ 129,730,353            |
| Commissions                                                                                       | <u>(1,297,304)</u>        |
| Net Receipts                                                                                      | 128,433,049               |
| Disbursements to Commonwealth                                                                     | <u>(128,477,388)</u>      |
| Balance due Commonwealth (County)<br>per Department of Revenue data                               | (44,339)                  |
| Proposed audit adjustments                                                                        | <u>(3)</u>                |
| Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (County)<br>for the period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2023 | <u><u>\$ (44,342)</u></u> |

RECORDER OF DEEDS  
LANCASTER COUNTY  
WRIT TAXES AND JUDICIAL COMPUTER SYSTEM/ACCESS TO JUSTICE FEES  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2023

Receipts:

|                                                                                                   |                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Writ Taxes                                                                                        | \$ 164,293             |
| Judicial Computer System/Access To Justice Fees                                                   | <u>9,331,496</u>       |
| Total Receipts                                                                                    | 9,495,789              |
| Commissions                                                                                       | <u>(4,929)</u>         |
| Net Receipts                                                                                      | 9,490,860              |
| Disbursements to Commonwealth                                                                     | <u>(9,491,859)</u>     |
| Balance due Commonwealth (County)<br>per Department of Revenue data                               | (999)                  |
| Proposed audit adjustments                                                                        | <u>-</u>               |
| Adjusted balance due Commonwealth (County)<br>for the period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2023 | <u><u>\$ (999)</u></u> |

RECORDER OF DEEDS  
LANCASTER COUNTY  
REPORT DISTRIBUTION  
FOR THE PERIOD  
JANUARY 1, 2020 TO DECEMBER 31, 2023

This report was initially distributed to:

**The Honorable Pat Browne**  
Secretary  
Pennsylvania Department of Revenue

**The Honorable Andrea Tuominen**  
Court Administrator of Pennsylvania  
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania  
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

**The Honorable Ann M. Hess**  
Recorder of Deeds

**The Honorable Kathy Kunkel**  
Controller

**The Honorable Joshua G. Parsons**  
Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at [www.PaAuditor.gov](http://www.PaAuditor.gov). Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 229 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: [news@PaAuditor.gov](mailto:news@PaAuditor.gov).