



Cobb County...Expect the Best!

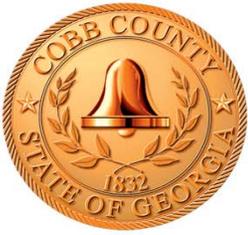
INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

Report Number 2012-011

***Final Letter Report: Supplemental Analysis of
ACCELA System Controls-Review of Cash Handling
Activities in the Community Development Agency,
Development and Inspections Division***

November 16, 2012

***Latona Thomas, CPA, Manager
Barry Huff, Staff Auditor I
Steven Harper, Staff Auditor I***



COBB COUNTY INTERNAL AUDIT

Latona Thomas, CPA

100 Cherokee Street, Suite 250
Marietta, Georgia 30090
phone: (770) 528-2559 • fax: (770) 528-2642
TDD/TTY: (678) 581-5429
latona.thomas@cobbcounty.org

Division Manager

November 16, 2012

TO: MEMORANDUM TO COBB COUNTY MANAGER

FROM: Latona Thomas, CPA, Manager

SUBJECT: **Final Letter Report:** Supplemental Analysis of ACCELA Systemic Controls - Review of Cash Handling Activities in the Community Development Agency, Development and Inspections Division

As part of our review of controls over the cash handling in the Development and Inspections (D&I) Division, we evaluated whether the ACCELA¹ system used to facilitate fee calculation and collection had controls to prevent the misappropriation of funds. In our discussion with management, we determined there were concerns whether control weaknesses exists that allowed changes in cash transactions without detection, and their inability to monitor or identify when changes are made to critical information within the permit record. We discussed their concerns with Information Systems (I.S.), and facilitated a joint meeting to determine if anything could be done to address their concerns and give them some ability to monitor changes in cash transactions and other critical information. We also performed a test, with I.S. assistance, to determine if cash transactions can be altered without detection.

Results of Review

Controls over Cash Transaction

We conducted tests of the ACCELA system to determine if a payment amount can be altered without detection for the purpose of misappropriating funds. We wanted to know if a cashier or other cash handler could collect money, subsequently change the amount, misappropriate the difference and not be reflected in the end-of-day balancing.

Our tests show that payments cannot be changed after they have been processed and the receipt issued. In order to change a payment, you have to void the previous transaction and enter a new transaction. The system also allows the input of an explanation of the voided transaction, and it maintains an historical record of voided transaction.

¹ A web-based computer software solution that tracks and manages land use and community development activities needed to support and promote economic development and prosperity, including permits; building safety; inspections; investigations and reviews.

Proposed Information Services Actions: I.S. determined that they can provide D&I with a report that will alert them to any voided transactions input the previous day. They can also provide a report that shows records where there are voided transactions but no explanation was provided. These reports give management the ability to monitor and validate changes made to fines and fees in a timely manner.

Controls Over Change in Critical Information

In addition to the remittance processing controls, officials in D&I expressed their concern over the inability to detect and monitor the changing of sensitive/critical data within the permitting record. Three particular areas of concern were discussed:

Professionals – D&I expressed that it's important to know all the contractors that work(ed) on a construction project. If the name of a subcontractor is changed, there is no historical record of the contractor on ACCELA. During discussions with D&I and I.S., it was determined they can get this historical information from scanned information stored in OnBase Document Management Software².

Proposed I.S. Actions: No additional actions are needed from I.S. to address this issue.

Addresses/Parcels IDs – D&I stated that address information is critical to retain the integrity of the permit information.

Proposed I.S. Actions: To address this concern, I.S. is looking into providing email alerts for address changes. I.S. will also perform research to determine whether a report can be generated and/or give D&I query capability to obtain information on changes to addresses/parcel IDs, as needed.

Conditions³ – Conditions should not be changed without authorization. Officials in D&I need to know when a permit's condition is changed, especially from a locked⁴ condition. D&I found a way to determine who makes changes to conditions using I.S. assistance, but they are not automatically alerted to when those changes take place.

Proposed I.S. Actions: I.S. will attempt to develop a daily report for D&I that list all permits where a change was made to the conditions.

² An enterprise document management solution to make documents more readily accessible in an electronic format.

³ Conditions are restrictions placed on permits that require the contractor to complete certain tasks before the restriction is lifted.

⁴ Identifier that a restriction has been placed on a permit.

Other Systemic Controls

Audit Activity Log

Initially I.S. indicated that an audit trail of all changes to permitting records was not feasible or accessible in the current system without substantial functional changes and memory concerns. However, subsequent to several discussions, an ACCELA representative informed them of a capability to provide some historic information on permitting records. On the main screen, the user can click on a view log button that will provide the capability to review all activity on permits. The user can filter the information to focus on the specific information they want to see. For example, they can filter the data to look at one particular permit record or the activity of one particular user. Several variables exist which the user can use to obtain the activity information needed.

D&I tested this feature and stated the log may not give all the historical information needed on a specific record. A subsequent discussion with I.S. revealed that the logging feature was not activated until August 2012 and thus, the historical activity log will not have data before the feature was activated.

Proposed I.S. Actions: Additional testing is necessary to fully understand the functionality of the historical record activity feature and to determine if it will accommodate the needs of D&I.

Security Profile Configuration

In addition, the current security profile configuration does not allow the setting of security profiles to prevent certain users from modifying data. For instance, Inspectors' security profiles cannot be changed to prevent them from modifying fines because doing so would also eliminate their capability to input the fines.

Proposed I.S. Actions: I.S. is planning to obtain assistance from ACCELA to modify the security profiles in the near future so security settings can be better utilized to limit activity on permit records and serve as an added level of control.

Response

No formal written response to the findings in this draft report was necessary as the respective parties previously agreed upon them. Although no response was required, the D&I Division Manager expressed concerns about unresolved issues in the implementation of the ACCELA system. We will follow-up on the status of the proposed I.S. actions within three months. During this follow-up, we will facilitate a meeting between I.S. and D&I to determine if the system has any additional capabilities that would address the concerns of the D&I Division Manager. Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this report, please contact me at extension 2559 or Barry Huff, Auditor-in-Charge, at extension 2558.

Report Distribution:

Rob Hosack, AICP, Community Development Agency Director

Paul Ruth, Information Services Director

Julia Levesque, Information Services Division Manager

Lee McClead, Development and Inspections Division Manager

Yolanda Rucker, Information Services Technical Services Manager

Internal Audit Division File