THE CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT
COURT OF COOK COUNTY

MARIYANA T. SPYROPOULOS
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT
COURT OF COOK COUNTY

KATARINA DURCOVA
INSPECTOR GENERAL

MEMORANDUM

TO: **The Honorable Mariyana T. Spyropoulos**,
Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County
Michael Ciaccio, Chief of Staff
Chad Gearig, Chief Human Resources Officer
James Chandler, General Counsel
Tyhani Hill, Chief Financial Officer
Vivek Ananda, Chief Technology Officer

FROM: Katarina Durcova, Inspector General
Kristen Regalado, Inspector General Investigator
Eric Perkins, Inspector General Investigator

DATE: June 27, 2025

SUBJECT: ***Traffic Court Tickets, Fines, and Fees: Implementation of Internal Processes*** **(**CF # 22-10-496)

In 2015, the Office of County Auditor (OCA) identified over $30 million in outstanding accounts in traffic tickets and requested a corrective action plan from the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County (CCC). The OCA identified several issues the CCC needed to address: (1) analyze the $30 million in outstanding accounts to determine a financially viable and worthwhile recovery strategy; (2) the reconciliation of detailed collection agency reports and internal reports to identify outstanding accounts; (3) develop plans and processes to effectively collect the outstanding debt through the Wage Garnishment Program, the Local Debt Recovery Program, and the State's Income Tax Refund Intercept Program; and (4) establish Collection Agency Performance Measures for the next contract.

In October 2020, the CCC reported to the OCA an outstanding balance of approximately $31 million. However, in September 2021, the Martinez administration reported the balance as significantly higher at $176 million. Through its investigation, the OIG determined the $176 million sum was not an accurate reflection of the outstanding balance but instead represented unreconciled amounts. The OIG concluded that the actual balance was likely closer to the $31 million reported by the Brown administration in October of 2020. Specifically, the OIG discovered that the discrepancy arose because the Martinez administration's CFO experienced difficulties identifying what accounts were outstanding because the CFO was unable to match internal CCC accounts with detailed reports from collections agencies. Thus, in 2022, the OIG began working closely with the CFO, CIO, and other key players to facilitate the reconciliation process of the outstanding accounts.

By 2023, MIS developed an internal report summarizing the outstanding collection balances, which was periodically compared to the Alliance One Aging Report to provide an analysis of the variances between these two reports. However, difficulties arose because the Alliance One Aging Report contained 16,000 lines sorted by individuals addresses, rather than by the agency that had issued the ticket, fee, or fine. To address this, the CCC collaborated with Alliance One Aging Report to reorganize the information by the issuing agency so that the CCC could effectively compare the outstanding receivables to its internal records.

In October 2024, MIS tested a configuration to identify cases of past due balances were past due (91st day after judgment), apply a 30% collection fee, and generate outbound files for the collection agency. MIS intended to begin processing cases from December 2022 for Alliance One and January 2023 for Harris & Harris.[1] If successful, MIS planned to continue to process additional months until becoming current.

In March 2025, following the change in CCC administration in December 2024, the OIG requested an update on progress and met with relevant stakeholders. In April 2025, the CIO and CFO provided OIG with an update. The CIO shared that updates to the system were regular, with File Transfer Protocol (FTP) reports uploaded weekly. MIS was manually entering data into the electronic court docket and case management system, Odyssey. MIS was working to automate the process with E-citation and Defender Access. MIS also planned to document the process for Finance to help improve payment tracking going forward. As of May 2025, the CCC has implemented effective account reconciliation and aims to automate the processes.

CONCLUSION

The CCC has made significant progress in addressing OCA's recommendations. In 2015, the OCA made 7 findings and associated corrective action plans for the CCC. By June 15, 2016, the CCC had complied with three of OCA's seven recommendations.[2] As of March 7, 2017, the CCC has been actively working to resolve the one 2015 Open Audit Recommendation of outstanding accounts in the Traffic Division.[3] It has been a journey of stops and starts across three administrations. What progress one administration may have achieved appeared to be rolled back as a new administration took over. The OIG found that the last two administrations were unaware of the lingering 2015 Open Audit Recommendation from the OCA, primarily due to a lack of communication and documented processes to support leadership transitions.

The OIG commends MIS, Finance, and Madam Clerk Spyropoulos on implementing procedures and processes to ensure collection of outstanding traffic accounts and safeguarding Cook County taxpayer resources. The OIG recognizes that the continued collaboration between MIS and Finance will be crucial to prevent any future setbacks.

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[1] **Collections Agency Schedule**
Harris and Harris - Jan, Mar, May, July, Sept, Nov
Alliance One - Feb, April, June, Aug, Oct, Dec
[2] 03 OCA-FY16-2nd-Quarter-Open-Findings-Report
[3] 06 OCA-FY17-1st_Quarter-Open_Recommendations_Report

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure the continued success of these processes, the OIG recommends that:

- The CCC formally document and maintain relevant procedures and processes as part of its internal MIS and Finance policies;
- MIS and Finance periodically evaluate whether performance measures in contracts with Alliance One and Harris & Harris remain effective and appropriate;
- MIS and Finance share the internal policies, along with any updates, with the OIG for transparency and collaboration; and
- MIS and Finance provide the OCA with regular progress updates, plans for addressing any outstanding accounts, and assessments of the feasibility of recovering on old accounts.

Submitted,

Katarina Durcova
Inspector General

June 27, 2025
Date