

STANDING VIOLATIONS

TICKET CONTROL

376 - 67

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COMMUNITY SYSTEMS FOUNDATION

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Memo on: Standing Violations Ticket Control
To: Guy Larcum
From: Bart Burkhalter, Community Systems Foundation
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Introduction

It is appropriate that City Administration be appraised of the control system for standing violations and its weaknesses so that appropriate action can be taken. Ultimately the objective of administration should be to:

1. Assure the citizens of Ann Arbor that the process is being carried out in an honest and efficient manner, and
2. Adhere to State law.

State Law

The Michigan Legislature passed Michigan Act No. 235, P.A. 1966 on traffic tickets to go into effect July 1, 1967. A summary of key points in this law is given below:

1. Each citation shall be numbered consecutively
2. Each citation shall be in such form as determined by the Secretary of State, Attorney General, State Court Adm., Chief of State Police
3. Each citation shall consist of: original filed with the court, first copy which is abstract of court record, second copy retained by local traffic enforcement agency, third copy delivered to alleged violator [except that] citation may be appropriately modified as to content or number of copies to accommodate local procedures
4. Each Police Chief shall issue a citation book to each officer and obtain a receipt from each officer
5. When writing a ticket (arrested without warrant) the officer shall prepare an original and three copies containing; name and address of offender, offense charged, time and place
6. [When a ticket is written] the officer shall deliver all copies to the Chief of Police or his designate duly signed. The Chief or his designate shall deposit the original and a copy for the State with the court within two days

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7. The State Treasurer shall establish procedures to insure accountability
8. A Record of issuance and disposition shall be maintained complete for 5 years
9. A complete audit of citation records shall be required annually by an appropriate fiscal officer of the city.

The City Attorney's office has been contacted on the implications of this law, along with the State Treasurer, the State Police, and the Michigan Municipal League. It is unclear at this time whether the law applies to moving violations only, moving violations and some standing violations, or all moving and standing violations. At this point in time, the City has assumed it does not apply to any standing violations. Given the confusion that currently exists, the probable high cost of switching standing violations to meet the law, and the lack of enforcement procedures in the law, the decision not to apply the law to standing violations is probably a good one.

Current Procedure

1. Police notifies Purchasing when tickets are low (about once a year)
2. Purchasing orders the ticket books and IBM cards with ticket numbers pre-punched.
3. When the tickets arrive Purchasing signs a receipt for the number of boxes of tickets received.
4. The Police are notified and pick up the tickets from Purchasing signing that they have in fact received the number of boxes indicated. They also check to be sure the beginning and ending numbers recorded on each box are a full sequence from one box to the next.
5. Police store the unissued tickets in a locked room.
6. As each box of tickets is opened, the books of tickets are checked to be sure all tickets recorded as being in the box are in fact there.
7. Police issue tickets to officers from one office on a daily or weekly basis and the officer signs a slip for the specific ticket numbers he has taken out. A listing of each officer and the ticket numbers he has been issued is sent to Data-Processing.
8. Data-Processing matches the tickets issued to officers with its IBM cards pre-punched with the ticket numbers. Each pre-punched card is key-punched with the badge number of the officer to whom it was issued and the date of issuance. These cards are then stored by ticket number.

9. Stubs of tickets written by an officer are turned in to Police.
10. Police void tickets on signature of command officer only.
11. Police take tickets stubs and void tickets to Data-Processing once a day. The clerical staff in Data-Processing know the command officers and accept tickets only from them.
12. Data-Processing punches an IBM card for each ticket written that contains ticket #, officer badge number, violation code or void code, license #, car make, area code, date written. These cards are used to pull and destroy cards in "tickets assigned file". The new cards are filed by ticket number in the "ticket issued file". Voided tickets are placed in "permanent storage".
13. All mail and in-person payments are received by the Treasurer. See his memo on "General Procedure for Standing Violations". Tickets paid (packet received daily from Treasurer) are pulled from the "tickets issued file" and placed in "permanent storage".
14. Treasurer deposits the money in bank daily and sends paid tickets to Data-Processing with a control total of money deposited. Data-Processing staff know clerks from the Treasurer's office and accept paid tickets only from them. Data-Processing runs totals on paid tickets and returns this total to the Treasurer for his control. Data-Processing pulls paid tickets from "tickets issued file" and are placed in "permanent storage".
15. Tickets dismissed (Court notifies Data-Processing, D.P. knows girl from Court) are sent from Court to Data-Processing and these tickets are transferred from "tickets written file" to "permanent storage".
16. Recently, Data-Processing has begun to prepare a monthly ticket inventory report which lists the total outstanding tickets in the possession of each officer. Data-Processing is responsible to check the unissued ticket inventory of each officer to insure that the inventory does not contain any tickets that have been issued a long time before. The report is sent to Police who are responsible to see that the inventory of an officer is not building up.

Several points of clarification are appropriate. First, Data-Processing keeps four files of cards:

1. Pre-punched file containing all cards corresponding to tickets that have not yet been assigned to officers
2. Assigned ticket file containing cards corresponding to tickets that have been assigned to officers but not yet issued

3. Issued ticket file containing cards corresponding to tickets that have been issued but not yet paid, voided, dismissed.

4. Permanent storage file containing all tickets that have been paid, voided, dismissed.

Second, once a ticket has been issued by an officer and recorded as such by Data-Processing, it can be processed out of the system only by authorized personnel and procedures. The Treasurer can authorize paid tickets, Police can authorize void tickets, and the Court can authorize dismissed tickets or can turn tickets into warrants. The Court is the only agency authorized to process warrants from the system.

Problem Areas

There are several areas in the current system over which proper control may be lacking.

1. Little control exists over tickets before they arrive at Purchasing. Unissued tickets could be pilfered and not discovered for many months later. If duplicate tickets were produced and pilfered, the City would have no knowledge of this until such a ticket showed up as paid. The issuing of tickets by unauthorized individuals might be considered a significant practical joke.

2. The point at which Data-Processing is told that a ticket should be processed from the system is subject to error or other problems. Paid tickets is controlled because the dollar amount of the paid tickets for the day is totaled independently by the Treasurer and Data-Processing and then compared by both. Warrants that have been processed out of the system are taken directly from the Court docket, which provides good control over error, but the Court does not check warrants Data-Processing has claimed to have processed against the docket. In other words, there is no independent check by the Court of dismissed tickets or warrants.

3. There is no control over voided tickets. The effectiveness of the current procedures depends on the honesty and accuracy of clerks in Police and Data-Processing and the fact that they know and trust one another. The Police do not check the number of voids processed by Data-Processing (which they receive on the Daily Standing Violation Totals Report) against the number they sent to Data-Processing. This leaves the system wide-open to tampering by clerical personnel in Data-Processing, as it also is with dismissed tickets and warrants from the Court.

4. The procedures proposed by the Treasurer for handling the arrival of tickets in the mail appear to be adequate if they are followed. However, during periods of personnel shortage or simply as time passes, it is conceivable that the control might become lax. If so, this would be a prime place for tampering to occur since City employees are handling unaccounted for cash.

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5. The procedures established to control the inventory of assigned but unissued tickets in each officer's possession is adequate so long as Police and Data-Processing systematically carry out their auditing responsibilities.

6. Some overall auditing procedure, probably on an annual basis, needs to be established to see that all individuals are properly carrying out their control responsibilities.