

SHARON R. BOCK
Clerk & Comptroller
Palm Beach County

PROTECTING YOUR PUBLIC DOLLARS

The Clerk's role in the audit of the Convention and Visitors Bureau

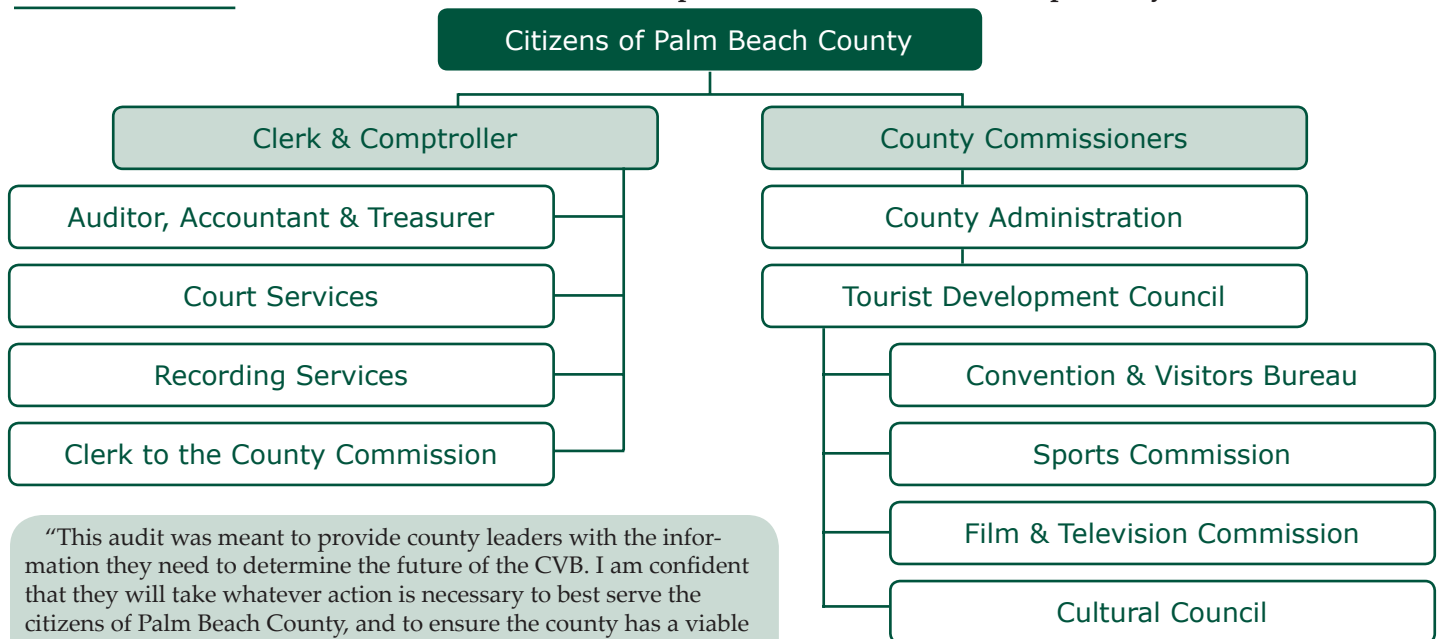
Public corruption has been at the forefront of the news in Palm Beach County. According to the 2005 Annual Report by the U.S. Department of Justice's Public Integrity Section, the Southern District of Florida leads the nation in prosecutions of public corruption, reporting a total of 576 cases since 1996.

Clerk & Comptroller Sharon R. Bock last week released her audit report for the Palm Beach County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), a private nonprofit entity under contract with Palm Beach County to provide tourism marketing services. As the county's elected auditor, Bock initiated the audit in response to the CVB's former Controller misappropriating over \$1.5 million.



Sharon R. Bock

The audit revealed that weak internal controls, combined with "gross mismanagement," made it possible for the Controller to forge 222 separate checks, payable to herself, over a three-year period, without being detected. The 46-page document details 34 findings and 75 recommendations. Findings include reports of public funds being co-mingled with private funds, \$750,000 in withholding taxes not being paid to the I.R.S., and varied conflicts of interest. Overall, lax internal controls and the management environment contributed to the weakness in the operational structure. **The audit is available to the public on the Internet at www.pbcountyclerk.com.**



"This audit was meant to provide county leaders with the information they need to determine the future of the CVB. I am confident that they will take whatever action is necessary to best serve the citizens of Palm Beach County, and to ensure the county has a viable means of promoting tourism."
-Sharon Bock

An ongoing and separate forensic audit is being performed by a private firm at the request of the Board of County Commissioners. The matter is under investigation by the West Palm Beach Police Department. The former Controller has not yet been charged. The President/CEO and the Vice President of Finance and Administration have resigned.

The Clerk's role as County Auditor

My role as county auditor goes back to the Florida Constitution of 1838, which provides for the protection of public funds through the creation of an independent, elected chief financial officer in each county who would serve as the county's accountant, treasurer, and auditor. In Palm Beach County, this official is the Clerk & Comptroller, a "watch-dog" of county funds who is directly responsible to the citizens.

This unique, constitutionally-created audit function acts as the final check and balance on county expenditures. The clerk's audit role is most effectively summarized in the 1984 Palm Beach County case of *W & F Limited v. Dunkle*. It states that the Clerks actions in this regard would

"be an effective antidote to several political maladies found in other communities: the soap syndrome--one hand washes the other; complacency--be concerned only when someone gets caught, and lock-jaw--don't rock the boat."

As your public trustee, I take very seriously my responsibility to protect your money from theft, fraud and misappropriation. I welcome any comments or questions you may have about my auditor role.

Best regards,



Sharon R. Bock
Clerk & Comptroller
Palm Beach County



Sharon R. Bock

I welcome your input!

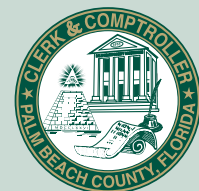
Executive Offices:

301 North Olive Avenue, 9th Floor, West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Website: www.pbcountyclerk.com

Phone: 561-355-2996

E-Mail: sbock@co.palm-beach.fl.us



SHARON R. BOCK
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Palm Beach County