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Disbursement Warrants under Financial Management System of 1981

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We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other e-Li material.

Sincerely,

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In those counties operating under the County Financial Management System of 1981, the director of the finance department cosigns all disbursement warrants for all funds that are handled by the county trustee. Disbursement warrants are prepared by the director of finance and signed in accordance with T.C.A. § 5-21-116. T.C.A. § 5-21-115(b)(3). See Op. Tenn. Atty. Gen. 99-032 (February 18, 1999) (authority to sign disbursement warrants).

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 5-21-116(a), all disbursement warrants drawn on the county trustee for the obligations of all county departments, agencies, and officials, including the county mayor, the county highway department, and the county department of education, are signed as follows:

- (1) The disbursement warrants are prepared in the finance department, and provided to each department for signing.
- (2) Upon preparation of the warrant by the finance department, the department head signing the disbursement warrant keeps one copy for filing in the department.
- (3) The original and all other copies of the warrant are returned to the director for the director's signature as a cosigner and for filing and mailing from the finance department.
- (4) A duplicate copy of all disbursement warrants, with all original invoices and other supporting documents attached thereto, are kept on file in the office of the director.

T.C.A. § 5-21-116(b).

In lieu of each department agency or official signing disbursement warrants, the departments may authorize the director to use a signature plate in accordance with the general law and approval by the comptroller of the treasury. If a signature plate is used, it must be secured in a safe place when not in use and supervised by the person responsible for its safekeeping when in use. A record must be maintained indicating when the signature plate is used, numbers of the warrants signed, and the person using such plate. T.C.A. § 5-21-116(c).

Payroll Account. The financial management committee shall maintain a special county payroll account at a bank, in which disbursement warrants for the total of each payroll shall be deposited and against which individual net earning checks may be issued to each of the county employees. The committee may authorize the issuance of payroll checks on the signature of the director of finance and, in such event, the depository bank shall be so instructed. T.C.A. § 5-21-117.

Application to Schools. The provisions of the 1981 Act apply to county school funds if the Act has been adopted by the county. See Op. Tenn. Atty. Gen. 88-202 (December 2, 1988).

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