

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**February 14, 2012 Recessed and Reconvened on  
March 1, 2012**

The Honorable,  
The Board of Commissioners of Cook County

**ATTENDANCE**

Present: Chairman Daley, Vice Chairman Sims, Commissioners Beavers, Butler, Collins, Fritchey, Gainer, Garcia, Gorman, Goslin, Murphy, Reyes, Schneider, Silvestri, Steele, Suffredin and Tobolski (17)

Absent: None (0)

Court Anthony W. Lisanti, C.S.R.  
Reporter:

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Your Committee on Finance of the Board of Commissioners of Cook County met pursuant to published notice for a Public Hearing at 1:00 PM on February 14, 2012, recessed and reconvened for a meeting on Thursday, March 1, 2012 at the hour of 10:00 A.M. in the Board Room, Room 569, County Building, 118 North Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois.

The Secretary to the Board informed Chairman Daley that a quorum was not present.

Chairman Daley informed the Committee that ten Commissioners had responded indicating that they would be present for a quorum at the meeting; as of this morning, only Commissioner Collins had called to inform him of her absence.

Commissioner Fritchey suggested that the Committee stand in recess until all Members can be present to hear testimony.

Chairman Daley stated that he would recess to the call of the Chair, but there are individuals present who are registered with the Secretary to testify and he thinks that those individuals should be heard as scheduled.

Commissioner Fritchey requested that the matter be deferred until the March 1, 2012 regularly scheduled Finance Committee Meeting.

Chairman Daley informed the Committee that he had received a letter from Commissioner Collins and it will be entered into the record.

Chairman Daley asked the Secretary of the Board to call upon the registered public speakers, in accordance with Cook County Code, Sec. 2-107(dd).

- 1) The Hon. Jesse White, Secretary of State
- 2) Laurence Msall, President, Civic Federation
- 3) Carmen L. Torres, Concerned Citizen
- 4) Darlena Williams-Burnett, Chief Deputy Recorder of Deeds
- 5) Clem Balanoff, Deputy Clerk, Cook County Clerk's Office
- 6) Adam Clement, Deputy Chief Information Officer, Shared Services, Inc.

315458

**REQUESTING TO PRESENT A PUBLIC QUESTION VIA A COUNTYWIDE REFERENDUM ABOLISHING THE OFFICE OF THE COOK COUNTY RECORDER OF DEEDS (PROPOSED RESOLUTION).** Submitting a Proposed Resolution sponsored by John A. Fritchey, County Commissioner, Co-sponsored by Gregg Goslin, Jesus G. Garcia and Edwin Reyes, County Commissioners.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

**REQUESTING TO PRESENT A PUBLIC QUESTION VIA A  
COUNTYWIDE REFERENDUM ABOLISHING THE  
OFFICE OF THE COOK COUNTY RECORDER OF DEEDS**

**WHEREAS**, Cook County government continues to make concerted efforts to address current and future budgetary constraints by rightsizing governmental operations, improving efficiency and eliminating redundancy in operations, among other measures; and

**WHEREAS**, The County currently has 29 separately elected officials, some of whom oversee administrative offices; and

**WHEREAS**, the Cook County Recorder of Deeds is tasked with keeping accurate records of land transactions for public and private review; maintaining official records of UCC, tax liens and lien releases; and recording and maintaining other official records; and

**WHEREAS**, the key functions of the Cook County Clerk include maintaining vital records and other official records, administering elections, and maintaining County tax maps and calculating tax rates; and

**WHEREAS**, functions that are narrowly drawn and administrative in nature provide an excellent opportunity for consolidation with another office; and

**WHEREAS**, record-keeping is an administrative function shared by both the County Clerk's Office and the County Recorder of Deeds, with many of the Recorder's duties aligning with already existing divisions under the Clerk; and

**WHEREAS**, only 2 of the 10 largest counties in the United States have a separately elected Recorder of Deeds and Clerk; and

**WHEREAS**, it is anticipated that a merger of the Cook County Clerk and Cook County Recorder of Deeds could save the County over \$1 million dollars annually through a more efficient provision of services while also centralizing record-keeping and improving customer service; and

**WHEREAS**, Article VII, Section 4(c) of the Constitution of the State of Illinois states, "Any office may be created or eliminated and the terms of office and manner of selection changed by county-wide referendum"; and

**WHEREAS**, 10 ILCS 5/28-8.1(a) states, "Whenever a proposition required by law to be voted upon before its adoption, other than a constitutional amendment, is submitted to the people, it is the duty of the Secretary of State to prepare a statement setting forth in detail Section or Sections of the law sought to be amended by the vote, together with statements and suggestions as may be necessary for a proper understanding of the proposition. The statements and suggestions shall be submitted to the Attorney General for his approval"; and

**WHEREAS**, it is a fundamental underpinning of our great country to provide taxpayers the opportunity to have input as to the functioning of their government and use of their tax dollars; and

**WHEREAS**, allowing the voters of Cook County the opportunity to determine the propriety of the proposed consolidation via a binding referendum is an opportunity to engage residents directly in our democratic process; and

**WHEREAS**, in order to consolidate and improve services by merging the functions and responsibilities of the office of the Recorder of Deeds into the office of the Cook County Clerk, the Cook County Board of Commissioners seeks to place a question before the electorate via a referendum on the November 6, 2012, countywide ballot seeking to eliminate the office of the Cook County Recorder of Deeds and merge its functions into those of the Cook County Clerk, as follows:

**"Shall the Office of the Cook County Recorder of Deeds be eliminated and all duties and responsibilities of the Office of the Cook County Recorder of Deeds be transferred to, and assumed by, the Office of the Cook County Clerk by December 1, 2013?"**

Yes

No

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Cook County Board of Commissioners that this Board present the aforementioned question to the electorate via a countywide referendum on the November 6, 2012 ballot.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Cook County Clerk notifies the Secretary of State, and the Attorney General of this request for action.

**\*Referred to the Committee on Finance on 11/15/11.**

Commissioner Fritchey gave the Committee a presentation on the proposed Resolution, attached to this Report as Attachment A.

Chairman Daley indicated that Committee would stand in recess to the call of the Chair.

**March 1, 2012**

Pursuant to notice, Chairman Daley reconvened the recessed Finance Committee Meeting of February 14, 2012 at 10:00 AM on March 1, 2012.

Chairman Daley asked that Commissioners Beavers, Butler, Collins, Goslin, Murphy, Reyes, Schneider, Silvestri and Steele be added to the roll call.

Present: Chairman Daley, Vice Chairman Sims, Commissioners Beavers, Butler, Collins, Fritchey, Gainer, Garcia, Gorman, Goslin, Murphy, Reyes, Schneider, Silvestri, Steele, Suffredin and Tobolski (17)

Absent: None (0)

After being informed by the Secretary that a quorum was present, Chairman Daley stated that a substitute Resolution was distributed by Commissioner Fritchey for Communication No. 315458.

**Commissioner Fritchey, seconded by Commissioner Silvestri, moved to accept a Substitute Amendment to Communication No. 315458. The motion carried, and Communication No. 315458 was further amended by substitution, as follows:**

**PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO COMMUNICATION NO. 315458**

Sponsored by  
The Honorable John A. Fritchey, County Commissioner

315458 **REQUESTING TO PRESENT A PUBLIC QUESTION VIA A COUNTYWIDE REFERENDUM ABOLISHING THE OFFICE OF THE COOK COUNTY RECORDER OF DEEDS (PROPOSED RESOLUTION).** Submitting a Proposed Resolution sponsored by John A. Fritchey, County Commissioner, Co-sponsored by Gregg Goslin, Jesus G. Garcia and Edwin Reyes, County Commissioners.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

**WHEREAS**, Cook County government continues to make concerted efforts to address current and future budgetary constraints by rightsizing governmental operations, improving efficiency and eliminating redundancy in operations, among other measures; and

**WHEREAS**, The County currently has 29 separately elected officials, some of whom oversee administrative offices; and

**WHEREAS**, the Cook County Recorder of Deeds is tasked with keeping accurate records of land transactions for public and private review; maintaining official records of UCC, tax liens and lien releases; and recording and maintaining other official records; and

**WHEREAS**, the key functions of the Cook County Clerk include maintaining vital records and other official records, administering elections, and maintaining County tax maps and calculating tax rates; and

**WHEREAS**, functions that are narrowly drawn and administrative in nature provide an excellent opportunity for consolidation with another office; and

**WHEREAS**, record-keeping is an administrative function shared by both the County Clerk's Office and the County Recorder of Deeds, with many of the Recorder's duties aligning with already existing divisions under the Clerk; and

**WHEREAS**, only 2 of the 10 largest counties in the United States have a separately elected Recorder of Deeds and Clerk; and

**WHEREAS**, it is anticipated that a merger of the Cook County Clerk and Cook County Recorder of Deeds could save the County over \$1 million dollars annually through a more efficient provision of services while also centralizing record-keeping and improving customer service; and

**WHEREAS**, Article VII, Section 4(c) of the Constitution of the State of Illinois states, "Any office may be created or eliminated and the terms of office and manner of selection changed by county-wide referendum"; and

**WHEREAS**, 10 ILCS 5/28-8.1(a) states, "Whenever a proposition required by law to be voted upon before its adoption, other than a constitutional amendment, is submitted to the people, it is the duty of the Secretary of State to prepare a statement setting forth in detail Section or Sections of the law sought to be amended by the vote, together with statements and suggestions as may be necessary for a proper understanding of the proposition. The statements and suggestions shall be submitted to the Attorney General for his approval"; and

**WHEREAS**, it is a fundamental underpinning of our great country to provide taxpayers the opportunity to have input as to the functioning of their government and use of their tax dollars; and

**WHEREAS**, allowing the voters of Cook County the opportunity to determine the propriety of the proposed consolidation via a binding referendum is an opportunity to engage residents directly in our democratic process; and

**WHEREAS**, in order to consolidate and improve services by merging the functions and responsibilities of the office of the Recorder of Deeds into the office of the Cook County Clerk, the Cook County Board of Commissioners seeks to place a question before the electorate via a referendum on the November 6, 2012, countywide ballot seeking to eliminate the office of the Cook County Recorder of Deeds and merge its functions into those of the Cook County Clerk, as follows:

**“Shall the Office of the Cook County Recorder of Deeds be eliminated and all duties and responsibilities of the Office of the Cook County Recorder of Deeds be transferred to, and assumed by, the Office of the Cook County Clerk by ~~December 1, 2013~~ December 5, 2016?”**

Yes

No

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Cook County Board of Commissioners that this Board present the aforementioned question to the electorate via a countywide referendum on the November 6, 2012 ballot.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Cook County Clerk notifies the Secretary of State, and the Attorney General of this request for action.

Chairman Daley asked the Secretary of the Board to call upon the registered public speakers, in accordance with Cook County Code, Sec. 2-107(dd).

- 1) Karen Yarbrough, State Representative
- 2) Lori Gadbois, Recorder, Kankakee County
- 3) Barb Krasca, Recorder, Champaign County
- 4) George Blakemore, Concerned Citizen

**Commissioner Fritchey, seconded by Commissioner Murphy, moved to Approve the Proposed Resolution (Communication No. 315458) as amended by substitution. Commissioner Tobolski called for a Roll Call Vote on the Motion, the vote of yeas and nays being as follows:**

**Roll Call on Motion to Approved the Proposed Amendment to  
Communication No. 315458 as Substituted**

**Yeas:** Commissioners Fritchey, Commissioners Gainer, Garcia, Gorman, Goslin, Reyes, Schneider and Silvestri (8)

**Nays:** Chairman Daley, Vice Chairman Sims, Commissioners Beavers, Butler, Collins Murphy, Steele, Suffredin and Tobolski (9)

**Absent:** None (0)

**The motion failed, and Communication No. 315458 was not recommended for Approval.**

Vice Chairman Sims, seconded by Commissioner Butler, moved to adjourn. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned.

**YOUR COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING ACTION  
WITH REGARD TO THE MATTER NAMED HEREIN:**

Communication Number 315458

Not Recommend for Approval

Respectfully submitted,  
Committee on Finance Committee

  
John P. Daley, Chairman

Attest:

  
Matthew B. DeLeon, Secretary

The transcript for this meeting is available in the Office of the Secretary to the Board, 118 North Clark Street, Room 436, Chicago, IL 60602.

\*An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Office of the Secretary to the Board, 118 North Clark Street, Room 567, Chicago, IL 60602.

# TOWARDS A BETTER COOK COUNTY

*A Series of Ideas to Make Cook County  
Government Work Better for its Residents*

**CURRENT MISSION:** Eliminate the elected office of the Recorder of Deeds and merge its functions with the office of the County Clerk

PRESENTED BY



# THE OPPORTUNITY

- ◆ Cook County has dozens of independent administrative offices run by separately-elected officials
- ◆ Positions that are narrowly drawn and administrative in nature provide an excellent opportunity for consolidation with another office
- ◆ We have an elected Recorder of Deeds for some public record keeping and an elected County Clerk for other public record keeping
- ◆ Record keeping is an administrative function
- ◆ 8 of the 10 biggest US counties have a combined Recorder and Clerk office
- ◆ Merging the functions of the Recorder of Deeds into the Clerk's office will improve constituent service, reduce political and bureaucratic inefficiency and save taxpayer dollars

PRESENTED BY



# SEPARATE OFFICES, OVERLAPPING MISSIONS

## COOK COUNTY RECORDER OF DEEDS

Budget: \$11.3M

Staff: 195 employees

Mission: Public record keeper

*Key office tasks:*

- Maintain official records of land transactions
- Maintain official records of UCC, tax liens and lien releases
- Maintain other official records such as military discharge documents
- Collect and record transfer taxes
- Link land records to GIS data



Budget: \$33.3M

Staff: 286 employees

Mission: Public record keeper and suburban election administrator

*Key office tasks:*

- Maintain vital records
- Maintain other official records such as business name documentation
- Maintain County's property tax maps and calculate tax rates
- Maintain legislative records, ethics filings
- Administer elections for County suburbs

- Recorders' record keeping functions align with the Clerk's Vital Records Bureau
- Recorders' transfer tax functions align with the Clerk's Tax Services Division

Note: This is a summary of each office's key functions. It is not an exhaustive list of functions by office.

PRESENTED BY

Towards a Better  
Cook County

# ONLY 2 OF THE 10 BIGGEST US COUNTIES HAVE SEPARATELY ELECTED RECORDERS OF DEEDS

County	State	Pop.	Recorder, Clerk combined	Recorder, Clerk elected separately	Website
Los Angeles	CA	9.8M	✓		<u>Registrar-Recorder/Clerk</u>
Cook	IL	5.2M		X	<u>Recorder &amp; Clerk separate</u>
Harris	TX	4.1M	✓		<u>Clerk (is Recorder)</u>
Maricopa	AZ	3.8M		X	<u>Recorder &amp; Board Clerk separate</u>
San Diego	CA	3.1M	✓		<u>Assessor/Recorder/Clerk</u>
Orange	CA	3M	✓		<u>Clerk-Recorder</u>
Kings	NY	2.5M	✓		<u>NY City Register</u>
Miami-Dade	FL	2.5M	✓		<u>Clerk of the Courts (is Recorder)</u> <b>*separate Clerk of the Board handles legislative records only</b>
Dallas	TX	2.4M	✓		<u>Clerk is Recorder</u>
Queens	NY	2.2M	✓		<u>NY City Register</u>

PRESENTED BY

Towards a Better  
Cook County

# WHY IS MERGING OFFICES REFORM?

## Better constituent service

- Centralized record keeping makes the service more user-friendly by increasing ease of navigation
- Reduce the number of offices visited for record application and retrieval
- Automating and updating of records done by one official

## Cost savings for taxpayers

- Civic Federation estimates combining offices could save at least \$800K. (Item 31, pg. 154)
- Based on these calculations (which assumed additional office consolidations) and new analysis we estimate **taxpayer savings should be approximately One Million Dollars EVERY YEAR**

## Less politics in government

- Cook County has 29 separately elected officials. Larger Los Angeles County has 8.
- 8 of 10 largest counties combine Clerk/Recorder

Sources: Civic Federation, LA County documentation  
*White Elects To Have Post Be Appointed Chicago Sun-Times January, Lou Ortiz Pg. 34.*  
*Chicago Sun-Times*

PRESENTED BY



# SO HOW DO WE DO IT?

*"Our government rests in public opinion."* - Abraham Lincoln

- ❖ Ask the public through a County-wide referendum.
- ❖ The Cook County Board of Commissioners must approve and adopt a resolution to initiate the submission of this public question.
- ❖ The public question will be asked at the November 2012 general election.
- ❖ Approval by a simple majority will allow for the offices of the County Clerk and Recorder of Deeds to be merged before the end of 2013

Source: (10 ILCS 5) Election Code; IL Constitution, Art. VII

***We've done this before  
in Cook County...***

- 1972: A County-wide referendum eliminated the elected Coroner's Office.
- It became the Office of the Medical Examiner; a position appointed by the President of the Board.

PRESENTED BY



# WE DID IT BEFORE... IT JUST HAPPENED AGAIN!

✓ On August 16, 1972, the County Board approved a resolution proposing a question be placed on the general election ballot on November 7, 1972, calling for the elimination of the Office of Coroner of Cook County, replacing it with a Medical Examiner

✓ On November 7, 1972, the voters, by an almost 9 to 1 majority, approved the proposition setting in motion the replacement of an elected office with an appointed one.

✓ On December 20, 2011, The McLean County Board, voted 13-5 to approve a resolution to include on the November 6, 2012 ballot a referendum asking the voters whether or not to abolish the Recorder of Deeds Office and consolidate its functions with the County Clerk's Office by December 31, 2013.

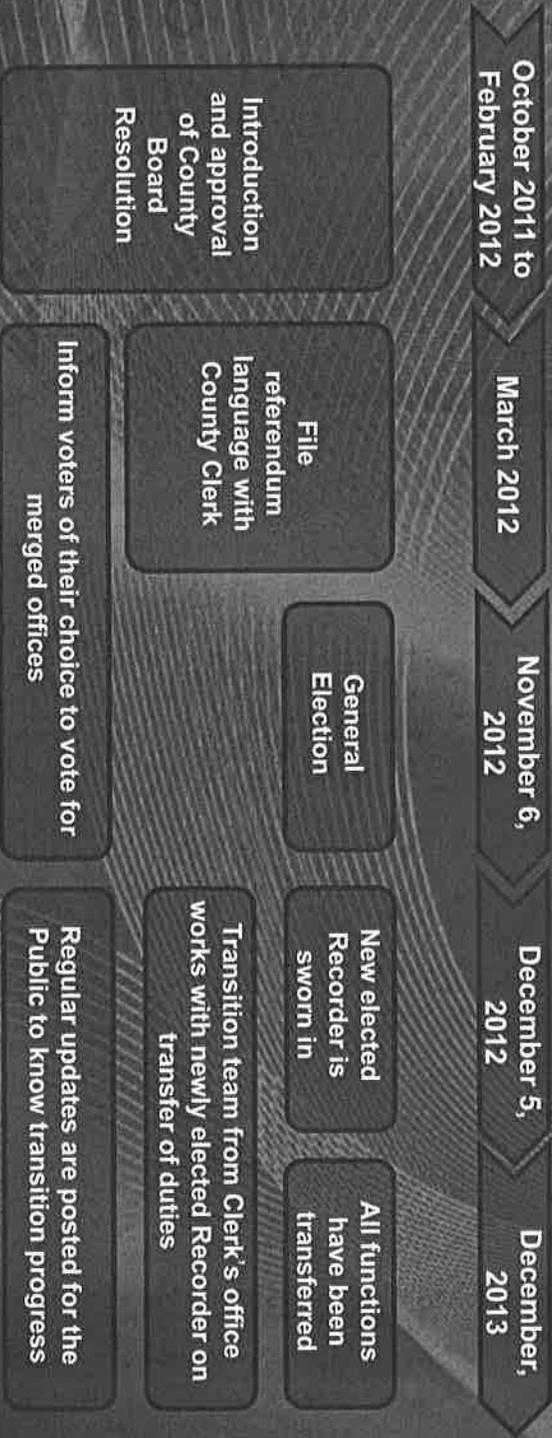
✓ On April 5, 2011, 65.5% of the Tazewell County voters approved a referendum, placed on the ballot by the Tazewell County Board of Commissioners, that calls for a consolidation to take place at the expiration of the current Tazewell County Recorder's term on December 2012.

PRESENTED BY



Sources: Cook County Board Journal of Procedures, Records of meetings held in August 16, 1972 and March 4, 1974, McLean County Board Records. Resolution approved December 20, 2011. Tazewell County Board Records. Resolution approved January 13, 2011  
Journal Star, "Tazewell voters abolish recorder of deeds post", Pekin, IL, April 6, 2011  
Chicago Sun-Times

# HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?



PRESENTED BY

COUNTY BUILDING  
118 N. CLARK STREET  
ROOM 567  
CHICAGO, IL 60602  
312 603-4566 (P)  
312 603-3696 (F)  
ecollins@cookcountygov.com



DISTRICT OFFICE  
5943 W. MADISON STREET  
CHICAGO, IL 60644  
773 626-2184 (P)  
773 626-2407 (F)  
ecollins@cookcountygov.com

**EARLEAN COLLINS**  
**COMMISSIONER - 1ST DISTRICT**  
**COOK COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

February 14, 2012

Chairwoman  
Criminal Justice  
Workforce, Job Development  
& Training Opportunities

Member  
Finance  
Forest Preserve  
Litigation  
Health & Hospital  
Human Relations  
Legislation, Intergovernmental  
& Veterans Relations  
Roads & Bridges  
Zoning & Building

Dear Chairman Daley and fellow Commissioners,

Thank you for granting me an opportunity to have my statement read into the record. I am absolutely opposed to this attempt to overthrow the State Act which created the Recorder of Deeds office. If there is just cause to eliminate this office then let it be done by the State.

Over the past 10 years this office has made great strides in building high tech systems for easier access to records and expanding the use of this office to the public. Most of all this office has become a strong revenue generating source for Cook County.

I am appealing to all of my colleagues to vote no to the elimination of this office.

Sincerely,

Earlean Collins  
Cook County Commissioner

