

KAREN A. YARBROUGH

OFFICE OF THE COOK COUNTY CLERK



TRANSITION REPORT 2018-19



The Transition Process

Dear Cook County Residents:

On November 7, 2018, the people of Cook County elected me as the first female and first African-American County Clerk in Cook County. At that time, the Transition Team I had selected began to compile their findings from months of research.

Keeping vital records and running our elections are some of the most fundamental aspects of our democracy. It is because of their importance that I made sure to select a diverse Transition Team with relevant experience and knowledge. Additionally, the sheer breadth of the Clerk's duties meant that I had a lot to learn in a short amount of time.

The goals of the Transition Team included ensuring continuity of government, that the pending municipal elections for early 2019 were on track and adequately planned, and determining a basic roadmap for instituting best-practices learned from running the Cook County Recorder of Deeds for six (6) years.

The main areas of focus by the Transition Team included:

- **Cybersecurity and Technology** – Ensuring the Office has no major weaknesses or known threats to election data, voting, or vital records.
- **Infrastructure and Administration** – Assessment of the Office's assets, including people, processes, technologies, and the financial and budgeting processes for various infrastructure.
- **Human Resources and Talent Development** – Assessment of existing HR policies, collective bargaining agreements, office policies and procedures, and available resources.

- **Elections** – Ensure that the 2019 Spring election cycle planning and implementation are underway, and all best practices continue.
- **Real Estate & Tax Services** – Ascertain the progress towards next tax-cycle activities, and the Office's progress in two (2) major technology implementations that would greatly affect County residents.
- **Vital Records** – Ensure one of the highest volume Divisions is secure, efficient, and providing excellent customer service.

As you will read in the following pages, many of the recommendations we came to have already been implemented, or are in the planning stage. Though we had a successful transition, much work remains to be done, and we will be guided by our principles of Advocacy, Cybersecurity and Accountability.

I hope this Report finds you in the spirit of collaboration. As always, I welcome feedback and ideas from anyone.

With best wishes,



Karen A. Yarbrough
Clerk of Cook County



Welcome Statement from the Transition Team Chairs

The Cook County Clerk serves as the chief election authority for the entire county, one of the largest election jurisdictions in the nation. Along with administering elections in suburban Cook County, the Clerk's Office maintains birth, marriage, and death records, assists property owners in redeeming delinquent taxes, and records the activity of the Cook County Board of Commissioners.

As the official record keeper, The Honorable Karen A. Yarbrough requested the Transition Team to complete a situational analysis examining the internal strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities, and threats faced by the Office of the Cook County Clerk. Through our process we organize the administration, plan for success instituting maximum impact while mitigating

risks and delivering and implementing plans which will inspire the new administration to improve government services and delivery to the citizens of Cook County.



The Transition Team focused on **ADVOCACY** for the citizens of Cook County while clearly recognizing the significant value our citizens place in good government. In addition, we identified areas to improve **ACCURACY**, define and maximize

EFFICIENCY, and enhance **CYBERSECURITY** ensuring all operational structures maintain integrity.

Our process has yielded this Transition Team Report which is a living document requiring time and investment of financial resources to be successfully implemented. While the responsibilities of the transition team have concluded, the process of implementation is now set forth within budgetary guidelines and office policy. We are honored and affirm to present the plans and procedures set forth in this report and affirmed they will be beneficial as the Cook County Clerk accomplishes the goals set forth making the Office of the Cook County Clerk a place which embraces modern technology, exudes professionalism, promotes customer service and implements policies and procedures that emphasize accountability.

Thank you to all Transition Team Members. We are proud to serve and look forward to the full implementation, creating a new and improved Office of the Cook County Clerk honoring the public's trust and confidence.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honorable Bobbie L. Steele, Honorary Co-Chair

Carmen K. Triche-Colvin, Honorary Co-Chair

Cybersecurity & Technology

Co-Chairs

John Mirkovic, Former Deputy Recorder of Communications & Information Technology with the Cook County Recorder of Deeds, and present Deputy Clerk of Policy & Communications with the Cook County Clerk's Office

Kevin McDermott, Present Deputy Clerk for Information & Technology with the Cook County Clerk's Office

Subcommittee Team Members

Timothy Curry (Member), Former Chief of Police of the Maywood Police Department and Director of Security with the Cook County Recorder of Deeds, and present Deputy Clerk of Security with the Cook County Clerk's Office

Purpose

- 1** To determine the top two (2) areas of focus for the new administration which directly impact one of the Clerk's key initiatives of Cybersecurity.
- 2** Identify strategies or action steps that will minimize and reduce the chances of technological and/or physical security breaches of the office, so as to deliver on Clerk Karen A. Yarbrough's campaign promise.

Introduction

Upon formation, the Cybersecurity & Technology Committee ("Committee") identified its prime areas of focus as:

- **Computer and Network Security; and**
- **Physical Site Security**

These two (2) areas encompass all persons and entities that have remote or physical access to County Clerk secure zones. Other items of research included Blockchain Technology, specifically for the certifying of digital (instead of paper) vital records and the identities of persons requesting these records, and exploring the feasibility of a high level of security that could facilitate a test of smartphone-voting, primarily for the purpose of improving the voting experience for military members stationed overseas.

Overall, the Cybersecurity & Technology Committee ("Committee") found a high level of forethought, preparation, and readiness from the staff at the Cook County Clerk's Office ("CCCO") as it pertains to Cybersecurity. As a result of this level of preparedness and culture of awareness, the Committee is comfortable foregoing any broad or major Cybersecurity recommendations at this time, and instead, formally recommending a stance of continued and ongoing vigilance to existing practices and policies. The only area which the Committee does recommend a somewhat more aggressive and increased level of engagement is with respect to its physical and site security practices and equipment, which in the Committee's professional opinion, should be upgraded within the first year of the administration's tenure.

DISCLAIMER: Finally, please note that due to the sensitive and confidential nature of most aspects of government Cybersecurity, this portion of the Transition Report will simply summarize the findings and activities, and NOT provide any detailed information which could jeopardize or create vulnerabilities for the office.

1. Cybersecurity Assessment and Determination

Because the Committee included the Clerk's current Chief Information Officer ("CIO"), who supervises the Office's present Director of Cybersecurity, the assessment of existing practices within the CCCO was easily achieved. Committee members were able to meet with the CCCO's Information Technology ("IT") staff regularly, which included collaborating with them regularly, and even discussing matters which related to the impending merger between the Cook County Recorder's Office ("CCRD") and the CCCO.

The Committee reviewed Confidential scorecard rankings of Cook County's election systems (for which the CCCO received high marks from all independent reviewing entities) and made recommendations directly to then Clerk-Elect Yarbrough regarding the few areas which were believed to be the most impactful.

It is duly noted that members of the Committee continue to meet weekly, internally, which is a practice that is anticipated to continue throughout Clerk Yarbrough's tenure as the Clerk.

2. Cybersecurity Strategies and/or Action Steps

New Voting Equipment:

Early on in the transition process, members of the Committee performed an assessment of the Dominion Voting Equipment which was procured by the CCCO. The Committee was able to view both working versions, and demo versions of the voting machines, ballot scanners, mail machines, and audit and review tracking software. The Committee was also able to ask direct questions of the vendor and is pleased to report that it received satisfactory answers to all inquiries.

The Committee believes that the CCCO did a good job in selecting a highly secure system, in large part because of how forward-thinking the system is, which should ensure that an adequate length of satisfactory longevity over

numerous future election cycles. The CCCO's Cybersecurity team is also working with the Cook County Information Security Officer ("ISO") to examine the security of the voter activation cards when programmed by the Clerk's e-Pollbook system, as required for the new equipment rollout in April of 2019.

Recommendations:

- **The CCCO should work with the vendor to create a video which demonstrates how secure and auditable the paper trails on electronic voting machines are.**
- **Continue to work with the Cook County ISO, and possibly outside experts, on the examination of potential vulnerability vectors in the new environment. –RECOMMENDATION CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS**

Site Security:

Early on in the transition process the Committee decided that an analysis of the CCCO's physical offices and access policies would be a necessary complement to a Cybersecurity analysis. To that end, members of the Committee began evaluating site access and the security procedures, including the suitability of CCCO internal security and staffing levels. A Committee member also worked directly with Facilities Management and Building Security to participate and advise on an (in progress) increase of security camera coverage in the main office building. During this process, a need for certain personnel to have "panic alarms" became evident as well.

Physical Site Security is one area where the CCCO can make significant improvements, specifically related to access, monitoring, and security coordination. As further support for such a recommendation, it begs noting that during the assessment period it was discovered that a critical and highly sensitive facility was lacking certain specific means of security related to the best practices for coverage of that facility.

Recommendations:

- Increase the number of Security Staff for the CCCO.
- Ensure all “Critical Facilities” have alarms connected to 24/7 monitoring and emergency responder services. –
RECOMMENDATION IS CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS

3. Blockchain

The Cook County Recorder of Deeds Office (“CCRD”) has been engaged in testing and analysis of certain aspects of Blockchain technology for several years now, under the direction of then-Recorder Yarbrough. Such testing and analysis have resulted in the recent offering of “certified digital files” instead of paper-only certified records. The use of a public Blockchain as a means of authenticating and permanently storing government records has already been implemented and incorporated by CCRD staff, which sets the stage for the CCCO to follow suit. As a generally accepted industry premise, certified computer files are more secure, more verifiable, and more protected from fraud or manipulation attempt, which eventually result in a more efficient delivery to those the CCCO serves, which are the public.

Presently, other jurisdictions around the country have begun testing Blockchain technology, both for certified records and inclusion in the facilitation of elections. Currently, the CCCO is proud to be counted as such a trailblazing jurisdiction, due to its present testing of Blockchain technology in the facilitation of elections, and specifically its inclusion of the “missing cartridge” report. Additionally, the CCCO Cybersecurity team has also worked with a third-party vendor on the design of a Blockchain based add-on for its voter registration system (which is presently on-hold at the vendor’s request). However, despite the ability of Blockchain technology to address the myriad of vulnerability which exist in any proposed online or mobile based voting system, the lack of substantial testing and data makes the development of any such system still highly uncertain. For clarity sake, it needs to be noted that any type of electronic voting must be **highly** scrutinized and include some level of open-sourcing to ensure a wide vetting

process can occur to detect vulnerabilities. Accordingly, as a general recommendation, the Committee recommends a “measured and deliberate” approach to exploring and moving forward with Blockchain technology.

Recommendations:

- Work with CCRD to incorporate lessons-learned from its recent digital certified file project for implementation of the technology in a comparable digital certification of CCCO vital records.
- Explore the feasibility of hiring more software programmers to more efficiently create cutting-edge software solutions.

Infrastructure & Administration

Co-Chairs

James Hill III, CPA, President of ICL, LLC a Chicago based professional service firm, Leader in service – Non-profit boards, Marwen Foundation, and, Chicago Commons Association, past Board Chair and the American Dental Association Foundation Audit Committee

Calvin Jordan, Business Proprietor, Elected Government Official and Board Member -specializing in leadership, business and community development

Subcommittee Team Members

Kouri Marshall, (Member) Former Chief of Staff to Cook County Commissioner Richard Boykin, Campaign & Elections Magazine's 2016 Rising Star award recipient, member of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago's Young Professionals Board of Directors, member of the Loyola Hospital Chicago Gun Violence Committee and Present Chairman of the Board of Directors for ChiGivesBack

Cedric Giles (Member), Former Chief Deputy Recorder with the Cook County Recorder of Deeds, and present Chief Deputy Clerk with the Cook County Clerk's Office

Carolyn Wilhight, CPA (Member), Former Deputy Recorder for Finance with the Cook County Recorder of Deeds and present Deputy Clerk of Real Estate, Tax Services & Chief Financial Officer with the Cook County Clerk's Office

Larry Brannon (Member), Forensic accounting, internal audit and management advisory consultant. Former forensic auditor with the Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Director with KPMG and Internal Audit Manager with Sara Lee Corporation

Kevin McDermott (Advisor), Present Deputy Clerk for Information & Technology with the Cook County Clerk's Office

Purpose

- 1** To analyze and gain a greater understanding of the people, processes, policies and technologies that drive the execution of the administration of the Cook County Clerk's Office, specifically related to the finances, budget and ethics.
- 2** Identify strategies or action steps that will maximize and improve the processes and policies related to the infrastructure and administration of the Cook County Clerk's Office.

Introduction

Upon formation, the Infrastructure and Administration Committee ("Committee") identified its prime areas of focus as:

- **Infrastructure – specifically, the people, processes, policies and technologies of the office, and;**
- **Administration – specifically, the finances, budget and ethics**

These two (2) areas were evaluated through a process of interviews with various supervisors and employees, in-person tours of facilities and offices, as well as a thorough and in-depth review of certain applicable documents. The documentation reviewed included, but was not limited to, budgets, inventory, organizational charts, and risk assessment surveys.

1. Infrastructure

Infrastructure is one of the most vital aspects of any organization, and the Committee's analysis focused on several key areas. The processes that link the information flow between the CCCO's Vital Records Division and the Illinois Department of Public Health ("IDPH") appear to be one of the greatest opportunities for further evaluation to determine the efficiency and precision of its processes. After a review of several reports, the Committee noted that the performance measurements report which is submitted to the Cook County President's Office annually lacked information specific to the efficiency of satellite locations. With respect to reports, the Committee also concluded that the annual risk assessment survey that is submitted to the Office of the County Auditor lacked essential information which resulted in a seemingly incomplete report.

The Committee's analysis also included a review of CCCO inventory and equipment. A review of detailed CCCO IT spreadsheets and application inventories was completed but left unanswered questions regarding the overall short-term and long-term replacement plans for major property and equipment throughout the office. Finally, an analysis of the CCCO Election's division equipment—specifically the scanning hardware and software for that division—resulted in a conclusion that such equipment is at the end of its lifecycle.

Recommendations:

- **Further evaluate satellite offices for capacity and process improvement opportunities, especially as it relates to the impending absorption of CCRD duties which must occur by December 7, 2020.**
- **Review, document and design workflow configurations that ensure the optimization of internal controls within the new CCCO Cashiering System.**

- **Conduct a formal risk assessment that focuses on each major functional division (Elections, Real Estate & Tax Services, IT, Vital Records, Human Resources, Clerk of the Board and Communications) to assist the new administration in identifying and prioritizing significant risks.**
- **Implement a project to harmonize all IT related initiatives and plans that support a long-term replacement plan for major property and equipment.**
- **Plan the purchase and implementation of a formal fixed asset system to track assets by location and user.**
- **Acquire new scanning hardware and software for elections equipment, which should be evaluated, selected and implemented in the near future.**
- **Establish a more robust and complete inventory of property, which should include the regular reconciliation of elections equipment with existing records.**

2. Administration

The Administration for the CCCO is poised to have a smooth transition into the office, in large part because of its familiarity and shared vision with the Clerk herself. However, such a transition will not be without its challenges, as the Committee uncovered in its review that many of the policies and procedures for the office are outdated. Another area of opportunity is that procurements are originated and driven by process owners within individual divisions and departments but there is no universal reconciliation process which corroborates with the budget for actual expenditures. A similar opportunity exists in the acquisition, allocation and tracking of supplies and materials.

The analysis of the Administration also uncovered opportunities related to the reporting of actual filled positions as they correspond to the annual budget. Another budget opportunity includes the litany of compensation

reclassifications which presently contribute to errors within the corporate fund. There appears to be a lack of clarity concerning the process for reviewing activity reports filed by lobbyists within the Ethics Division. However, in spite all of the aforementioned opportunities, the office does boast a refreshing culture of cross-training for various critical functions and tasks throughout the entire CCCO—especially as it pertains to the facilitation of Suburban Cook County elections.

Recommendations:

- **Create office-wide policies and procedures for key operations.** This should include desk procedures (especially for primary data-entry job functions). Additionally, formalize and create cross-training practices and procedures for future employees to take full advantage of.
- **Create a process to perform at least annual inventory of supplies and materials, which should then be utilized to reconcile office records.**
- **Establish a project management team to ensure on-time implementation of IT projects and other projects critical to operations.**
- **Design and implement leadership training for those who take on additional seasonal duties within various divisions throughout the office.**
- **Examine the workflow and create process changes that will assist with the onboarding of new employees, specifically, as it relates to the accuracy and timeliness of budget and actual reporting.**
- **Develop and formalize a process for tracking and reporting on the allocation of seasonal workers to reduce the risk of posting**

errors and the need for the Comptroller to subsequently reclassify such expenditures.

- **Perform a finance review to evaluate the processes and internal controls the CCCO uses that effect financial reporting.**
- **Evaluate the process and workflow related to mandatory lobbyist activity reporting.**

Human Resources & Talent Development

Co-Chairs

Janet Gilbert, Esq. Former Vice President and General Counsel for Wisconsin Central Ltd and CN and current partner in the law firm of Fletcher & Sippel LLC

Chloe Pedersen, Esq. Former Assistant Attorney General, Chief Legal & Labor Counsel for the Cook County Recorder of Deeds, and present Attorney with Fletcher & Sippel LLC

Subcommittee Team Members

Patricia Fallon, Esq. (Member) Former Assistant State's Attorney, Supervisor, Labor & Employment Section, with the Cook County State's Attorney Office, and present Chief of Human Resources for the Cook County Recorder of Deeds

Tom Nowinski, Esq. (Member) Former Labor Counsel with the Cook County Assessor's Office, and present Labor Counsel for the Cook County Recorder of Deeds

Purpose

- 1** To analyze and gain a greater understanding of the human resource management and talent development within the Cook County Clerk's Office.
- 2** Identify strategies or action steps that will maximize and improve the processes and policies related to the Human Resources and Talent Development of the Cook County Clerk's Office.

Introduction

Upon formation, the Human Resources & Talent Development Committee ("Committee") identified its prime areas of focus as:

- **Existing employee policies and procedures;**
- **Collective Bargaining Agreements and general labor/management relations; and**
- **Ordinances or other legal requirements currently imposed on the CCCO.**

These three (3) areas were evaluated partially through a process of interviews with various CCCO staff, and to a much greater extent, through the review of certain applicable documents. The documentation reviewed included, but was not limited to, the following:

- **Limited Job Descriptions;**
- **Available employment related forms and policies;**
- **A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed June 21, 2018, among SEIU Local 73, Cook County and the Cook County Clerk's Office.**
- **Collective Bargaining Agreement between SEIU Local 73 and the Cook County Clerk's Office relating to County Clerk Supervisors covering the time period between December 1, 2017 to November 30, 2020; and**
- **Collective Bargaining Agreement between SEIU Local 73 and Cook County Clerk's Office relating to Administrative Support Staff covering the time period between December 1, 2017 to November 30, 2020.**

1. Employee Policies and Procedures

Completeness of employee policies and procedures is the primary concern of the Committee as it relates to this area of focus. A key component of this area are Job Descriptions, for which there is a major opportunity as currently constituted. Overall, the Committee concluded that as it relates to employee policies and procedures there are several opportunities which await the new Clerk's administration. Accordingly, the following recommendations are provided with a particular sense of urgency to ensure a smooth transition into the CCCO.

Recommendations:

- Within the initial 45 days perform a full assessment of all employee policies and procedures.
- Review any and all Job Descriptions for the purpose of determining which positions will need the development of entirely new descriptions versus simple revisions or updates to other positions.
- Establish a documented process for the review, analysis and development of all new Job Descriptions, as well as pinpoint which employees within the office will be responsible for such a process. **–RECOMMENDATION IS CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS**

2. Collective Bargaining Agreements

Collective Bargaining Agreements ("CBA") are a key facet of the CCCO employment relations. The Committee reviewed two (2) CBAs and one (1) Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") when completing its analysis of this area of the CCCO. The findings were as follows:

Under both CBAs, the Clerk has full authority and responsibility for directing the CCCO's operations, which includes determining policy. However, such

determinations must abide by and be consistent with the specific and express terms of the CBA. These Agreements anticipate that designated representatives of the SEIU Local 73 ("Union") and the Employer will meet at least once per quarter to confer on matters of mutual interest not governed by the grievance procedures (considered a Labor-Management Committee). Additionally, both CBAs require the Clerk to maintain Job Descriptions for each position within the bargaining unit and provide a copy to each new employee, as well as any employee holding the position upon request.

The CBAs also require at least six (6) months advanced notice of any proposed technical change in the operation of the office which will have a significant effect on the employees within that particular unit and/or division. The Clerk must provide the Union with sufficient and reasonable training opportunities for the bargaining unit employees so as to ensure that any new positions created as a result of the change which may require new job skills or knowledge can first be potentially filled by bargaining unit employees.

Other key findings included the following:

Collective Bargaining Agreement Between Local 73 Service Employees International Union (S.E.I.U.) AFL-CIO and County of Cook/Cook County Clerk (as Joint Employers) for Administrative Support Staff

The current CBA has a term effective from December 17, 2017 through November 30, 2020. The Agreement automatically renews year to year unless either party gives notice to the other not less than 90 calendar days prior to the anniversary date that the party wants to modify or terminate the CBA.

Employees covered by this CBA (excluding confidential employees, supervisors, managers, seasonal employees and personnel department employees) are: (a) Grade 11: Accountant I, Clerk V (upgrade to Administrative Assistant I), and Tax Examiner III; (b) Grade 12: Administrative Assistant I, Cashier III, Clerk V; (c) Grade 13: Accountant II, Stenographer V, Tax Examiner IV; (d) Grade 14: Administrative Assistant II, Bookkeeper IV, Tax Examiner IV; (e) Grade 15: Election Support Clerk V, Vital Records Clerk V; (f) Grade

16: Administrative Assistant III, (g) Grade 18: Administrative Assistant IV.

Collective Bargaining Agreement Between Local 73 Service Employees International Union (S.E.I.U.) AFL-CIO and County of Cook/Cook County Clerk (as Joint Employers) for County Clerk Supervisors

The current CBA has a term effective from December 17, 2017 through November 30, 2020. The Agreement automatically renews year to year unless either party gives notice to the other not less than 90 calendar days prior to the anniversary date that the party wants to modify or terminate the CBA.

The employees covered by this CBA (excluding confidential employees, supervisors, managers, seasonal employees and personnel department employees) are: (a) Grade 18: Vital Records Supervisor I, Election Division/Warehouse Supervisor I; and (b) Grade 19: Vital Records, Tax Services and Election Division Administrative Support VII.

Memorandum of Understanding Among Local 73, Cook County and the Cook County Clerk Regarding Future Part-Time and Seasonal Employees

On June 21, 2018, as settlement of a petition filed by the Union before the Illinois Labor Relations Board, the County, the Clerk and Local 73 entered into a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") to add to the current CBA future part-time and seasonal employees in the Clerk's Office who work at least 60 calendar days in three (3) out of the last four (4) elections. The MOU includes provisions for wages, discipline, grievance, layoff, full-time employment opportunity, accruing sick time, etc. but also acknowledges that employees covered by the MOU will not be eligible for benefits (health insurance, holidays, vacation, sick leave not covered by the MOU, personal days, or overtime not covered by law), have rights not specifically set forth in the MOU, or be subject to other terms and conditions of either CBA.

Recommendations:

- Locate all Job Descriptions as soon as possible and determine which descriptions are adequate versus which ones should be updated, or replaced completely with brand new Job Descriptions. **–RECOMMENDATION CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS**
- Conduct a compliance review of the MOU to identify all temporary staff subject to the MOU and ensure the CCCO is in compliance with it. Additionally, the Human Resources Department ("HRD") should also review all procedures related to temporary employees and ensure that complete records are maintained to determine the date on which such temporary employees are hired, which processes are in effect to ensure proper payroll of such employees, which benefits are applicable, whether such employees are eligible or subject to the participation and membership with the SEIU MOU, and most importantly, which policies and procedures best meet this "temporary" class of employee.
- Establish a documented process for the updating of all CCCO Job Descriptions, and pinpoint who will complete that process. **–RECOMMENDATION CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS**

3. Ordinances and Other Legal Requirements

The CCCO is governed by several Ordinances and statutes which derive from many different legislative bodies. Due to the intrinsic legal nature of Human Resources and Labor Relations, it is to be expected that there are various court orders and other mandates related to employment policies and procedures within the CCCO. At the time of this analysis, such documents were less than clear, but believed to exist nonetheless. Accordingly, the specific recommendation related to this area is very simple, and is as follows:

Recommendations:

- Locate all Statutes, Ordinances, Laws, Court Orders or Agreements which govern and/or regulate the CCCO and consolidate them into a single location which is accessible and available for all CCCO staff as quickly as possible.

Elections

Co-Chairs

Edmund Michalowski, Esq. Former Labor Counsel for the Cook County Recorder of Deeds, and present Deputy Clerk of Elections with the Cook County Clerk's Office

James "Jim" Gleffe, Esq. Former Chief Legal Counsel for the Cook County Recorder of Deeds, and present Chief Deputy Recorder of the Cook County Recorder of Deeds

Subcommittee Team Members

Noah Praetz, Esq. (Member) Former Deputy Clerk of Elections with the Cook County Clerk's Office

Vito Battaglia, (Advisor) Public Relations Consultant for Clerk Yarbrough's Transition Team, Courtroom Clerk for the Clerk of the Circuit Court – Law Division

Cassandra Matz, (Member) Former Chief of Staff - Illinois State Senator, Present Owner/Managing Broker of CJREDD Realty, Inc and Olympia Fields Trustee

Purpose

- 1** To analyze and gain a greater understanding of the facilitation of all Suburban Cook County elections for which the Cook County Clerk's Office is responsible for.
- 2** Identify strategies or action steps that will maximize and improve the Elections Division of the Cook County Clerk's Office.

Introduction

The CCCO implements Suburban Cook County Elections. The value of the right to vote is essential in defining the American Dream. Unfortunately, recent history has shown that voter suppression tactics continues to be an issue across the nation. Just as voting is part of our American heritage, voter disenfranchisement is as equally intertwined, and creates the troubling side of that history. Historically, large segments of our population have not had the right to vote based on race, gender and/or the payment of taxes. Creating a system that promotes voter engagement regardless of party affiliation or differences within party brand is a key responsibility and duty of the CCCO. Karen A. Yarbrough, is committed to being a zealous advocate for the protection of all voter rights. She intends to execute on this goal by establishing a strategy to increase voter engagement, improve election security and leverage election technology. Additionally, candidates for public office rely on the CCCO to ensure all legal requirements for ballot access are enforced equitably, which is another key priority for the current Clerk.

The Elections Committee ("Committee") performed an in-depth analysis of the CCCO Elections Division, and targeted four (4) key areas of review which are as follows:

- **Increase Voter Engagement, specifically by leveraging Early Voting, Mail Voting, and the opportunities to increase and reinvent how Voter Registration Occurs;**
- **Election Security, and specifically, guarding against Voter Fraud and Electioneering;**
- **Modernization of existing CCCO Voting Equipment; and**
- **Focus on Ballot Access, and ways to improve the process for becoming a potential candidate.**

The over 1,500,000 voters can cast their ballots in person on election day or by early voting. In addition, voters can cast their ballot by mail. Voter registration and voter turnout have increased based on statistical data presented after the 2018 Gubernatorial Election.

The security of elections is of a paramount concern and real threats to the election infrastructure exist by foreign governments, foreign entities, and domestic entities. The continued need to support election security with resources and best practices are imperative to protect the security of elections and enhance public belief that elections results are true and accurate.

Current voting equipment is in process of replacement. The April 2019 elections will allow the testing of new equipment in three (3) of the 30 suburban Townships. The new equipment is necessary as it will replace failing and/or outdated election equipment while leveraging new technology and suppling enhanced security. Additional technological enhancements are planned for managing election equipment inventory and election day help desk needs. Additional technological enhancements are being considered for the collection of signatures for petitions for candidacy.

1. Increase Voter Engagement

Voter Engagement in the 2018 Gubernatorial Election was robust. More ballots were cast, more people participated in Early Voting; more residents registered to vote; and the registered voter turnout was higher than in any

previous Gubernatorial Election in Suburban Cook County. The increase in voting opportunities correlated with increased voter turnout. Early voting has increased from 83,000 in 2010 to 255,000 in 2018. Additionally, Mail Voting has increased from 25,000 in 2010 to 95,000 in 2018. Building on Vote By Mail numbers will require a commitment from the CCCO. Accordingly, recommendations to achieve such an increase are as follows:

Recommendations:

- Continue to market Early Voting and Select Early Voting Sites that provide the greatest amount of access for all voters.
- Provide voters an opportunity to “opt-in” to a mail ballot so as to provide voters a mail ballot for not only the specifically requested election, but all future elections on a continual basis.

2. Improve Election Security

Most voters are very concerned about Election Security, Voter Fraud & Electioneering in Cook County. Because of that fact, the new Clerk of Cook County is committed to placing a heavy emphasis on improving Election Security, fighting Voter Fraud and Electioneering which is capable of occurring equally throughout any and every part of Suburban Cook County. With that understanding, the Committee recommends such an imperative aspect of the Clerk’s responsibilities be addressed by implementing the following recommendations:

Recommendations:

- Create a process, training program and resources that both enable and require Election staff to share threats related to elections—including but not limited to claims of Voter Fraud and Electioneering before, during and after the actual Suburban Election. –**RECOMMENDATION CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS**
- Request increased funding for Election Infrastructure Security.

- Continue to utilize, and perhaps increase, the frequency of Public Audits.
- Introduce new voting equipment that provides a paper ballot in addition to the digital image which is tied to that paper ballot that has been cast. –**RECOMMENDATION CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS**
- Upgrade the monitoring on all election networks by utilizing the industry accepted approach of “Defend”, “Detect”, and “Recover”. This includes Defending through the use of experts engaged to thwart outside Cybersecurity threats, as well as the utilization of as many free or reduced cost local, state and federal tools as possible. Detect each vulnerability point, while validating all data sources. Finally, plan a Recovery plan for every point of vulnerability and perform risk-limiting audits.

3. Modernization of Existing CCCO Voting Equipment

The equipment used to cast one’s vote is in many ways the most important tool required to ensure the maintenance of our institution of Democracy. Accordingly, the CCCO must always maintain a commitment to most capable and effective equipment used in the facilitation of Suburban Cook County Elections. Accordingly, the Committee recommends the following actions be taken as it relates to the existing Voting Equipment used by the CCCO:

Recommendations:

- Rigorously test the vulnerabilities and opportunities of the new Voting Equipment which is set to be tested in specific townships during the April 2019 Consolidated Election. –**RECOMMENDATION CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS**

- Continue to troubleshoot current Voting Equipment which will be used for the non-test jurisdictions during the April 2019 Consolidated Election, for the primary purpose of ensuring there is an appropriate contingency plan in place in the event the new equipment fails to perform as desired and/or required.
–**RECOMMENDATION CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS**
- Manage required e-Pollbook enhancements required to active touch screen voting with new voting election technology. –
THIS RECOMMENDATION CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS
- Solicit the opportunity to secure additional election equipment/software for an asset tracking software program to reconcile all election equipment in a single program/location.
- Bolster election day assistance, including but not limited to, increasing the help desk support available direct to precincts or other remote operations while continuing to leverage current hardware and staffing.

- Review technology from other states, including but not limited to recent jurisdictions in Colorado and Washington D.C., in an effort to increase the percentage of valid signatures which are presented.
- Create additional informational resources which further explain how to comply with candidate petitions and the process required to gain inclusion on the ballot.
- Create an exploratory committee to study the financial cost and logistical challenges involved with acquiring the candidate filing process and Electoral Board challenge process for all Suburban Cook County municipal elections, including, but not limited to Mayor and/or Village President, Village Clerk and/or Trustees, which are currently handled by the individual municipality.

4. Improve the Process to Obtain Access to the Ballot

Gaining access to the ballot is a key priority of the new Clerk, as she has personally experienced the challenges which accompany simply earning a spot on that ballot. Many current candidates for public office fail to leverage software for the collection of nomination petitions, which presently requires the use of nomination signatures being affixed to the physical paper. As a result of these opportunities, the Committee recommends the following:

Recommendations:

- Explore the possibility of Candidate Petition collection using software and hardware that could verify the proposed signature as valid for the specific candidate, and possibly track the actual progress of candidate workers while using GPS time-stamped technology.

Real Estate & Tax Services

Co-Chairs

Carolyn Wilhight, CPA Former Deputy Recorder for Finance with the Cook County Recorder of Deeds and present Deputy Clerk Real Estate, Tax Services & Chief Financial Officer with the Cook County Clerk's Office

Tatia Gibbons, Esq., Former Deputy Clerk of Real Estate & Tax Services for the Cook County Clerk's Office. and present Legal Counsel with Cook County Assessor's Office

Subcommittee Team Members

Larry Brannon (Member), Forensic accounting, internal audit and management advisory consultant. Former forensic auditor with the Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Director with KPMG and Internal Audit Manager with Sara Lee Corporation

Purpose

- 1** To analyze and gain a greater understanding of the Real Estate & Tax Services Division within the Cook County Clerk's Office.
- 2** Identify strategies or action steps that will maximize and improve the processes and policies related to the Real Estate & Tax Services Division of the Cook County Clerk's Office.

Introduction

Upon formation, the Real Estate & Tax Services Committee ("Committee") identified its prime areas of focus as:

- **Organizational structure of the division and the impending two (2) major technical projects of, 1) New County Integrated Property Tax System ("IPTS"), and 2) An Integrated Accounting, Cashiering, and Enterprise Content Management Solution for Cashiering, Collections and Payables.**
- **Time-sensitive timetables that govern the division, as well as the cyclical nature of the division.**

1. Organizational Structure & Two Impending Projects

The Real Estate & Tax Services (RE&TS) Division of the CCCO is a major component of that office. Home to more than 60 full-time budgeted employees, it is a robust operation in and of itself. The division's operations consist of four primary areas which breakdown as follows:

Mapping & Tax Extensions – which focus on the collection and review of tax levy submissions from local governments and taxing districts throughout Cook County. In addition, the unit creates the required geographical information system updates.

Tax Redemption – which focuses on the collection of outstanding property taxes which have past due beyond a year. Additionally, it manages both the standard annual tax sale as well as the odd-year Scavenger sale.

Cashiering & Customer Service – which focuses on the actual collection of tax payments as well as working with tax payers who have questions and inquiries related to all outstanding property tax balances and payments.

Accounting – which focuses on the back-office financial responsibilities for not only the RE&TS division, but also the entire CCCO. Such accounting also encompasses all Satellite locations which include all of the Suburban Courthouses and the Maybrook stand-alone operation.

The Committee also focused on gaining a better understanding of the two (2) impending major technical projects, which are as follows:

- New County Integrated Property Tax Systems (IPTS-Vendor is Tyler), which is in the developmental stages with deployment dates pushed back due to the delayed project implementation with other key Cook County Agencies, namely, the Cook County Treasurer's Office which is scheduled for Fiscal Year 2020.
- Integrated Accounting, Cashiering and Enterprise Content Management Solution for Cashiering, Collections and Payables. This system will replace the existing ten (10)-year old comprehensive Cashiering, Accounting and General Ledger System which presently handles all financial responsibilities within the CCCO, and provide iNovah Revenue Management and Cashiering Systems with OnBase Content Management capabilities that will interface to the County's Enterprise Accounting System-Oracle eBusiness Suite.

Other key observations as it relates to the organizational structure and processes within the RE&TS Division included the following:

- Internal and external forms lack clarity concerning both the functionality and user-friendliness.
- Reviewed Accounting operations that relate to preventative and detectable controls necessary to ensure consistency with industry

best-practices to minimize the chance of financial misstatements and/or losses.

- Presently the Security Department is housed within the RE&TS Division, with the staff managed by the Tax Redemption Manager.
- Opportunities concerning financial security throughout the office.
- Lack of clear division between the Front-Line Cashiering Staff and Back-Office Finance and Accounting Staff members.
- Reviewed Accounting balancing procedures and processes to ensure industry best-practices are being utilized to mitigate financial risk and losses.
- Call routing within the division is an opportunity, as presently there are customer service-related calls which are frequently directed to the Accounting section of the division.
- Hardware and technological opportunities, specifically computer and peripheral-related deficiencies that impede the ability of some staff to perform their job duties in a timely and efficient manner.
- Significant number of customer refunds, both for Tax Services and Vital Records which consistently impacts CCCO revenue.

Recommendations:

- **Identify subject matter experts for each, or both, technical project to ensure the projects are completed efficiently and data is converted accurately. –RECOMMENDATION CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS**
- **Redesign forms after consulting with employees who better understand what each form is used for, and what elements**

should be included in order to ensure the most effective forms possible. –**RECOMMENDATION CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS**

- Establish internal project timelines that align with the IPTS project to ensure completion in a timely manner.
- Perform a full financial review to address the overall accounting processes and procedures to ensure all financial risk is mitigated and adequate controls are in place.
- Establish standardized accounting, collection, balancing, and reporting procedures for all Accounting functions (including, but not limited for the Satellites, Vital Records and RE&TS).
- Realign and restructure the Accounting Department, including establishing a dedicated Accounting Manager who will oversee both the Frontline Cashiers and Finance Team.
- Establish a Tax Division Records Management Liaison to work with designated EOC Records Management Liaison to efficiently track, monitor and manage the Records Management processes related to Applications and Certificate specifically.
- Update key financial control information.
- Restructure the call-flow and create dedicated processes for fielding Customer Service inquiries.
- Continue to work on the development of the Accounting system software replacement and work towards the elimination of manual processes as soon as possible.
- Implement updated computers and related peripherals, so as to ensure staff have appropriate resources to perform their job duties in a timely and efficient manner.

- Conduct Reconciliation to identify effective funding allocations to reduce unnecessary refunds.

2. Tax Redemption & Tax Levy Timetables & Timelines

The GIS, Mapping, Tax Extension & Tax Redemption portion of the office consistently has high-traffic and customer volume periods of the year due to the nature of the work they perform.

The Tax Extension Department typically experiences peak customer volume during the four-month period between the end of December to the end of April due to the required acceptance and review of all tax levy submissions from all taxing bodies throughout Cook County. The Tax Extension Department is charged with the responsibility of reviewing and approving the levies which are used to collect municipal revenue associated with real estate property taxes. It is during this time that the Tax Extension Department determines the rate needed per every \$100.00 of taxable value to generate the requested revenue, based on the value of all taxable property within the district's boundaries. Such a responsibility requires the utmost commitment to accuracy and must be completed in a timely manner to ensure that all taxing bodies can be notified as quickly as possible to make any and all necessary adjustments.

In addition to the high-volume time period for the Tax Extension Department, the Tax Redemption section of the office also experiences peak periods throughout the year depending on a number of factors. These periods fluctuate based on whether it is an even or odd year, as during odd years, the unit is responsible for playing a pivotal role in the management of the Scavenger Sale. However, even when it is not an odd year, the Tax Redemption Department is responsible for managing the Annual Tax Sale, which has many peaks and valleys throughout the year.

Recommendations:

- Create standard forms which explicitly reference the statutory provision of the Property Tax Code which applies to the

purpose of the form. –**RECOMMENDATION CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS**

- Create documented Standard Operation Procedure (“SOP”) manual which outline each and every step of the Tax Purchasing process as it relates to the CCCO.
- Document the complete Tax Purchasing process as it pertains and relates to the Real Estate & Tax Services Division and provide in-depth training and step-by-step resources (i.e. Systems, Log Books, etc.).
- Streamline the administrative processing components of the Tax Purchasing process.
- Coordinate a separate security department which reports to the Deputy Clerk of Security and includes additional staff.
- Redesign and otherwise implement security cameras and surveillance systems throughout the division.

Vital Records

Co-Chairs

James “Jim” Gleffe, Esq. Former Chief Legal Counsel for the Cook County Recorder of Deeds & present Chief Deputy Clerk with the Cook County Recorder of Deeds

Erica Sanchez, Former Executive Assistant to the Chief Deputy Clerk for the Cook County Recorder of Deeds & present Director of Vital Records with the Cook County Clerk’s Office

Subcommittee Team Members

State Representative Lou Lang (Member), Former Illinois State Representative for the 16th District with the Illinois House of Representatives

Connie Myers (Member), Former Deputy Clerk of Vital Records with the Cook County Clerk’s Office

Purpose

- 1** To analyze and gain a greater understanding of the Vital Records Division within the Cook County Clerk’s Office.
- 2** Identify strategies or action steps that will maximize and improve the processes and policies related to the Vital Records Division of the Cook County Clerk’s Office.

Introduction

Upon formation, the Vital Records (“VR”) Committee identified its prime areas of focus as:

- **Customer Service, including the opportunity to improve Genealogical product offerings; and**
- **Employee and Labor Relations, including the opportunity to improve synergy between the Satellite Offices**

The Committee analyzed various operations within the VR, which maintains and provides access to birth, death, marriage, assumed business names and notary commission records for all of Cook County. This Division consists of not just the downtown Chicago location, but all five satellite locations throughout the county comprised of more than 80 budgeted full-time employees.

For the purposes of this process an analysis of the VR operations was conducted, which consisted of interviews of various supervisors, leads and employees which resulted in the following findings and subsequent recommendations.

1. Customer Service, Genealogy & Processes

The VR Division is by far the division which is most frequently visited by customers of all of the CCCO Divisions. Such a fact creates numerous challenges and opportunities with respect to the execution of the new Clerk, Karen A. Yarbrough's mission of efficiency and accuracy in the maintenance and issuance of the various vital records.

A key opportunity within the division includes the lack of a customer service representative who exclusively fields telephone calls into the division. Such a void results in numerous employees who are assigned to different tasks and responsibilities throughout the department to take time away from those

responsibilities to either receive or return earlier customer phone calls and message requests. This lack of a dedicated phone representative adversely impacts employee work performance throughout the division and creates a major risk of a reduced customer experience due to the lack of efficient and timely responses to phone inquiries.

Another area of opportunity as it relates to customer service is the less than user-friendly and robust Genealogy section of the CCCO's website. Such an opportunity is important because the improvement of this section could result in a major increase in revenue for the office. Updated records, search parameters, and order tracking are a few of the elements which were readily apparent and in need of improvement during the initial review. Such deficiencies directly translate to a less than stellar customer service experience and make it more challenging to acquire such documents from the CCCO website.

Yet another distinct and looming opportunity within the VR division was the substantial mail-order document request backlog, which at the time of publication was close to five-weeks behind. Such an opportunity was due to a lack of a clear and defined workflow which was necessary to proficiently process mail orders.

One final observation as it relates to the VR division's customer experience pertains to the wait-time newly commissioned notaries endure when utilizing that process. Presently, the Illinois Secretary of State takes a minimum of one (1) week to transfer the necessary data to the CCCO. Such a lag impacts a substantial number of customers, as in 2017, 15,744 Certifications were processed by the VR Division, and in 2018, that number increased to 16,151.

Despite the various areas of opportunity throughout the division, the Committee believes all of these aspects can easily be rectified by executing on the following recommendations:

Recommendations:

- **Identify two (2) to three (3) employees who will serve as dedicated telephone customer service representatives, who**

will provide accurate information to customers in need of assistance with vital records via the various platforms.

- Upload the nearly four (4) million records to the CCCO Genealogy website and create search parameters that will assist customers in better identifying and navigating to the desired document. – **RECOMMENDATION CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS**
- Create a defined mail-order workflow which improves the separation of all requests into functional categories. Additionally, assign a minimum of five (5) employees to this workflow area and set a goal of processing all mail-order requests between three (3) and five (5) days. – **RECOMMENDATION IS CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS**
- Transition to a web-based notary public data transfer program which communicates with the Illinois Secretary of State's database. Such a transition would allow for real-time data sharing and virtually eliminate the present day one (1)-week waiting period for all new commissions.
- Work with the Illinois Secretary of State to establish a process for them to print their own Notary Commission Certificates.

2. Employee & Labor Relations, and Satellite Synergy

Due to the large number of budgeted full-time employees, the VR Division is one of the most challenging areas with respect to Employee & Labor Relations. Couple the large employee count with the fact that close to half of those employees are spread out throughout the CCCO's five (5) Satellite offices, and that makes for a very challenging and disjointed employee and labor relation experience. A major area of opportunity with employee and labor relations is the seeming lack of accountability concerning behaviors, processes and expectations throughout the division. In order to address this area of opportunity, the Committee recommends the following:

Recommendations:

- Work with the Administration to quickly develop and disseminate a uniform policy and procedure manual which can be coached on prior to holding all employees accountable to uniformity.
- Develop a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) manual for all processes within the VR Division, and provide training to all staff—especially the Satellites—to ensure uniform and consistent practices throughout the division.
- Conduct a full audit of the VR Division's finance office.
- Establish regular Satellite conference calls and communication forums where concerns, recognition and needs can be voiced collectively.

Conclusions

The transition from one administration to another is an important event in government, especially an office that safeguards vital records like birth, death, and voting history.

While the Transition of the Yarbrough Administration has been successful, with recommendations already in process, it is merely the beginning.

A successful government office requires a willingness to listen, learn and change. That means making all important data public, and working with members of the community, voter protection organizations, and other elected officials to keep government accountable to the people.

Clerk Karen A. Yarbrough is committed to her mission of Advocacy, Cybersecurity and Accountability. She will continue to look for ways to reduce costs while expanding services. She is mindful that the next transition she must preside over, the Clerk's assumption of all the duties of an entirely separate office, the Recorder of Deeds, will be the fulfilment of a promise she made to voters.

Special Thanks:

Stan Watkins, Retired Chief of Staff in the Office of U.S. Representative Bobby L. Rush (D-IL), current President/CEO of Thomas Windom Group, Inc., a public policy, government affairs and political consulting firm

Jamica Davis, Former Special Assistant to the Recorder of Deeds for Government Affairs, present Special Assistant to the Clerk for Government Affairs

