



FINAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN REPORT FOR  
THE COOK COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE'S  
ASSUMPTION OF THE RECORDER OF DEEDS OFFICE

“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 7, 2020?”

**K**aren Yarbrough was elected in 2018 as the Cook County Clerk at a time when the voters had overwhelmingly voted to empower the Clerk's office to assume the duties of the Recorder of Deeds—with the expectation to save taxpayer dollars. With this mandate, Clerk Yarbrough entered office with a mission to a modernize, professionalize, and create a forward-thinking governmental office. She is uniquely positioned to helm the assumption of duties having spent the prior 6 years as the Recorder of Deeds.



PROFESSIONALISM



MODERNIZATION

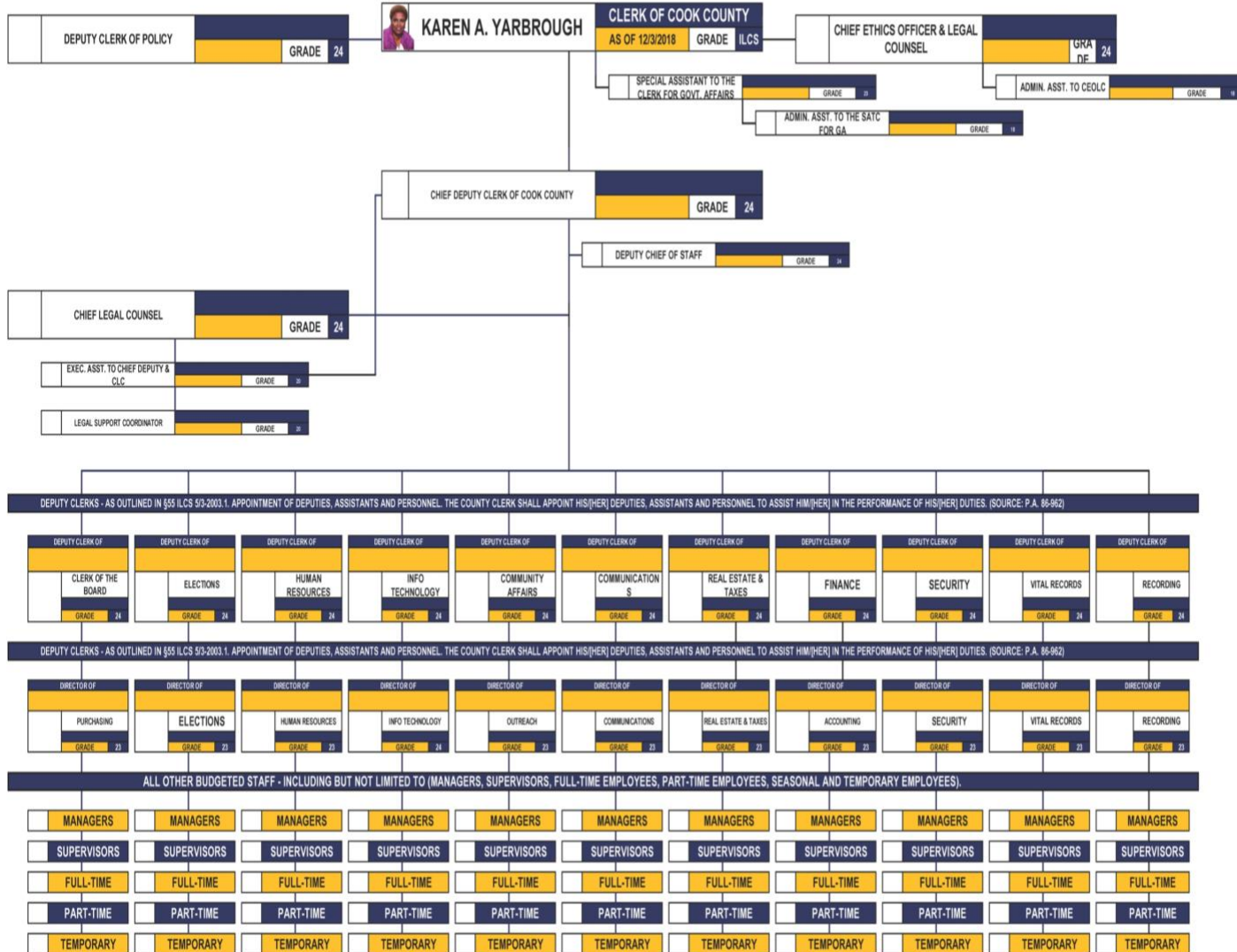


FORWARD-THINKING



# KAREN A. YARBROUGH | COOK COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

## DECEMBER 7, 2020 ORGANIZATIONAL CHART \*\*\*



## DEPARTMENT OF RECORDING FUNCTIONS

**CORE FUNCTIONS:** The Recorder of Deeds Office accurately records, stores, and maintains land records and other official documents in perpetuity for public and private use, facilitating home ownership and mortgage lending. The Recorder's Office also provides access to this information in an accurate, efficient, and courteous manner. These functions will be absorbed by the Clerk's Office at the end of FY 2020.

The newly conceptualized Recording Department will assume the crux of the recording functions but in a more efficient, streamlined manner, with an emphasis on e-Recording solutions. E-Recording is the process where customers electronically submit documents for processing via internet, eliminating expenses for direct drop off or mail fees. Currently, only real estate professionals with a high number of recording submissions are able to avail themselves to e-recording. The Clerk's Office is working to develop a new e-recording platform which would allow all customers the ability to submit their documents electronically to be recorded. The Recorder's office has seen a steady increase in e-Recordings in recent years. For the FY 2020, E-Recordings accounted for over 66% of overall recordings. In addition, indexing services, which can be done by private companies in a more efficient and accurate manner, will be outsourced to a vendor following procurement guidelines. Indeed, there are companies that already index recording information in furtherance of their own business purposes.

The Recorder of Deeds also has a Property Fraud unit and a Veteran's Service office. The functions of the Property Fraud unit and the Veterans Service office will be assumed by the Clerk's Legal and Communications departments, respectively.

## PHYSICAL SPACE REALLOTMENT

In conjunction with the President's Office and the Cook County Bureau of Asset Management, the Clerk will reallocate physical space upon the assumption of the duties.

### Vital Records

Vital Records provides death, birth, and marriage certificates to the public. Because of its significant public facing component, a determination has been made to move Vital Records from a below-street level location to a more prominent location, the first floor of 118 N. Clark, where the Recorder of Deeds operations currently exists. The Vital Records Department and the newly absorbed Recording Department will co-exist in a newly renovated space in Room 120.

### Elections

The Clerk will vacate its election operations on the lower level of 69 W. Washington Street and move these operations to the 5<sup>th</sup> Floor.

#### Administrative Offices

Currently, the Administrative offices of the Cook County Clerk's office is located on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of 69 W. Washington Street. With the assumption of Recorder of Deeds administrative functions, the Clerk's administrative office will relocate to the 118 N. Clark Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor where the current Recorder of Deeds administrative offices currently reside. The IT Department will then vacate its operations on the 14<sup>th</sup> Floor of 69 W. Washington Street and relocate to the 118 N. Clark Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor.

### BENEFITS TO TAXPAYERS

#### → Ease of obtaining Vital Records

→ Reduction in leasing & overhead fees at Daley Center. SAVINGS of **\$275,000/year**.

→ Ability to release space on the Lower Level and 14<sup>th</sup> Floor of 69 W. Washington Street at a rate of \$30/square foot per year. Potential revenue **\$123,660** (4122 sq ft).

### **UPDATING & ENHANCING TECHNOLOGY**

In the upcoming years, the newly formed Clerk's office intends to update and enhance technology to increase efficiencies and streamline operations, with the expectation that the public will receive better customer service in terms of quicker turnaround times and more user-friendly interfaces.

#### Integrating Technology Functions

→ The Clerk's current cybersecurity monitoring practices have been expanded to include the Recorder of Deeds' networks.

→ Utilize the same Point of Sale (Cashiering) and Document Management Technology Platforms. The Clerk's Office has procured new point of sale (collection) and document management systems, which will be used in Recording functions.

→ Use of the Clerk's "ClerkIT" trouble ticket system for reporting and managing IT issues.

→ Integration of Recorder of Deeds hardware inventory into Clerk's hardware inventory.

→ Integration of the networks—including the physical networks, email systems, access control systems and governance procedures.

## New Initiatives

- Development of the new system with OCR-Indexing functionality.
- Website integration will require additional review. The two websites are not currently compatible. Short term workarounds include using a link between each homepage for public accessibility. Requests for costs for website integration has been made.
- Replacement of outdated Recorder of Deeds hardware.
- Examining the possibility of offloading some of the cashiering functions with an expansion of the recording website.

## **TEAM BUILDING & STRATEGIC PERSONNEL INTEGRATION**

FY 2020 Recorder Full Time Positions: 121  
FY 2020 Clerk Full Time Positions: 265  
FY 2020 FULL TIME POSITION TOTAL: 386

FY 2021 Assumption-related positions: 77  
FY 2021 Clerk Full Time Positions: 244

**FY 2021 FULL TIME POSITIONS TOTAL: 321 (Reduction of 65 overall positions)**

During the planning for this assumption of duties, a review of recording operations, workflow processes, and management approaches were made with an eye to meet these desired cost-savings, while maintaining customer service. Automation and enhanced technological improvements require a skilled, experienced, and agile workforce that can meet the demands of the newly conceptualized recording operations. In addition, the Committee seeks to eliminate outdated job qualifications, such as the requirement to use a typewriter where typewriters are no longer used, or frivolous practices, such as a job description where the employee can only open US postal service mail but not packages from Federal Express. To this end, all recording-related positions have been updated in a manner that would have staff working on all aspects of the recording process instead of smaller siloed parts of the process.

The Committee recognizes the significant concerns and distress of the current Recorder of Deeds personnel. The Committee must consider these interests with the public interest in qualified and capable government workers. The posting of the newly created recording-related positions balances these concerns, with the priority in awarding government work to the most qualified applicant. It is the expectation of the Committee that many current Recorder of Deeds personnel will prevail in their application for the newly created positions given their experience.

With the assistance of a staffing consultant, the Clerk's HR Department will post, process, and hire for newly created positions.

Onboarding plans and culture integration efforts will be developed in anticipation for the December assumption deadline.

### **FINANCIAL AND TRANSACTIONAL SOUNDNESS**

The seamless absorption of the financial and transactional operations of the Recorder of Deeds is a priority for the Committee. The Clerk’s Chief Financial Officer previously served as the Recorder’s Chief Financial Officer and, therefore, is well suited to ensure a successful assumption. Financial schematics for banking services and the consolidated budget have been developed.

→ Utilize Great Plains, the accounting/general ledger system currently employed in the Clerk’s office, for accounting services relating to recording functions.

→ Continue to negotiate with banks for better rates due to higher volume of services because of additional funds generated by recording functions.

#### FY2020 Recorder of Deeds Budget

Full Time Positions 121  
Total Funds Budget \$12,520,191  
Personnel Budget (\$5,961,206)

#### FY 2020 Clerk Budget

Full Time Positions 265  
Total Funds Budget \$45,550,478  
Personnel Budget (\$11,103,922)

#### FY2021 New Clerk

Full Time Positions 321 (Reduction of 65 FTE)  
FY 2021 Corporate Fund (Consolidated Budget)

Expenditure Requested: \$19.7 Million

Expenditure Target: \*\$18.2 Million

Our projected savings based upon our consolidation plan restructuring is \$1.45 M in FY2021 and \$6.7 M over the next three years.

\*We are working diligently to meet the suggested target.