



# **KAREN A. YARBROUGH**

COOK COUNTY RECORDER OF DEEDS

**“ACCURACY – EFFICIENCY – ADVOCACY”**

## CCRD BUDGET PRESENTATION – 10/20/14

I appreciate the opportunity to update you on our good stewardship of public dollars, and show how we are working to do more with less.

Our vision for the Recorder of Deeds Office can be summed up in three words: **Accuracy, Efficiency and Advocacy**.

- As keepers of the public record, our foremost statutory duty is to ensure that what is presented to us is **accurately** recorded and indexed in a way that improves and supports the housing market.
- As a government office responsible to taxpayers, it is also important that we do so as **efficiently** as possible, using only the resources needed to get the job done.
- As you know, I actively **advocate** taxpayer and property-owner needs before the General Assembly in Springfield, and was able to pass 3 state laws and 2 County Ordinances that will allow us to assist victims of recording fraud and punish fraudsters.

As we enter our third budget year of my Administration, I want you to know that we are more focused than ever on the efficient use of resources.

**I also want to stress what you already know:** the revenues we bring in are based almost entirely on economic factors outside of our control. CCRD is not like a retail store that can think of exciting, new promotions to increase revenue. That being said, we are aggressively pursuing revenue-sharing arrangements to market our data, and anticipate over \$2 million as a result.

Ultimately, where we find ourselves today is a reflection of a national trend of declining home sales and declining foreclosures. While I do promote programs like ***Welcome Home Illinois*** that encourage and incentivize people to buy a home, ultimately it is the consumer's confidence and ability to take

## **CCRD BUDGET PRESENTATION – 10/20/14**

on the purchase of a home that determines our revenue. **Also, the extreme weather we experienced at the beginning of 2014 had a large impact on the real estate market.**

Regardless of this, it is my duty to make sure our office is ready for today, **and** ready for tomorrow, when the economy comes back fully. Our hardware and core recording software application, which has not been updated in 11 years, will be our focus as we invest in efficient and modern resources.

## CCRD BUDGET PRESENTATION – 10/20/14

### OUR BUDGET REQUEST

To ensure that our actions match our words, consider these 6 highlights:

1. Our Corporate Operating Budget request is 4.1% less than we asked for last year.
2. In response to a request to reduce vacant positions, our FTE positions from Corporate Fund 130 in our request represent a 20% reduction from *FY 2013 Adopted*. We also did a realignment of positions and the respective funds from which they are paid to better reflect their duties and functions.
3. We are only hiring where absolutely needed, and relying on savings through retirement attrition.
4. We are being aggressive in pursuing revenue-sharing arrangements.
5. We are implementing aggressive internal procedures for regulating inventory and purchasing. From FY 2014 to FY 2015 we have made an additional reduction in our supplies and materials request by 13.4 %. Additionally, the supplies and materials lines from Fund 527 and 570 have been reduced 14 and 20 percent respectively. We have excellent monitoring controls in place to limit waste and obsolescence.
6. Our FY 2015 Capital Request reflects the approval for moving forward with our Core Application project. We are in need of this as we have outdated processing equipment which results in increased maintenance cost. This can be reduced once a new system and equipment are implemented.

## CCRD BUDGET PRESENTATION – 10/20/14

### OUR PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

Now that we've talked about how our Budget Request reflects our values, I want to update you on some of our bigger plans for 2015.

- **Recording Efficiency:** We have successfully advocated for a change in state law to allow land conveyance documents to be electronically recorded, (otherwise known as E-Recording). This will ensure accurate tax revenues are collected on the front end, minimizing the need and cost of collection efforts. This change, which the County Board recently voted to help implement, will also save paper and staff time.
- **System Upgrade:** Our recording software system, which we call our "core application," has not been updated in over 10 years. As a result of many hodgepodge modifications over the years, the database is essentially unusable as far as offering us metrics we can use to better promote revenue-generating products. We are close to issuing a RFP that should be awarded in 2015.
- **Workflow:** Based on our Workflow Audit, we will be aggressively implementing changes in the way we perform our daily operations. This will eliminate redundancies, unneeded paper and supplies, and free up staff to focus on our core operations and bringing the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Recorder's Office into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This is being implemented in conjunction with our Core Application project.
- **Digitization:** As each year passes, more public records are at risk of deteriorating to the point of unusability. We are working to undertake a push to digitize our records (such as microfilm and Photostat) from 1970 back to 1871, a move that will not only protect the public record, but allow us to free up physical space in our Chicago Location.

## CCRD BUDGET PRESENTATION – 10/20/14

- **Military and Veterans Discount Program** – All Board Members recently received an update on this project. We look forward to fully implementing this Program after Veterans Day, and increasing the number of veterans our office, and the County, serves. As you know, we are administering this program without seeking additional funds from the County.

### CONCLUSION

Again, our mission is **Accuracy, Efficiency and Advocacy**, and this Budget Request is our blueprint. This request represents an honest effort to be a part of a larger, Countywide effort towards fiscal responsibility.

Though we have asked for less than last year's appropriation, we also ask that you not cut any further, because doing so could jeopardize our ability to handle a housing market recovery and transition the office to a more modern and efficient long-term operation.

I invite each of you to personally visit me at my Office so that I can show you how we are putting our mission into action.

Thank you.