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## **Comments of the League of Women Voters of Cook County Regarding File No. 19-4656, Consolidation Joint Status Update Report Cook County Clerk & Cook County Recorder of Deeds**

The League of Women Voters of Cook County <sup>1</sup> is very pleased to see this Consolidation Joint Status Update Report for the period of April 1, 2019 thru June 30, 2019 regarding the upcoming merger of the office of the Cook County Recorder of Deeds into the office of the Cook County Clerk ("2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Report"). <sup>2</sup> The League, after conducting a study, supported the referendum in 2016 that has led to this upcoming merger in 2020. The League believes that this merger should result in a reduction in costs and an improvement of services for the people of Cook County beginning in the first quarter of 2021, provided that sufficient planning and action take place in a timely manner.

The League is pleased to read that a Joint Committee has been formed. However, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Report does not state who is on this Joint Committee.

The League is also pleased to read in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Report that Working Groups have been formed to deal with Information Technology, Human Resources, Finance, and Administration/Operations. We hope these Working Groups are looking at such issues as the physical layout of the offices to optimize efficiencies and services, as well as opportunities for cross-training of employees which Clerk Karen Yarbrough mentioned during the mid-year budget hearings in July.

However, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Report fails to include a timeline of target benchmarks as specified in the resolution passed by the Cook County Board requiring these reports.

This leaves us with many questions, such as

- Who is on the Joint Committee?
- When does the Joint Committee expect to obtain the initial reports from the Working Groups?
- Is it expected that there will need to be follow-up reports from the Working Groups?
- When does the Joint Committee expect to produce a Consolidated Recommended Implementation Plan referred to in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Report?
- How much time will be allowed for the Joint Committee to identify and reach out to public stakeholders to get their input?
- When does the Joint Committee expect to have a Final Consolidation Implementation Plan?
- How much time is allowed to carry out that Implementation Plan before December 2020?

The League urges this Committee to pursue these questions and others. We look forward to seeing the next quarterly report which we hope will include the timeline of target benchmarks that the Board's resolution requiring these reports specifies.

*Prepared for the meeting of the Legislation and Intergovernmental Relations Committee meeting of September 4, 2019.*

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<sup>1</sup> The League of Women Voters of Cook County is a nonpartisan political organization which encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The Cook County League is comprised of the over 1500 members of 13 local Leagues within Cook County.

<sup>2</sup> After the Cook County Board voted to place a referendum on the November 2016 ballot asking whether the elected office of the Recorder of Deeds should be abolished and the duties of that officer be transferred to the Cook County Clerk, the League did a study of the pros and cons of that merger and came to a consensus position to support the referendum and the merger. The referendum passed, and the transfer of the Recorder duties is to take place by December 7, 2020. In March of 2017, the Cook County Board passed a resolution requiring semi-annual reports in 2017 and 2018, and quarterly reports in 2019 and 2020 (January, March, July, and October) on the plans for the transfer. **Such reports are to include a timeline of target benchmarks**, and the Recorder and Clerk are to appear before the Legislation and Intergovernmental Relations Committee to answer questions. See **Item 17-2106** passed on March 8, 2017.