Department

1110 COUNTY CLERK

Mission
The Cook County Clerk is the chief election officer for suburban Cook County. The office of the Cook County Clerk is committed to providing quality service to the public in a timely and efficient manner. The Election Division strives to ensure that all eligible suburban residents can exercise their rights in the electoral process; that all candidates have fair, open and equal access to all stages of the process; and that the public has access to open and transparent information.

The Clerk is also responsible for; maintaining and providing various aspects of the real estate tax process, receiving and making available to the public statements of economic interests and lobbyist registrations, serving as Clerk to the County Board of Commissioners and providing birth, death and marriage certificates in Cook County.

Mandates
- Sec.2-173. Cook County Automation Fee.
  Cook County Clerk Vital Records automation fee. The fees in Section 2-174, "Vital records fees for County Clerk," include an automation fee as set out in Section 32-1, which shall be remitted monthly by the Clerk to the County Treasurer, to be retained in a special fund designated as the Clerk's Automation Fund. Upon request of the County Clerk, the Board shall make expenditure from the fund to pay costs related to the automation of functions performed by the Clerk including hardware, software, research and development costs and personnel related thereto.

Key Activities and Services
- Issues property tax rates, permanent real estate numbers and new tax codes, maintains real estate maps and processes redemptions of delinquent property taxes;
- Prepares agendas, communicates actions taken by the Board through posting Board meeting documents, and maintains the Board's legislative records and Code of Ordinances;
- Administers elections for suburban Cook County's 1.5 million registered voters, which entails voter registration, poll worker recruitment and training and polling place identification, mapping and management;
- Directs activities related to preparation, programming, layout, testing and deployment of ballots, memory packs/results cartridges and equipment for Early and Election Day voting, as well as Election Night vote tabulation;
- Recruits, assigns, trains and manages nearly 12,000 election judges and equipment managers;
- Heads pre-Election Day voting programs, including Early Voting, Grace Period Registration and voting, Mail Voting, Military/Overseas Voting, Nursing Home Voting and Detainee Voting;
- Operates, maintains, stores, repairs and pre-LAT (pre-election logic accuracy tests) all election equipment, including touch screen machines, optical scanners, HAATs (Hybrid Activator, Accumulator and Transmitters) voting supply carriers, voting booths and ancillary parts;
- Conducts Election Day Registration and manages voting activities and vote tallying;
- Spearheads public policy initiatives at the state and local levels to improve elections administration;
- Receives, processes and makes available to the public more than 22,000 Statements of Economic Interests filed annually, as well as lobbyist registrations and semi-annual reports;
- Maintains and provides vital records including birth, marriage, civil union and death certificates dated since 1872. The Vital Records division also administers assumed business name registrations, notary commissions and an award-winning genealogy website;

Discussion of 2018 Department and Program Outcomes

Our online 20-year tax search, which allows individuals and businesses to search overdue tax records on any PIN, continues to be heavily used to review payment status of properties. Last year, visitors viewed 2,812,136 total pages on the Clerk's site. This 24/7 self-service tool continues to conserve staff resources. From January 1, 2018 – mid-July 2018, we have already experienced more than 1.7 million total page views.

Although unique pages viewed decreased slightly from the prior year, it stems in part from greater efficiency. An improved web application for taxing districts require half the number of page visits to view the same information. With the introduction of an updated web portal in late 2017, we began providing two-way communications between the Clerk's office and taxing districts. This enhancement allowed districts to file important documents that were used to calculate taxes, such as levies and budgets, electronically each year. It also facilitated an easier review and approval process of levies. In its first year, 816 out of 2,424 taxing districts utilized the portal. That number undoubtedly will increase in the coming year.

We have experienced improved production time from a GIS system upgrade, which was part of a county-wide project. We look forward to implementing e-government solutions in 2019 for other records such as tax delinquency, tax sale judgment books and all budget, levy and bond information. We are working with the Tyler Technologies team to implement the Integrated Property Tax System (IPTS) in late 2019 and plan to implement an updated cashiering and document management system that will interact with IPTS.

Tax Services increased outreach efforts, partnering with community organizations and leaders to ensure that all residents of Cook County understand tax delinquency issues and the information available and services provided by the County Clerk.

We conducted a successful Gubernatorial Primary Election which culminated on Election Day, March 20, 2018. There were 425 candidates in 357 contests, 27% of them contested. Record-high number of registered voters in suburban Cook County (1,549,688, as of 3/20/18). We set a new Gubernatorial Primary record with 109,811 ballots cast in-person before Election Day. That's the highest total yet for a Gubernatorial Primary, and for Primary Elections, second only to the 2016 Presidential Primary (120,681). Election Day Registration, offered for the first time in a Gubernatorial Primary, was popular with voters, especially younger ones. Voters between 17 and 22 years old made up 32 percent of the 4,278 who took advantage of Election Day Registration.

Our Elections team also launched two new tools. We launched the new Election Judge Module, which makes it easier to communicate with and train Election Judges. We also expanded GIS online election results, making the results more interactive.

Other facts about the March 20 Gubernatorial Primary:

- Detainee Voting: 111
- Nursing Home Voting: 1,740
- UOCAVA: 183
- Mail (total): 23,459
- Election Day Voters: 317,057
- Election Day Workers: 8,600 Election Judges, working in 1,000 polling places (1,599 precincts)

This spring the Clerk's office won a Publicity Club of Chicago "Silver Trumpet" Award for our "Vote Local/We Love Local Voters" campaign, which was used to encourage participation in the 2017 suburban Consolidated Elections. This public relations and media campaign used videos, social media, posters, traditional press releases, and free ads on suburban Pace buses to stress how much of our everyday lives

are impacted by decisions made by local units of government and how essential it is that residents take part in their local elections.

Our office has also been a leader in Illinois and Nationally on Election Security and Cybersecurity issues. We drafted White Paper on Election Security in Dec. 2017 and worked on State and Federal legislation.

The Clerk's office, in conjunction with Capital Planning, successfully moved our warehouse operation. This collaborative effort will save the County millions of dollars and lead to a more efficient election operation for our warehouse.

Additionally, staff from the Clerk's office visit the Cook County Department of Corrections before each election, to register eligible detainees to vote. Detainees requested their mail ballots when they registered to vote. Staff determined which ballot they needed, then, during the Early Voting period, our office and volunteers brought mail ballots to all detainees who requested them. A total of 111 Cook County Jail detainees were able to vote in the Gubernatorial Primary because of this program.

In 2018, the Bureau of Vital Records launched a website allowing anyone seeking to marry in Cook County the opportunity to apply for a marriage license online. Both parties are required to appear in person at one of the Cook County Clerk's six locations to complete the application and obtain the marriage license. It has greatly reduced the amount of time that residents will spend in line at the customer service counter. Since its launch in January 2018, 35% of all marriage licenses (6,019 issued online out of the 17,042 issued) issued started with the new online service. The average wait time for a license regularly was 10 minutes, but now with the online application couples only have to wait four minutes to complete their application. That is a savings of six minutes per application, leading to a savings so far of 602 FTE hours. We expect this number to increase as more and more couples learn about the online application option.

This year the office unveiled a completely re-designed website. This was the first substantial update to CookCountyClerk.com in nearly a decade. The new website was designed to above all, quickly and easily answer the public's questions, whether it's locations of polling places, how to apply for a wedding license, information on property taxes, and more. We worked extensively with the website developers to make it user-friendly and have the same degree of functionality and ease of use on desktop and mobile.

As a result, traffic to CookCountyClerk.com – in both Unique Pageviews and Total Pageviews – has grown tremendously. Any visit to a web page counts in Total Pageviews, but Unique Pageviews are the better representation of website traffic as it counts each user, regardless of the number of times they view the same page. Through the first half of 2018, we've had the highest number of Unique Pageviews ever for CookCountyClerk.com, even beating the first half number of 2016, which until this year had the most visits to the site due to the Presidential Election. For instance, from Jan. 1 to July 18, 2014 the website had 2,095,407 Unique Pageviews. In that time period for 2018, Unique Pageviews increased 77%, to 3,707,091. Total Pageviews in the first half went from 3,077,645 in 2014 to 6,239,632 in 2018, a 103% increase.

Budget, Cost Analysis and 2019 Strategic Initiatives and Goals
The major cost driver for the County Clerk's budget is contracted salaries, which are increasing due to collective bargaining agreements. The following fixed charges have been added to the Clerk's office's budget and although they lead to an increase in costs, do not represent a new expenditure: The Bureau of Technology expenses allocated to the County Clerk's budget related to the cost of software licenses and adding pension costs to the election and automation funds.

- **Two-way Communication**: With the introduction of an updated web portal in late 2017, we began providing two-way communications between the Clerk's office and taxing districts for the 2017 tax year. This enhancement allows districts to file important documents such as levies and budgets

electronically each year, which is to be used to calculate taxes in 2018. It also facilitates an easier approval process by taxing districts once levies are reviewed by the Clerk.

- **Tyler Technologies**: We continue to work closely with Tyler Technologies and other tax offices to ensure that Integrated Property Tax System (IPTS) is properly developed and implemented as planned, replicating all functionality in time for a calendar 2020 rollout.
- **Automation**: With an RFP released in 2017, Tax Services has selected a vendor and with Board approval we will implement a new accounting and cashiering system for the entire office in 2018.
- **2019 Consolidated Elections:** In 2019, we will conduct the February Primary and April Consolidated Elections.
- **Election Equipment RFP:** Our office issued a Request for Proposals to procure new election equipment, with Board approval we will be rolling out new election equipment beginning in February 2019. Cook County last rolled out new election equipment in 2006. Our election equipment has served us well for a decade, but it has aged significantly. The public – as well as our poll workers – deserve the best election equipment that address the technological and security issues. The new election equipment will cost an estimated $25-$30 million.
- **Data Integration:** We will increase the public's access to our data through the launch of the new Cook County Clerk website with integrated Tableau dashboards. This will provide the public an easy way to view and election results and other statistical data pertaining to elections.