



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 24-1152, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

CELEBRATING THE 193RD ANNIVERSARY OF COOK COUNTY

WHEREAS, Cook County was founded by an act of the Illinois legislature on January 15, 1831; and

WHEREAS, originally part of the commonwealth of Virginia, the area which comprises modern day Cook County was also part of the Northwest Territory and then a part of 10 separate counties as the territory was formed into states, including Illinois. The 10 counties are Knox (1790), St. Clair (1801), Madison (1812), Edwards (1814), Crawford (1816), Clark (1819), Pike (1819), Fulton (1823), Peoria (1825), Putnam (1826); and

WHEREAS, when formed in 1831, Cook County's original boundaries included all of McHenry, Lake, DuPage and parts of Kane and Will. The other counties were separately created between 1836 and 1839, leading to Cook County's current boundaries; and

WHEREAS, Cook County was named for Daniel Pope Cook (1794 - October 16, 1827). Originally from Kentucky, Cook moved to Illinois and became a lawyer, newspaper publisher, politician and one of the early advocates of statehood for Illinois. An anti-slavery advocate, he was the state's first Attorney General, and then congressman. It is believed Cook never visited the area which would be named in his honor; and

WHEREAS, the first Cook County Board of Commissioners was elected on March 7, 1831, taking office and holding their first meeting the following day. Three (3) commissioners-Gholson Kercheval, Samuel Miller and James Walker-convened a meeting at Fort Dearborn on the Chicago Settlement lakeshore, in the magazine (powder room). The first County Board meeting would last for two (2) days; and

WHEREAS, also elected on March 7 were Sheriff James Kinsey and Coroner John K. Clark. County Clerk William See, County Treasurer Archibald Clybourn, were appointed March 8 and Jedediah Wooley, Jr was recommended as County Surveyor to the Governor and Legislature; and

WHEREAS, one of the first acts of the new board was approval of a Resolution asking Illinois for 10 acres of land including the corner of Clark and Randolph for the location of a new County Courthouse. This building would be completed in 1835 and included a small stockade which served as the first County Jail and later added an Almshouse which was the forerunner of the County Hospital, Since the land was granted to the County, the corner of Clark and Randolph Streets in Chicago has been the headquarters of Cook County Government; and

WHEREAS, the official population of Cook County at the time of its founding was 100 (a count of settlers, not including Native Americans forcibly removed from the local area). The Chicago settlement (Chicago was not incorporated as a town until 1833) had 50 to 60 residents; and

WHEREAS, Cook County would become a leader in growing the region, the state and the nation; blazing trails in the fields of transportation, food processing, public health, education, juvenile justice, art and music. The dynamic and diverse county population would swell the county population to 350,000 in 1870, over 1.1 million 20 years later and 1.8 million at the turn of the 20th Century. By 1910, Cook County had 2.4 million residents, surpassing three million residents by 1920. By 1940, Cook County grew to four million residents. In 1960, Cook County population totaled 5.1 million; and

WHEREAS, the history of Cook County Government contributed directly to the development of the region and the State of Illinois, with many projects and initiatives of several County departments directly impacting the economic and political direction of the region for years to come; and

WHEREAS, in December 2019, the Cook County Board of Commissioners determined that, in celebration of the County's bicentennial anniversary, a new flag would be created to be representative of the bountiful geography, history, culture and diversity of Cook County; and

WHEREAS, the new Cook County Flag, which was approved and adopted on June 16, 2022, symbolically represents many of these initiatives including: the provision of health services to all as an essential County mission and the creation over time of institutions to fulfill that mission including John H. Stroger, Jr., Provident and Oak Forest Hospitals; the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center, the Ambulatory Care Network and the Cook County Department of Public Health; the protection of individual rights and voting rights through County ordinances and the conduct of free and fair elections for the entire jurisdiction of Cook County; the protection and preservation of the environment including natural lands and open spaces primarily through the establishment of the Forest Preserves in 1914; the establishment of the world's first juvenile court system, which separated children from adults with an emphasis on individualized treatment instead of rigid adherence to due process, and probation over incarceration, and; the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation with all local governments as partners for progress through the work of county offices and agencies; and

WHEREAS, as Cook County approaches its 200th anniversary-and having developed a unique and extensive collection of public documents and records that contain historical significance-establishing an initiative to archive historically significant documents and records is imperative to County Government history; and

WHEREAS, fundamental to capturing the history of Cook County is a thorough and complete documentation of the history of Cook County Government; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners created a County Historic Archives and Records Office (CARO) to affirmatively coordinate efforts across all departments and with all officials to determine the historical value of various county documents and records and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners regarding access and promotion of the County's history; and

WHEREAS, looking forward to Cook County's Bicentennial in 2031, and building upon the previous years' work, CARO seeks to establish a Cook County Archives Center to continue to manage, promote, document, and preserve said materials, activate its collections; and to engage exploratory initiatives to establish sustainable external fiscal support through the development of a foundation to support the ongoing growth of CARO.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the President and the members of the Board of Commissioners of Cook County does hereby celebrate the 193rd anniversary of the founding of Cook County, Illinois; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the President and the members of the Board of Commissioners of Cook County are contributing to the preservation of Cook County Government; and encourages all County agencies under all elected and appointed officials to work closely with the Manager of Archives and the Cook County Historic Archives and Records Office (CARO) to preserve the history of their offices, to include all formats of physical and electronic documents, photographs, maps, films, other media and artifacts towards that purpose.