



REAL ESTATE AND TAX SERVICE
OFFICE OF COOK COUNTY CLERK KAREN A. YARBROUGH
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To: Honorable John P. Daley, *Chairman*
 Cook County Board of Commissioners, Finance Committee

From: Carolyn Wilhight, CPA *Carolyn Wilhight CW*
 Deputy Clerk
 Cook County Clerk Office

CC: Annette C.M. Guzman, *Budget Director*
 Department of Budget & Management Services

Date: November 9, 2020

Re: Request for Information from FY2021 Department Budget Hearing

The following information is provided in response to questions posed at our department's hearing held on November 6, 2020 to discuss the FY2021 Executive Budget Recommendation.

I. Request ID# 1110-01

Commissioner Degnen asked where in the Clerk's FY21 budget the amounts for microfilm digitization and records preservation are budgeted? Please provide the total amounts broken out across all funds.

Response:

Fund	Description	Image Capture Project	
11000	Corporate	520650-Media Storage Services - Budget Entry	\$10,000
11314	Document Storage	520650-Media Storage Services - Budget Entry	\$815,000
11259	GIS	520830-Professional Imaging Services	\$250,000
Total			\$1,075,000

II. Request ID# 1110-02

Commissioner Degnen asked for an explanation of the increase in professional services from \$175,826 in FY20 to \$1,157,000 in FY21 and detail whether or not these are one-year costs or will they continue across multiple years?

Response:

Fund	Using Group	2020	2021	Purpose of Funds
11000	10155-Administration	\$ 175,826	\$ 72,000	Assumption of Duties Consultant-ICL \$72,000
11000	18675-Recording Operations	\$ -	\$ 90,000	Current POS Provider-Maintenance Contract for continuous maintenance support for 20/20 Cashiering/Collection System.

11000	35610-Tax Services Administration	\$ -	\$ 895,000	Vitals Security Paper, Accounting & General Ledger Upgrade contract services.
11000	35655-Vital Records Administration	\$ -	\$ 100,000	Additional enhancement/Proof of Concept to the Vitals Point of Sale System-\$100,0000 to track security paper allocation and usage for internal control measures.
	Total 520830-Professional Services - Budget Entry	\$ 175,826	\$ 1,157,000	

III. Request ID# 1110-03

Commissioner Degnen asked for an explanation of the difference in personnel costs in the Clerk plus Recorder's budget in FY20 vs. the Clerk's budget in FY21 (minus the Election Fund) and why it went down by 10% vs. the reduction in FTEs by 15.47%?

Response:

Salary, wage and benefit costs are valued differently than pure FTE count. The value of health benefits shifted from the Recorder of Deeds office based on the methodology used by the County to determine annual benefit costs. Also, overall health benefits increase on an annual basis based on increases in plan rates. Thus, there was an increase in the budgeted amount of \$373,196. In addition, recording functions and operations have been reconceived to ensure greater efficiencies, which required the development of new positions. Generally, new positions have been budgeted at an entry level rate. However, it is anticipated that many current Recorder of Deeds employees will prevail in obtaining these positions through the open interview process. If an existing employee in the Recorder of Deeds Office is successful in obtaining a recorder position within the Clerk's office, that employee is entitled to receive compensation in line with their existing compensation rates, per our compensation schedules. Therefore, we have budgeted an amount in reserve to allow for increases and will adjust our budget where necessary, to make the employee whole should any positions be offered to an existing employee of the Recorder of Deeds Office.

IV. Request ID# 1110-04

Commissioner Daley asked if the Clerk's office can provide a response to all the questions submitted by the League of Women's Voters?

Response:

See Additional Attachment.

V. Request ID# 1110-05

Commissioner Degnen asked if the Clerk's office can provide an updated organizational chart for the consolidated office?

Response:

See Attached Organizational Chart.

VI. Request ID# 1110-06

Commissioner Degnen asked if the Clerk's office can provide target dates for the completion of projects related to the Clerk's assumption of the Recorder's duties and identify which projects are one-time costs vs. multi-year costs?

Response:

There are a number of non-personnel initiatives included in the FY 21 budget. Please see below for a list of these initiatives:

FY21 Budgeted Amount	FY21 Initiatives	Timeline Completion Date
\$90,000	Current POS Provider-Maintenance Contract/Project (ongoing)	1 st Qtr
\$895,000	Vitals Security Paper, Accounting & General Ledger Upgrade (new, one time)	2 nd Qtr
\$815,000	Image Capture Project (document storage fund) (new one time)	4thQtr
\$100,000	Enhancement/Proof of Concept to the Vitals Point of Sale System (new one time)	1 st Qtr
\$80,000	Legal Counsel for multiple Clerk-Office Needs: Labor negotiations and Shakman (new, one-time)	On-Going
\$413,000	Cashier System Licenses/Accounting System Licenses (ongoing)	3 rd Qtr
\$250,000	Contract with US Imaging for imaging the old records to get rid of the microfilm. (GIS fund) (ongoing)	4thQtr
\$150,000	Digitization of Recording Records operating capital request (new, one time)	4thQtr
\$2,793,000	Total	

VII. Request ID# 1110-07

Commissioner Degnen asked why are the number of FTEs for the Election Fund going up by 5 in FY21?

Response:

The Clerk made corrections to inadequately placed positions that impacted the Corporate Budget by placing them in the appropriate fund according to the respective program and duties. Thus, such positions were appropriately applied to the Election Fund.

As always, please let us know if you have any additional questions.

Cc: Karen A. Yarbrough, Cook County Clerk
 Cedric Giles, Chief Deputy Clerk
 Sisavanh Baker, Legal Counsel
 Jeron Bland, DBMS



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The Cook County Clerk's Office, together with the Department of Budget and Management Services, provides the following responses to the memo received from the League of Women's Voters.

1. Looking at the comparison between the Clerk plus Recorder in 2020 vs. the Clerk in 2021 (minus the Election Fund), we calculated the following:
 - a. The total number of FTEs went down by 41.8, or a minus 15.47% in 2021.
 - b. **Personnel costs went down by 10% vs. the reduction in FTEs by 15.47%. What explains this?**

Salary, wage and benefit costs are valued differently than pure FTE count. The value of health benefits shifted from the Recorder of Deeds office based on the methodology used by the County to determine annual benefit costs. Also, overall health benefits increase on an annual basis based on increases in plan rates. Thus, there was an increase in the budgeted amount of \$373,196. In addition, recording functions and operations have been reconceived to ensure greater efficiencies, which required the development of new positions. Generally, new positions have been budgeted at an entry level rate. However, it is anticipated that many current Recorder of Deeds employees will prevail in obtaining these positions through the open interview process. If an existing employee in the Recorder of Deeds Office is successful in obtaining a recorder position within the Clerk's office, that employee is entitled to receive compensation in line with their existing compensation rates, per our compensation schedules. Therefore, we have budgeted an amount in reserve to allow for increases and will adjust our budget where necessary, to make the employee whole should any positions be offered to an existing employee of the Recorder of Deeds Office.

- c. There is a 10% reduction in personnel costs (\$2,230,000), but a 47% increase in other costs (\$3,135,000). The net result is a 3% increase in total costs for 2021.

There are a number of non-personnel initiatives included in the FY 21 budget. Please see below for a list of these initiatives:

FY21 Budgeted Amount	FY21 Initiatives	Timeline Completion Date
\$90,000	Current POS Provider-Maintenance Contract/Project (ongoing)	1 st Qtr
\$895,000	Vitals Security Paper, Accounting & General Ledger Upgrade (new, one time)	2 nd Qtr
\$815,000	Image Capture Project (document storage fund) (new one time)	4thQtr
\$100,000	Enhancement/Proof of Concept to the Vitals Point of Sale System (new one time)	1 st Qtr

FY21 Budgeted Amount	FY21 Initiatives	Timeline Completion Date
\$80,000	Legal Counsel for multiple Clerk-Office Needs: Labor negotiations and Shakman (new, one-time)	On-Going
\$413,000	Cashier System Licenses/Accounting System Licenses (ongoing)	3 rd Qtr
\$250,000	Contract with US Imaging for imaging the old records to get rid of the microfilm. (GIS fund) (ongoing)	4thQtr
\$150,000	Digitization of Recording Records operating capital request (new, one time)	4thQtr
\$2,793,000	Total	

2. In the Final Plan submitted by the Clerk to the Board, the total reduction in FTEs was listed as 65 (see p.5). However, in the 2021 proposed budget, the net decrease is 36.8. Even if the increase in the Election Fund FTEs is not counted, there is still a decrease of 41.8 vs. 65.

The 65 FTE was our projected FTE reduction based on volume retrieved from the current budget books. As a result of the hold back request due to COVID, some of the Recorder of Deeds vacant positions were released. Our actual reduction in workforce, due to the restructuring of functions, was based on the active positions subsequent to the holdback.

3. Because of so many changes in position titles listed in the Executive Budget, we were unable to identify what positions and what grade levels were eliminated and what are to be retained. A detailed organization chart would be useful. Possibly the chart in the Final Plan could be provided to the Commissioners and public, but with the number of FTEs added to the boxes.

All new positions were created for the Clerk's assumption of recording functions. Please see attached for the pending organizational chart for the consolidated Clerk's Office.

4. In the Final Plan, there are a number of projects related to the Clerk's assumption of the Recorder's duties. Since there were no target dates for completion stated in the Final Plan, we are unclear as to how these projects impact the proposed 2021 budget and how many of the proposed expenditures are one-time costs.

We are planning for large projects to start as early as 2nd quarter of FY2021 after various contracts are finalized. See references in Question #1 for proposed timelines which will be contingent upon external vendor and internal resources.

5. In light of all of the above, we question where and how the \$1.45 M in savings for 2021 by combining the offices which was stated in the Final Plan submitted to the Board (p. 6) will be achieved.

Item	Description	(Cost) / Savings
Data Entry-Indexing	Outsourcing overall processing but keeping and Internal Exception Group to handle issues/exceptions/etc. (10 positions)	\$ 283,791.00
New Collateral/Signature Stampers/Stationary/Other	New Signage due to offices relocating. System graphics change over, other. (Completion by 3 rd Qtr FY 2021)	\$ (50,000.00)
Accounting/GL System	Need to upgrade for uniformity of reporting (Implementation by 2 nd Quarter FY 2021)	\$ (75,000.00)
20/20 Point of Sale System Maintenance	Service continues until system is replaced	\$ (90,000.00)
Labor/Legal/Outside Consultant Services for Consolidation Schematics, etc.	Time Utilized for consolidation purposes (40% of \$150,000) and (40% of \$288,000)	\$ (175,200.00)
Human Resource Support for Assumption of Duties	Time allocated to Consolidation	\$ (100,000.00)
Website	Services provided by contractual vendor to update and link websites-Capital outlay (Implementation by 12/31/2021)	\$ (400,000.00)
Move Administration to 118 N. Clark	Unknown internal cost as of 7-28-2020	TBD
Move from Daley Center & 14th Floor	Release of space eliminating required support for managing location (i.e. electricity, maintenance, etc.)	\$ 275,000.00
11 Elimination of Additional Active Positions ROD**	Positions not including in restructuring due to duplicate functions (including but not limited to mail processing-5 security--2, Recorder of Deeds, Chief of Staff, Other)	\$ 974,210.00
Elimination of Vacant Positions	11 Vacant Positions not being assumed or filled due to budget constraints	\$ 498,162.00
	Total	\$ 1,140,963.00

Election Fund

Normally, the Election Fund budget goes down significantly in odd numbered years. This is because in even numbered years there are two Suburban county-wide elections: the Primary and the General. In odd numbered years, there are local elections and only a few primary elections, and far fewer ballots needing to be processed.

Generally, the elections when it is a Presidential election year, such as 2016, are higher than in the gubernatorial election year, such as 2018.

- a. For example, comparing 2016 (the last Presidential election year) to 2017, the Election Fund Expenditures for the Clerk were \$35,012,592 in 2016 vs. \$19,594,930 in 2017.
- b. Comparing 2018 to 2019, the Election Fund Expenditures for the Clerk were \$24,114,596 in 2018 vs. \$17,754,677 in 2019.

6. But the difference between the Election budgets for 2020 and 2021 for the Clerk is only \$384,000, rather than the millions of dollars difference previously. Why? We note that the provisions of the June 2020 state election law amendment that increased the workload and costs this year will expire on January 1, 2021.

On average, the odd year elections have cost \$23M annually, excluding reimbursements from the state for voter registration and respective HAVA grants. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the new state election law for mail-in ballots and respective notifications, and increased voter registration, greater expenditures are needed to conduct elections fairly and accurately. Therefore, we are planning for the same types of COVID-19 related expenditures in FY2021, such as services/vendors for mass mailings, establishing a mail-in ballot processing site, and other needs for the safety of residents during voting. Notably, in FY2020, we received grants related to COVID-19 to offset these increased costs. We do not have a current expectation to receive those same grants in FY2021. These include approximately \$3M in HAVA CARES Act grant, \$2M HAVA IVRS grant, a \$1M postage grant, and \$500K in PPE purchases. Because there is no certainty as to whether such grants and additional funding will be forthcoming in FY 2021, we have budgeted these funds to ensure a safe and effective 2021 election.

Please see below for a breakdown of the FY21 projects being done during this out-year in the Election Fund.

FY21 Budgeted Amount	FY21 Election Fund Projects
\$1,805,000	Maintenance on Dominion Equipment, Renewal of Licenses, VMware support, renewal of Melissa Data license, Clarity Website updates, Maintenance of VRXG System (ongoing)
\$1,200,000	Election Operation Center- Asset/Inventory Tracking System. Funding shifted from capital due to limited debt funding. (new, one-time)
\$3,005,000	Total

7. Why are the number of FTEs for the Election Fund going up by 5 in 2021?

Due to the County's decreased revenue position as a result of COVID-19, the Clerk moved some positions that were funded out of their operating budget to the Election Fund in FY20. These changes were carried forward into FY 21.



Cedric Giles
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Office of the Cook County Clerk

Annette C.M. Guzman
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Cook County Department of Budget &
Management Services