McHenry County Recorder

Joseph J. Tirio

Mid-Year Update:

Where we've been and where we are headed.

Table of Contents

The Plan Begins

McHenry County is the 29th most expensive of 3,144 counties in the nation in terms of personal property tax.

"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

When I ran for this office, I published a plan. A major part of that plan was to eliminate the position of Recorder in McHenry County. In broad strokes, the first part of the plan was to get the office ready for integration into the Clerk's office and the second part was the actual integration.

We've made amazing progress on the first half of that plan in my first six months on the job. In what remains of this document, I'll be sharing some of the details regarding what we've done, what we have planned and how I think we will get to our Clerk/Recorder integration.

Where We've Been

"All progress is precarious, and the solution of one problem brings us face to face with another."
- Martin Luther King, Jr

One of my stated goals was to deliver a world class Recorder's Department to the office of the Clerk. In more practical terms, that means implementing certain management practices, processes and technologies that would enable the Recorder's department to reliably, and efficiently deliver services with as little imposition to the Clerk as possible.

To that end, over the past six months we've implemented a number of changes that bring us closer to that point. Some of the highlights…

✦ One Place Tools:

- Knowledge Base: Online process and policy documentation featuring automatic versioning, access control and indexing.

- Automated time-off request approval routing and scheduling.

- Operational Metrics Database: Collection and reporting database for statistics related to volumes and types of work performed, document cycle time and more.

- One Place News: Blog-style news source replacing emails, paper notes and conversation as the means to communicate changes in policy, process etc. Its durable nature serves to create a reference unto itself. It is also searchable and allows users to comment and/ or submit questions.

✦ Management Processes

- Hiring and promotion done by way of panel-based, behavioral-style interviews.

- Data-driven decision making tools: to assist management with staffing, training and work assignments.

- Introduced the language of LEAN to the team to help raise awareness of waste in our work and create a framework for process improvement.

- One-on-one meetings. Every employee gets a monthly one-on-one meeting with his/her Manager. These primarily focus on productivity, quality and contribution, but may also involve new skill development, contribution to the team, career path and so on. They also must include two very critical elements. The first is an opportunity for the managed person to give feedback to his/her Manager. The second is a tool that invites discussion on the question "How am I doing?" by asking both manager and managed person to give a graphical representation of their answer to that question and then prompting discussion about any differences.

These are just the highlights, of course. There's been a great deal done to eliminate unnecessary work, standardize and normalize what we do.

What's Next

"A great accomplishment shouldn't be the end of the road, just the starting point for the next leap forward"
 - Harvey Mackay

Between now and first calendar quarter of 2019, we have our work cut out for us. We have thousands of hours of work to update, correct, repair, and prepare for the coming integration. The outcome will be an operationally excellent organization, focused on executing our core deliverables in as an effective way as possible.

Infrastructure:
We have a number of infrastructure projects to complete before transition begins. Among these are replacement of our SAN (Storage Area Network), file and application servers, UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply) and likely workstation monitors. All of these will be or are at the end of their usable life... some are considerably past that point.

Process:
The team is currently engaged in a workflow assessment with our primary software vendor. As we conclude the assessment, we expect that we will find a number of opportunities to reduce the time and cost of processing documents while improving quality and the customer and employee experience. Independent of the assessment, we are exploring other means to improve service quality, cost, and experience. Among them are simply ceasing to do some unnecessary work, improving compliance to process and transforming the way we collect and pay for property taxes.

People:
I am reminded of a former employer's slogan "Never underestimate the power of people". This couldn't be more true and more important than it is now. In order for us to attain best-in-class status, we need great people, with the right tools and the right attitude. While you may accuse me of double dipping because I mentioned people in the prior section, the fact is that, our people are absolutely critical to our success. Recruiting, retaining and cultivating great employees and a rewarding, supportive, challenging work environment will continue to be a focus for the team.

Transition to Integration

> "Change defines us. It is not the droning of a single tone that makes music sweet, it is the well-planned parade of notes that brings out the dancer in us all"
>
> - Anonymous

Once both departments have done the work to ready themselves for the integration, we begin the work to actually integrate the two departments. Once the integration begins, it is likely to be more iterative than linear as certain patterns and events will guide a great deal of the execution of these activities.

Categories of Integration:

Cost, ease of execution, statutory limitation and outcome value of integration are some of the factors that will govern if, how and when specific integrations will take place.

In summary, here are some of the levels of integration that may be achieved:

✦ Organizational

✦ Financial

✦ Procedural

✦ Infrastructural

✦ Real Estate/Space

Integration Tasks

As we examine the above potential integration categories, the team will likely perform most or all of the following tasks to prepare for the integration:

✦ Assessment

✦ Infrastructure audit

✦ Functional Process audit

✦ Gap/overlap analysis

✦ Readiness determination

Delivering the plan

At this point, we should know if specific elements of the two departments can be integrated, what needs to be done to accomplish this, and understand the timing and resource limitations associated with each opportunity. All that should be left is:

✦ Scheduling tasks

✦ Assigning resources

✦ Executing the plan

Risks

"There are risks and costs to action. But they are far less than the long range risks of comfortable inaction"
 - John F. Kennedy

There is no change without risk

The very nature of change embodies risk. Given that, we must take every reasonable effort to mitigate risk and protect the citizens, the office and the county from harm.

To that end, we will observe the following principles to guide our actions:

✦ Our core, statutory deliverables are our first priority. Integration work cannot prevent us from meeting our obligations.

✦ We must make reasonable efforts to have backup and recovery plans for any element of the integration plan that could put data at risk.

✦ We will obtain formal sign-off from critical parties as we design and execute our plan to ensure that all know what is expected, when it is expected and the costs and risks involved.

It's likely we may develop other rules to guide us, and will incorporate those as appropriate.

Eliminating the Role of Recorder

"Simple can be harder than complex: You have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple. But it's worth it in the end because once you get there, you can move mountains."
 - Steve Jobs

Ultimately, it is the people who will vote on whether or not we should merge the functions of the Recorder's office into the Clerk's office and eliminate the Recorder's role.

The "mechanics" of getting the question on the ballot are spelled out in our Constitution and in state statute. Article seven of our state's constitution allows a County Board to eliminate an office by way of a binding referendum and section 28-7 of the Illinois Election Code allows such a public body create a public question for consideration during a regular election. Illinois Election Code also allows for a public question to be brought to the electors when initiated by petition (as opposed to our County Board).

The County Board promotes such an idea as eliminating an office, by way of something called a "Resolution". Resolutions can have the effect of law, can take the form of an instruction or can simply communicate the will of the body that passes it. They typically are constructed with two general sections. The first section most often describes the issue that the resolution intends to resolve, why and how the public body can address the issue. These statements typically begin with "WHEREAS".

The second section describes exactly what the resolution intends to do. These statements begin with "NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED" or something along those lines.

Even before the County Board considers a resolution during their full meeting, it is likely that a draft of the resolution (especially one as important as this one) has been reviewed by attorneys and the State's Attorney's Office and often informally introduced to members of the Board and County Administration for feedback and input.

If you are reading this, it means that, minimally, the draft resolution has begun its journey towards a full Board vote, and ultimately to the ballot box.

A copy of the resolution as it exists at the time of release of this document will be attached.

Thank you.

Thank you for taking the time to read this update. I hope you found it helpful in understanding the progress made by me and my team. I also hope that it helped clarify the road ahead and explained some of the processes involved.

If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me personally.

Kindest Regards,

Joseph J. Tirio
McHenry County Recorder

JJTirio@co.mchenry.il.us
(815) 334-4110

Appendix

Resolution Requesting The Submission Of A Binding Question Of Public Policy To The Electors Of Mchenry County Regarding The Elimination Of The Office Of The Recorder Of Mchenry County

RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE SUBMISSION OF A BINDING QUESTION OF PUBLIC POLICY TO THE ELECTORS OF MCHENRY COUNTY REGARDING THE ELIMINATION OF THE OFFICE OF THE RECORDER OF MCHENRY COUNTY

WHEREAS, property owners in McHenry County bear a higher property tax burden than 99.99% of property owners in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the McHenry County Board places the highest priority on reducing the costs of county government and closely related, overlapping administrative functions provide local governments with excellent opportunities for consolidation; and

WHEREAS, the functions of both the Office of the McHenry County Recorder of Deeds and the Office of the McHenry County Clerk include maintaining official records; and

WHEREAS, voters in other Illinois counties have recently elected to consolidate the powers and duties of the office of the Recorder of Deeds with existing County Clerk offices to save taxpayer funds; and

WHEREAS, Article VII, Sections 4(c) and 11 of the Illinois Constitution, provide that a County Board, by a resolution, may authorize a referendum to eliminate a county office, including the office of the Recorder of Deeds; and

WHEREAS, Section 28-7 of the Illinois Election Code (10 ILCS 5/28-7), provides that a governing body may initiate a public question as outlined in Article VII of the Illinois Constitution through resolution; and

WHEREAS, Section 28-2(c) of the Illinois Election Code (10 ILCS 5/28-2(c)), provides that a resolution of a unit of local government which initiates the submission of public questions pursuant to the law must be adopted no less than 79 days before a regularly scheduled election to be eligible for submission on a ballot at such election; and

WHEREAS, the next regularly scheduled election at which a referendum required by Article VII may be placed on the ballot shall occur on March 20, 2018.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the County of McHenry, a unit of local government, by and through the McHenry County Board, that

the following binding question shall be submitted to the qualified electors of the County of McHenry on March 20, 2018:

SHALL THE OFFICE OF THE RECORDER OF MCHENRY COUNTY BE ELIMINATED AND ALL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OFFICE OF THE RECORDER BE TRANSFERRED TO, AND ASSUMED BY, THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK OF MCHENRY COUNTY ON DECEMBER 1, 2020?

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, this question, as fully set forth in the previous paragraph, is authorized and shall be submitted to the qualified electors of the County of McHenry at the Gubernatorial Primary Election to be held on March 20, 2018, in accordance with all applicable provisions of Illinois law; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the County Clerk, as the election authority of McHenry County, is hereby directed to certify said binding question of public policy in accordance with the Illinois Election Code on or before January 19, 2018.

DATED at Woodstock, Illinois this 20th day of June A.D., 2018.

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JACK D. FRANKS, Chairman
McHenry County Board

ATTEST:

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MARY E. McCLELLAN, County Clerk