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**Franks Calls for Increased Scrutiny of Recorder's
Fund Spending**

WOODSTOCK, Ill. – McHenry County Board Chairman Jack Franks is asking Recorder Joe Tirio to account for how money from the office's automation fund is spent in the wake of allegations of questionable expenditures.

Franks, D-Marengo, said that it is a fair question and a legitimate concern as county staff finalizes the 2019 budget and seeks further cost savings. The automation fund presently has a surplus of about \$2.4 million, which has grown by about \$300,000 since Tirio took office.

"Tirio has proposed significant increases in recording fees for next year, even after his proposed reduction of the automation fee. This is nothing more than a shell game designed to perpetuate a broken system in which Tirio can spend without the need for budget line items, and without the County Board's scrutiny. The \$2.4 million surplus was accumulated by overcharging people, plain and simple – that surplus adds up to about three years' worth of fees."

"Tirio has spent that money to expand the staff of an office that will no longer exist in two years. In his proposed budget, he's looking to add another full-time employee, and Tirio was recently discovered to have spent automation fund money on expensive private transport to and from the airport, raffle tickets, and a visit to a convention that was held in a casino."

"I was unaware that these expenditures occurred until several courageous whistleblowers called them to my attention. Furthermore Tirio's monthly report to the County Board has never included the surplus and at present, only one other person, the County Auditor, gets to review and approve the day-to-day fund expenditures. The County Board needs reassurance that public funds, in this case fees paid to record documents, are not being spent inappropriately," Franks said.

The need for a full accounting is even more critical to maintain the public trust, Franks said, given that the fee structure Tirio has proposed for next year includes significant increases for mortgage and lease documents.

“Customers who come to the Recorder’s front desk to file real estate transactions, plats, surveys, and other documents, need to know that the fees they are paying the bare minimum needed to cover expenses, and that they are not ending up in a fund that the Recorder can spend on a whim. Whether we’re talking tax revenue or user fees, the public is entitled to know that it is being spent wisely. A person reading Tiro’s reports would have no idea of the surplus in the automation fund, and no idea of how he spends those funds,” Franks said.

Voters in March overwhelmingly approved a binding referendum to eliminate the Recorder’s Office and consolidate its functions into the County Clerk’s Office, as is done in most Illinois counties.

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