

Fiscal Year 2007/2008 Budget Highlights and Goals

COUNTY RECORDER

FY 2007 Highlights

The office scanned 620,000 new images in 2006; accurately recording, indexing, and verifying 96,602 documents.

An ongoing microfilm conversion project continued as the digital document images from 1977 to 1974 were cleaned-up and enhanced. Black borders were removed to free-up server space and reduce toner costs for printing copies; images were enhanced for more clarity and legibility. Another project converted microfilm to digital images for the years 1973 to 1965. These images and index files were then inspected and imported into our computer system.

The Backfile Conversion Department completed 3-1/2 years, indexing 118,316 documents dating from October 1978 back to March 1975. A milestone of "30 Years Indexed and Imaged" was reached August 2006 as the office completed thirty years of information and images on computer. Over 9 million images are available to search and print within seconds on Laredo. In September 2006 "Let's Make It Happen" a kickoff to the Backfile Finale was launched to review past achievements and future goals for completing the project. Charts detailing the project were placed in public view; goal charts encompassing years of recorded documents dating back to 1839 were placed throughout the office to motivate staff and track future progress. Phase II was completed and Phase III (1973 back to 1962) commenced.

The Recorder and her staff hosted visitors from Her Majesty's Land Registry (HMLR) who came from England and Wales to learn about the office after viewing a HP promotional video and article done in 2005 featuring the office. The group traveled exclusively to the U.S. for a personal onsite tour and demonstration of our daily operations focusing on our digital images; state-of-the-art technology; our ability to consistently add information and images, both old and new, to our computer land records information system; and customer service.

The Recorder and staff members met with other Recorders throughout the country as part of an Executive Design Team created by our software vendor. Intense discussion occurred on how the recording and utilization of official documents can be improved; along with ideas to achieve the solutions needed for outstanding performance.

A Quit Claim Deed Notification Program was implemented to help protect property owners from forged deeds. A postcard is sent to property owners for which a quit claim deed is filed, this alerts them to change of ownership. In conjunction, the Redaction of Social Security Numbers continue to help defray identify theft and block out personal information on documents.

Our Office Equipment List and 5-Year Inventory/Technology Equipment Plan were continually updated and proved invaluable in the beginning stages of our Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery Plan.

Real time replication of off-site images and indexing tested successfully and continues for disaster recovery purposes; while a Laredo search was loaded onto our off-site replication server. Communication continued with our 24-7 point person assigned by our vendor (at no cost) providing us with customized service, addressing our ongoing questions, and keeping our downtime to a minimum.

Incorporated use of virtualization and VMware technology to increase the efficiency and cost-effectiveness by consolidating more applications on fewer physical servers.

Future electronic recording will reduce overall costs and save time by simplifying the recording process; enabling the office to keep up with future growth. Various forms were created for eRecording in the near future – eRecord Agreement, Escrow Request/Authorization Form, Indexing Guidelines for eRecording, Indexing Abbreviation List, and in-office (batch) form. An accounting system for collecting, calculating, and transferring escrow funds to the County General Fund is in the works with a local financial institution, our software vendor, and the County Auditor and Treasurer. Also, many adjustments will be required internally on our Excel spreadsheets for balancing our books.

Bar-code printers were installed to interconnect future electronic recordings with those recorded in office. The bar code incorporates a document number and pages, eliminating the need for the Scanning Department to insert patches between documents. Also, as a result of bar-coding, microfilm numbering (the process of numbering each page of every document) has ceased; the scanning process now adds an annotation with a document number on each page. A quality control/document prep station has replaced the microfilm numbering position, to increase productivity in processing documents.

The Halon Fire System in our computer server room was completed. Dampers were installed in the ceiling to effectively seal the room in the event of a fire and the Halon gas has to be released.

A 72-hour demo for Laredo was implemented for potential subscribers to preview and test the program, and a *Free Search* option on the Recorder's website was added to allow the public to search limited information. These search options are particularly helpful when customers are out-of-town or unable to visit our office in person.

The County GIS Department signed on with our complimentary Laredo Program; joining the McHenry County Assessor, Treasurer, Planning & Development, Health, Transportation and State's Attorney offices making it possible for their staff to search records and make copies from their locations; saving time, labor and volumes of paper for each office.

Worn anti-fatigue mats were replaced in the Recorder's Records Library with ½-inch thick mats to prevent slips and falls in the workplace and reduce the risk of Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD's) of the legs and back from standing for extended periods on hard floors.

The Recorder installed a T-Card Scheduling Board in her office to use as a tool to aid in the planning and scheduling of cross-training. Extensive, daily cross-training continues between departments for increased knowledge and efficiency in staff development. A second Flex Executive Desktop Organizer was set-up at the public service counter in an effort to share information about the office. A PVC sign stating total documents and images currently available on computer was hung above our public service counter to be updated accordingly.

Staff attended seminars for *Assertive Leadership Skills* and "*Get Motivated!*" along with the Illinois Digital Technology Conference, various Recorder conferences and Zone IV meetings. Two staff members completed valuable training and received Heartsaver AED Program Certification. A most informative Command Spanish class was attended by two staff members; as a result of this class two bi-lingual reference sheets were designed (one with common, everyday words; and the other with requirements for recording) to assist Spanish-speaking customers at our public service counter, or on the telephone. Extensive, detailed training in our Record's Library continued and staff created quick reference notebooks to assist customers. The Recoding & Public Service Department reviewed subdivision and condominium plats weekly to discuss requirements for recording, pricing, and information to look for on plats.

Our Microfilm Department initiated a project to search older military discharge records on computer by veteran's name; rather than in the *Solider and Sailor* books now secure in a fireproof safe to protect private information. In addition, original microfilm containing these records was removed from our power file and secured within the Microfilm Department. A PowerPoint reference manual for Microfilm Procedures was created for use as a training tool and to help with specific tasks in the department. The Recorder renegotiated agreements for preventive maintenance on micrographic equipment; savings realized allowed funds for the purchase of a technologically advanced reader/printer enabling staff to view and instantly fax quality images via computer from older film and aperture cards.

The Mail Department stream-lined daily tasks and records kept on rejected documents. They also continued developing a resource of customer contact information i.e. speaking with same supervisors and/or document preparers in an effort to reduce repetitive errors.

Three staff members were recognized for 20 years of service to the Recorder's Office and all staff members were presented with years-of-service certificates along with service pins to acknowledge years worked and dedication to the Recorder's Office.

Monthly meetings between supervisors, lead persons, and staff continued to provide an excellent opportunity for knowledge and communication to be shared and for questions to be resolved. They also set precedence for the high level of customer service expected by the Recorder; along with efficiency and courteous customer service.

Technology, training, goal-setting, long-term planning, business continuity, and teamwork all continues to be a focus for Recorder Walters and her staff in 2007; while continually striving for accuracy and cost efficient ways to maintain an effective, state-of-the-art land records management system.

The Recorder's Office generated approximately \$8.7 million in revenue in the 2006 fiscal year of which approximately \$950,000 was collected for GIS (Geographic Information System) development and \$794,000 was collected and paid to the Illinois Housing Surcharge Fund.

FY2008 Goals

- Begin eRecording prior to start of 2008 Fiscal Year.
- Carry on with Job Classification/Job Analysis Process working in conjunction with the Human Resources Director and RSM McGladrey as needed to determine appropriate staff positions and acceptable compensation.
- Finalize Cost-Based Recording Fee Study for Recorder's Automation fund; determining sufficient revenue to adequately meet personnel and technology-related expenses that are necessary to properly maintain the office and its future growth.
- Continue indexing digital images back to 1965 of Backfile Conversion Phase III (Years 1973 to 1962).
- Proceed with conversion of microfilm dated prior to 1965; scanning film images to DVD for increased clarity and readability. These cleaned-up and enhanced DVD images are then imported onto our computer system to be indexed; making productivity faster.
- Research equipment and operations of machines that convert microfilm to digital image for possible use within the Recorder's Office.
- Replace Jukebox (purchased in 2002) with 2 SCSI connected shelves containing several drives to store images on our SAN for our Laredo Search Program. Replace several servers with a new server that will perform. Convert remaining computer servers to function in a Virtual Environment.
- Upgrade server operating system from Server 2000 to Server 2003 for enhanced security, increased reliability and management of services.

- Replicate iDoc databases off-site for Disaster Recovery, and refine equipment list and instructions for recovery site, and update as needed. Continue updating 5-Year Inventory/Technology Equipment Plan to include 2012.
- Continue cross-training as the office workload allows, and further Spanish education.
- Achieve and maintain 3-day turnaround on original document return.
- Research envelope-sealing machines for increased efficiency in mailing back original documents.
- Continue monthly meetings between departments. Consistently upgrade and maintain Recorder's Office Procedure Manual for all departments within the office to assist in cross-training, and aid future employees. Office Equipment List, and Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery Plan. Maintain teamwork throughout the office and continue to stress the value of each and every employee.