



Office of the President

**To:** Honorable John P. Daley, *Chairman*  
Cook County Board of Commissioners, Finance Committee

**From:** Lanetta Haynes-Turner  
Chief of Staff  
President's Office

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

**Date:** November 6, 2020

**Re:** Request for Information from FY2021 Department Budget Hearing

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The following information is provided in response to questions posed at our department's hearing held on November 2, 2020 to discuss the FY2021 Executive Budget Recommendation.

**I. Request ID#1007-1**

Commissioner Degnen asked for the status of the "Revenue Recovery Unit" that was established in FY20, what was the projected additional revenue goal, was any work actually done in FY20, and why this program is reducing total FTE count by 1.

**Response:**

The Department of Revenue (DOR) is currently in the process of hiring a manager level position for this unit. In addition to the COVID pandemic causing significant delays in the hiring process, two previous postings did not yield a qualified candidate. A third posting is in progress, including requesting assistance from BHR for targeted advertisement of the vacancy.

As all areas of Cook County were asked to reduce their spending, one of the three vacant positions in this unit was selected as DOR anticipated delays in the full operation of this unit for FY2021. Once a manager is hired, he/she will be working closely with the State's Attorney's Office, which, per state statute, is responsible for County collections. The manager will be involved in organizing the efforts of the unit, acclimating and training a current staff member that is assigned to the unit, hiring an additional vacancy in the unit and managing further collection efforts with the State's Attorney's Office and/or one or more outside collection agencies that will be selected during the current countywide RFP process. As the unit will not be fully functioning until later in the year, DOR felt this reduction was appropriate. DOR has already discussed adding the eliminated position back into the budget in FY2022 as things stabilize and we move forward.

The pre-COVID estimate for a full year revenue goal for this unit was \$2.5M. Some progress on secondary collections has been accomplished in FY2020 by the current resource in this unit, including placing accounts with the State Local Debt Recovery program and reviewing and cleaning data received back from the former outside collection agency.

## **II. Request ID#1007-2**

Commissioner Degnen asked what the impact of FTE reduction is (3) in the Compliance program on external audits and if that has any relation to the County Auditor operations.

### **Response:**

All areas of Cook County were asked to reduce their spending in FY2021. The three vacant positions in question in the Compliance unit were selected by DOR as part of those reductions due to a decrease in the number of out-of-town and on-site audits that can be scheduled in FY2021 because of the ongoing COVID pandemic. DOR has already discussed adding the eliminated positions back into the budget in FY2022 as things stabilize and we move forward. While the overall number of audits is expected to decrease in FY2021, DOR will be prioritizing audits where non-compliance is more likely to result in revenue collections.

DOR auditors perform audits of Cook County taxpayers related to the proper administration of our Home Rule Taxes. Their duties do not overlap with those of the Cook County Auditor's Office or the external auditors that perform the County's Annual Financial Audit. To that extent, these reductions will not have an effect on either of the other areas.

## **III. Request ID#1009-1**

Commissioner Miller asked for an update on the Integrated Property Tax System timeline and if any updates will be reflected in the budget book summary.

### **Response:**

In October 2020, the Assessor's Office went live with Phase 1.0 of IPTS, which includes Permits and Sales as part of the Computer-Aided Mass Appraisal (CAMA) functionality for the next cycle.

The Assessor's Office will continue to roll out components and complete Phase 1.5 by April 2021. Tyler is actively working with the Bureau of Technology's Project Managers to plan a detailed tax implementation schedule, which will include the offices of the County Clerk and Treasurer. This phase is expected to be complete by December 2022. The Bureau of Technology will work with the Budget Office to revise Volume I when preparing for the Final Adopted Budget Books for publication.

#### **IV. Request ID#1031-1**

Commissioner Degnen asked if there were any energy savings from the County transitioning to work from home.

#### **Response:**

Due to the impact of COVID-19, Cook County facilities have been at reduced occupancy since mid-March of 2020. In this time, the County has recognized an electricity savings of approximately \$129,000 from January 1st through November 2nd as compared to the same time in 2019 from buildings open in 2019.

However, additional facilities have been added to our portfolio in FY2020 that have increased the overall electricity spend. The increased spend for these additional facilities is outlined below:

Blue Island Health Clinic	\$33,000 (above budgeted amount)
Surge Center	\$118,000 (not budgeted for FY2020)

With these additional costs, the overall spend on electricity has increased by approximately \$22,000. Data for natural gas usage is still being analyzed but savings should be minimal since the reduced occupancy began just before cooling season. Our buildings are cooled using electricity as the primary source of energy.

#### **Other Factors that Influenced Potential Savings:**

We always had people in the buildings, which means setback temperatures and lighting schedules were not completely shut down. These are the largest uses of energy in a building. The impact of occupants usually only accounts for 2-5% of energy usage.

It was a warm summer. Average temperature was 5 degrees higher than 2019, and electricity usage goes up to cool buildings. Provident, IFM, DEMRS and Stroger saw a combined increase of \$82,833, which is expected given the pandemic.

The Cook County Professional Building, which did not have data in 2019 due to malfunctioning utility meters, has had an increase of \$74,000 over the budgeted amount for FY2020.

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