

Annual Report of the Budget & Structure Interest Group: May, 2020-April, 2020

Areas of Focus for 2019-20 (approved at May 2019 Annual Meeting):

1. Cook County and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) government organization and oversight
2. Transparency of board operations
3. Observing/reporting and assessing budget processes
4. Follow-up on applicable LWVCC positions and past studies (e.g., performance management and Recorder/Clerk 2020 merger)

As detailed below, Budget and Structure has been very active and has accomplished much in all these areas of focus during this past year. We continue to build on what we have learned and what we have done in past years, and expect to continue to make a positive difference. PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING US!

Activities/Accomplishments of Budget & Structure related to Cook County Government (Note: activities/accomplishments related to the MWRD may be found in a separate report)

Structure, organization, transparency (covering Areas of Focus 1 and 2)

- Reviewed Board and Committee agendas throughout the year for **items of interest** to League; communicated these to Observer Chair to assist Observers, as well as other Interest Groups when applicable; advised whether the League should take action; and followed status of items.
 - Among the items watching for on the Cook County Board agendas is a proposed easement agreement between MWRD and Cook County for North Shore Chanel, which is also of particular interest to the Evanston and Wilmette Leagues. Thus far, this agreement has not appeared on an agenda.
- In response to suggestions from the League, the Cook County Board changed its procedures to provide for a separate meeting for dealing with the **Consent Agenda** (resolutions honoring and commemorating persons and entities and anniversaries). Budget & Structure has found this change to be a great improvement, allowing the other business of the Committees and Board to proceed in a timely manner.
- Reviewed quarterly public reports of the **Office of the Independent Inspector General** for both Cook County and the MWRD. These reports illustrate the need for and value of having this Office.
- As a result of League action last year, the Cook County Litigation Subcommittee began holding periodic meetings with the Court-appointed compliance administrators and the representatives from the offices of the Assessor, Clerk of the Court, and Recorder of Deeds which are under Court supervision as a result of ongoing **Shakman cases**. These cases require that all Cook County offices hire, fire, promote, and pay based on merit, not politics, for all but a few “exempt” employees. Budget & Structure has submitted proposed questions, which the Subcommittee members have used. Based on what the Court-appointed compliance administrators have reported, it is unlikely that any of these offices will be found to be in substantial compliance with *Shakman* until after 2020.
 - In April, 2020, a U.S. Magistrate appointed a Special Master for the Cook County Clerk’s office as a result of a complaint filed in the *Shakman* case. The Clerk reportedly will be appealing the order. B&S will monitor and determine what, if any, steps it should take at the County level.

Budget process and transparency (covering Area of Focus 3)

- Observed Mid-Year budget hearings in July. Observer Report on web site. No tax or fee increases expected for 2020.

- B&S members, as well as members of the Criminal Justice and Cook County Health Interest Group, reviewed the Annual Performance Management Report for 2018, as well as the Executive (proposed) Budget for 2020 and drafted questions for Commissioners to use regarding performance during budget meetings. Finance Chair Daley sent questions to the applicable departments and asked for responses.
- Coordinated observers for the budget meetings held by the Cook County Finance Committee with all departments, as well as final meetings amending and approving the 2020 budget. (All reports posted under “Observer Reports” on LWVCC web site.)

Follow-up on past studies (covering Area of Focus 4)

- Merger of Cook County Recorder’s Office into Clerk’s by December 2020: Reviewed quarterly reports and submitted comments for 2nd quarter report in 2019. Pointed out failure to include a timeline of benchmarks as required by Cook County Board resolution. Clerk representative stated next reports will contain timelines, which they have. Reviewing 4th quarter report for 2019 and will likely file comments once appears on Committee agenda. Will be watching to see how coronavirus shutdown impacts the merger.
- Performance Management: President’s Office moved function to the Office of Research, Operations, & Innovation (“ROI”) under the Chief Administrative Officer from the Budget Department. Met with the Chief Administrative Officer and the Director of ROI, who outlined the new performance management system and told us that the measures departments were going to be using would be tied to the department’s mission and would emphasize quality and outcome to a greater extent. Prepared comments submitted by League to the Cook County Finance Committee which reviewed related ordinance changes and urged that as soon as practicable that all the aspects of the new system be expanded beyond the areas reporting to the President. Will be looking for the Annual Performance Management Report for 2019 (which was to be available this April, but may be delayed because of the coronavirus) to see whether changes reflected there, as well as in the upcoming proposed budget for 2021.