



**Lake County, Illinois  
Commission on Government Reform and  
Accountability**

**January 2018**

**Management  
Partners**







Lake County Commission on  
Government Reform and Accountability  
[www.lakecountyil.gov/govreform](http://www.lakecountyil.gov/govreform)

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January 10, 2018

The Honorable Aaron Lawlor  
Chair  
Lake County Board  
18 North County Street  
Waukegan, Illinois 60085

Dear Chair Lawlor:

On behalf of the members of the Lake County Commission on Government Reform and Accountability, we are pleased to submit this report of our recommendations for governance of the County.

Our charge was to examine the method of electing the County board chair, the size of the County board, and redistricting options. We conducted in-depth research, heard from distinguished experts, and participated in an extensive dialogue about the topics we were challenged to explore. In addition, we discussed and identified other topics that deserve additional consideration.

What was clear from the beginning is that each member is passionate about improving the quality of each of our resident's lives and is committed to identifying the best path forward.

We appreciate the opportunity to serve the residents of Lake County in this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred Foreman".

Fred Foreman, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Ryg".

Kathy Ryg, Vice Chair



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## Introduction

Lake County, Illinois was created by the state of Illinois in 1839. It has evolved from a rural agricultural county with a population of 2,634 persons to an urban county with a population of 703,047 (2016 American Communities Survey). It is the third largest county in Illinois and is one of the six “collar counties” surrounding Cook County, the home of Chicago. The other five collar counties are DuPage, Kane, Kendall, McHenry and Will. The seven-county metropolitan area had an estimated 8.3 million people in 2010. In 2010 the collar counties comprised 25% of the population of the state of Illinois, or 3,186,673 people, of which Lake County comprises 22%.

Lake County has a history of asking independent citizen commissions to study the efficiency and accountability of the county’s governance structure. Other recent commissions include the 1977 Lake County Governmental Study Commission I, which recommended some organizational and professional management changes. The 1990 Lake County Governmental Study Commission II and the 2000 Modernizing Lake County Commission followed with recommendations on the county board’s size, the election of the chair and appointment of some countywide elected officials. Although not all of the commissions’ recommendations were implemented, their appointment demonstrates the county board’s willingness to invite independent citizen input on critical structural reform questions.

On March 14, 2017, the Lake County Board adopted Resolution 17-0314 establishing the Lake County Commission on Government Reform and Accountability (Appendix 1). The County Board appointed fifteen residents broadly representative of the County’s diverse population to serve. The recommendations developed by the commission are listed in Attachment A.

Fred Foreman, retired U. S. Attorney and Chief Judge, served as chair and Kathy Ryg, retired Illinois State Representative, served as vice chair. Management Partners served as facilitator and staff to the Commission.

## Commission Charge

The Lake County Board established the Lake County Commission on Government Reform and Accountability in response to State legislation (Senate Bill 669, filed by Senator Link, passed in House and Senate but vetoed by Governor Rauner, with no veto-override attempted) requiring the County Board Chair be elected countywide effective in 2020 and the subsequent County Board Resolution 17-026 seeking amendments to the legislation.

The County Board subsequently created the Lake County Commission on Government Reform and Accountability, requesting legislative support on specific reform measures on the 2018 ballot. The Commission's charge was to:

*...evaluate proposed reform measures and report on key findings based on its ability to enhance accountability to the public, provide for an effective and responsive government structure, maintain strong professional and ethical standards, and reform redistricting to mitigate political influence.*

The specific reform measures being evaluated are binding or advisory referenda questions on the ballot in 2018, including:

1. A countywide elected chairman in 2022;
2. Redistricting reform that leverages the Independent Map Amendment process; and
3. An advisory question on streamlining county government by reducing the size of the County Board.

The establishing resolution specified the responsibilities of the Commission to:

1. Analyze state and county governments that have transitioned to an independent redistricting system by evaluating their governance structure, methodology, implementation and outcomes. Utilize information from proposals, such as the Illinois Independent Map Amendment.

2. Study similar counties that transitioned to a countywide elected chairman by identifying key issues, including board rules, challenges, opportunities and decisions that were made to enhance the stated goals of this resolution. Identify best practices and policies used to balance authority between the County Board, Chairman and County Administrator. Prioritize models that ensure strong accountability by elected leaders to the public; maintain strong professional standards; and set high ethical standards as well as safeguards that are in line with the spirit and intent of Lake County's Ethics Ordinance and Standards of Conduct.
3. Examine, assess and report similar counties' efforts to reduce the size of the board. Identify positive and negative impacts on efficiency, constituent services, policy decisions and compliance with the federal Voting Rights Act.
4. Provide opportunities for stakeholders and the public to share ideas on additional reforms that could be studied in the future.

Lastly, the board requested that the Commission discharge its duties in a manner that demonstrates "understanding and appreciating the values and attributes" that they believe in, specifically:

*Fiscally responsible, professional and ethical principles that have resulted in balanced annual budgets and a consistent AAA bond rating, as well as a collaborative and bipartisan culture that values relationships and commitment to service, trust in a professional staff and managerial form of government, and prohibitions against political patronage, nepotism or cronyism.*

### **Members of the Commission**

- Mr. Peter Bensinger, Board Member, Illinois Independent Maps Amendment
- Hon. Karen Darch, Mayor, Village of Barrington
- Hon. Fred Foreman, Retired U.S. Attorney and Chief Judge, *Chair*
- Mr. Steve Kim, Managing Partner, RKJ Legal and Commissioner, Illinois Human Rights Commission
- Mr. Chuck Lamphere, Lake County Partners Board of Governors
- Hon. Terry Link, Chairman, Lake County Democratic Party
- Mr. Ike Magalis, Retired County Administrator
- Mr. Laurence Msall, President, Civic Federation of Chicago
- Hon. JoAnn Osmond, Retired State Representative
- Hon. Kathleen O'Connor, Libertyville Township Supervisor

- Pastor Eugene Roberson, First Corinthian Baptist Church
- Hon. Mike Rummel, Republican Lake County Board Member, *ex-officio*
- Hon. Kathy Ryg, Retired State Representative, *Vice Chair*
- Ms. Mary Schaafsma, Executive Director, Illinois League of Women Voters
- Hon. Mark Shaw, Chairman, Lake County Republican Party

## Methodology

When the Commission was established, a schedule of eight meetings was developed for conducting the research and discussion. The Commission chair and vice-chair were selected and worked with County staff to identify a general work plan.

To support the Commission’s deliberations, Management Partners was engaged to staff the Commission meetings, provide support in developing agendas and meeting minutes (provided in Attachment B), conduct research into topics of interest to the Commission, identify background materials to inform Commission members on specific topics, identify and procure expert testimony at Commission meetings, write the draft and final reports, and provide technical advice on best practices in County governance and operations. Table 1 shows the meeting schedule for the Commission.

*Table 1. Commission Meeting Schedule*

Meeting Date	Location	Purpose
May 31, 2017	Central Permit Facility	Introduction and Commission purpose, background on the County structure and decision-making process, and an overview of the Open Meetings Act, Freedom of Information Act, Lake County Ethics Ordinance and Standards of Conduct provided by County Board Chair Aaron Lawlor and County Administrator Barry Burton.
June 21, 2017	Central Permit Facility	Introduction to the Management Partners team, initial discussion of the topics, identification of needed research, and adoption of the schedule.
July 19, 2017	Central Permit Facility	Expert testimony and discussion on redistricting including legal issues and by presenters Ruth Greenwood, Senior Legal Counsel for Voting Rights and Redistricting Campaign at the Campaign Legal Center and George Tzanetopoulos, partner at BakerHosteler.
August 23, 2017	Health Department	Expert testimony on redistricting principles by Cindi Canary, Executive Director of Independent Map Amendment. A presentation by and discussion with former Lake County Board Chair Jim LaBelle on his experience as a board elected chair. Presentation on “Opportunities for Government Efficiency” by Dr. Norman Walzer from Northern Illinois University.

Meeting Date	Location	Purpose
September 13, 2017	Health Department	Presentations and discussion with State Representative Mayfield, Representative Yingling and State Senator Bush on an at-large elected chair, redistricting and intergovernmental consolidation and collaboration. Interviews with at large elected neighboring county board chairs, Jack Franks of McHenry and Dan Cronin of DuPage and with an at large elected county executive, Lawrence Walsh of Will County. An interview with former at large elected Kane County Board Chair, State Senator Karen McConnaughay. Presentation by Dr. Eric Zeemering on "County Board Structure and the Goals of Institutional Reform."
October 4, 2017	Health Department	Workshop to discuss potential recommendations to the Lake County Board.
November 15, 2017	Department of Transportation	Review of the draft report and discussion.
December 20, 2017	Health Department	Ratification of the revised report.

To develop a common knowledge base among the commission members, the Commission embarked on a fact-finding process to review topical information about the election of the county board chair, the size of the county board, independent redistricting and other topics that emerged. Resources included presentations from experts and experienced officials (Appendix 2), research memos (Attachment C) and background reading (Appendix 3 and Appendix 4). Each meeting from July through September was organized to provide information on these topics with time for questions and discussion.

The strategy included:

- Learning about the current Lake County organizational structure from the Lake County Board Chair Aaron Lawlor and County Administrator Barry Burton.
- Hearing from experts on independent redistricting, including those with direct experience with previous Lake County redistricting and those involved in Illinois and national independent map initiatives.
- Getting the perspective of state officials and current and former at-large elected county chairmen from the collar counties on the proposed questions.
- Inviting a former Lake County Chair to share his insights on serving as a peer-elected county board chair and on how the size of the county board impacted representation and decision-making efficiency during his tenure.
- Listening to academicians involved in public policy studies describe their research and experience around collaboration and

consolidation and the method of electing a chair and setting the county board size.

- Inviting community groups representing minority populations to provide input to the Commission.
- Researching statutes, ordinances, articles and other information on these topics including resources from the Illinois Association of County Board Members and Commissioners and the National Association of Counties.
- Inviting Lake County Board Members to submit comments to the Commission.
- Providing time for Commission member questions and discussion with the presenters and each other.

Table 2 shows a detailed list of the presentations provided to the Commission.

*Table 2. Presenters to the Lake County Commission on Government Reform and Accountability*

Presenter	Organization(s)	Topic
Ruth Greenwood	Senior Legal Counsel for Voting Rights and Redistricting Campaign, Campaign Legal Center	Redistricting Reform Options for Lake County
George Tzanetopoulos	Partner at BakerHosteler	Redistricting Selected Legal Issues
Cynthia Canary	Executive Director, Independent Map Initiative	Redistricting Principles
Jim LaBelle	Former Lake County Board Chair 1984-1987; 1998-2000	The Role of the Chair and Size of the County Board
Dr. Norman Walzer	Senior Research Scholar Center for Governmental Studies, Northern Illinois University	Opportunities for Government Efficiency
Representative Rita Mayfield Representative Sam Yingling Senator Melinda Bush	State District # 60 State District # 62 State Senate District #31, Former Lake County Board member	The Method of Electing the Chair, Consolidation and Collaboration and other Reform Issues
Senator Karen McConnaughay Chair Dan Cronin Chair Jack Franks County Executive Larry Walsh	State District #33, Former Kane County Chair DuPage County McHenry County Will County	The Role of the Chair and Size of the County Board
Dr. Eric Zeemering	Assistant Professor, Public Administration, School of Public and Global Affairs, Northern Illinois University	County Board Structure and the Goals of Institutional Reform
Judge Jorge Ortiz	Nineteenth Judicial Court Chief Judge	Election of the Circuit Court Clerk

The information gathered through this methodology was used in evaluating the questions before the Commission in a facilitated workshop on October 4, 2017.

Based on the workshop, a draft report was developed and presented to the Commission for feedback and discussion on November 15, 2017 before finalizing the report and submitting it to the County Board in December 2017.

The Chair and Vice Chair will present this report to the Lake County Board in January 2018.

The remainder of this report reviews the current structure of Lake County governance in relation to the questions posed to the Commission and the recommendations developed by the Commission.

## Current Lake County Government

According to the 2017 budget, Lake County has 219 taxing units (1 county government, 52 municipalities, 18 townships, 51 school districts, 21 park districts, along with a number of library districts, fire districts, and others.)

The county form of government is established by the Illinois Constitution Article VII Section 3, which mandates that a county board be elected in each county. The county board serves as the legislative and executive branch of county government. It can take the form of commission, county executive, or township government. Lake County is a township form of county government, which statute allows to have between five and 29 members. Lake County has 21 board members that are elected in single districts and serve four-year terms.

### ***County Board***

The County Board oversees a 2017 budget of \$512 million in six service areas: 1) public works and transportation, 2) judicial and public safety, 3) finance and administration, 4) election and records, 5) planning, building and zoning, 6) health and community services.

In general, the County Board:

- Approves the budget,
- Approves contracts,
- Provides policy direction,
- Members serve on five standing committee,
- Establishes the board rules, and
- Hires the County Administrator.

The board works through five standing committees. The committees and duties of each committee are defined in the County rules and operating procedures. The current committees are defined on the County's website and are either standing committees or other.

The standing committees are:

- *Financial & Administrative Committee*—Responsible for County budgeting, wages, employee benefits, capital improvements, and other administrative items.
- *Health & Community Services Committee*—Responsible for community and economic development, housing and tourism, and budget and ordinance reviews for health-related issues.
- *Law & Judicial Committee*—Responsible for setting many court fees, and oversight of the Emergency Telephone Systems Board (911).
- *Planning, Building & Zoning Committee*—Responsible for Land Use Planning, Comprehensive Planning, and building and zoning issues.
- *Public Works & Transportation Committee*—Responsible for County transportation, water districts, and sanitary districts.

The other committees are:

- *Committee of the Whole*—Responsible for overall standing committee coordination and overall County policies and objectives.
- *Diversity and Inclusion Committee*—Responsible for fostering an understanding of diverse cultures, races, religions and beliefs in Lake County.
- *Ethics and Oversight Committee*—Reviews and revises the County's Ethics Ordinance and to assist in the enforcement of the Lake County Standards of Conduct Ordinance authorized by Public Act 98-0779.
- *Rules Committee*—Responsible for reviewing and recommending changes to the Rules of Order and Operational Procedures.

### **County Board Chair**

The chair is elected by peer board members for a two-year term. The chair's responsibilities are defined in the County Rules of Order and Operational Procedures, which are revised and adopted every two years with the election of the board chair. The chair:

- Serves as an ex-officio member on all committees,
- Presides over all County Board meetings,
- Serves as the Liquor Control Commissioner for unincorporated areas,
- Adds committee items deemed time sensitive with the concurrence of the committee chair,
- Authorizes the addition of recognition or items of extraordinary significance to the agenda,

- Executes board approved contracts,
- May authorize requests for a legal opinion from the state's attorney,
- Establishes ad hoc and special committees subject to majority approval by the Board,
- Establishes standing committees and appoints the chair, vice-chair and members subject to majority approval by the Board,
- Presents appointments to all other boards, commissions, districts and other authorities (over 300 appointees to 70+ units of government),
- Serves on the Lake County Partners Board of Directors
- Leads and provides oversight on economic development strategies, and
- Serves on regional groups (including the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning).

### ***County Administrator***

The County Administrator is hired by and reports to the County Board. The County Administrator's duties are detailed in a county ordinance.

The County Administrator:

- Implements policies of the County Board, and the goals and strategies identified in the strategic plan,
- Oversees appointed department heads,
- Researches and analyzes policy decisions and makes recommendations to the board,
- Develops and oversees the annual budget and capital improvement plan,
- Oversees the day-to-day operations of the County, and
- Coordinates and/or collaborates on countywide activities involving departments with countywide elected and appointed department heads.

### ***Countywide Elected Officials***

There are eight countywide elected officials. Brief descriptions from the County's website describe the duties of each:

- *Clerk of Circuit Court* is the official keeper of records for all judicial matters brought into the County's circuit court.
- *County Clerk* maintains the County Board records, public filings, vital records and manages elections.

- *Coroner* provides medicolegal death investigations and maintains historical data, identifies trends and offers recommendations to help prevent deaths of similar circumstances.
- *Regional Official of Education* serves as an advocate for education by providing positive leadership, performing regulatory functions as directed by the School Code of Illinois and the Illinois State Board of Education, coordinating and delivering state and local services, and disseminating information for educators, school districts and the community.
- *Sheriff* protects the public health and safety of the County's diverse communities by maintaining order, upholding laws and defending the rights of all people.
- *Recorder of Deeds* records, preserves and provides access to public records in the most accurate, efficient, responsible and professional manner.
- *State Attorney* prosecutes criminal acts, recognizes victims' rights, works with criminal justice partners to make communities safe, and provides legal representation to the County and its elected and appointed officials.
- *Treasurer* manages banking relationships and invests temporary surpluses; as the Ex Officio County Collector, the Office bills, collects, and distributes real estate taxes to County taxing bodies.

### ***Financial Condition***

The County maintains an AAA bond rating and has demonstrated fiscal prudence. It is widely acknowledged as being well managed. Currently, the County represents 7% of the total property tax bill for many residents. A breakdown of the typical tax allocation was provided by the County and is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Allocation of Lake County Property Tax Dollar by Entity



Ensuring that the Commission’s recommendations support the continuation of the County’s fiscal stability was a key consideration in the charge from the County Board.

### **Prior Commissions**

Lake County’s current structure has been informed by prior Lake County commissions on governance. The 1977 and 1990 Lake County Governmental Study Commissions I and II and the 2000 *Modernizing Lake County* report assessed the County’s governance needs and made recommendations for improvement. Although not all of the Commissions’ recommendations were implemented, many were— leading to the appointment of a County Administrator; changing the method of election of board members from multi-member districts to single-member districts; and encouraging the County Board to become a policy-focused body.

Perhaps more important than the outcome of the prior Commissions’ recommendations is the demonstrated value that the County Board puts on hearing from independent citizens on key governance questions. The 2017 Lake County Commission on Government Reform and Accountability continues this tradition.

## Commission Recommendations

The Commission considered the expert testimony presented as well as background information about the four areas (redistricting, the method of electing the chair, the size of the County Board, and other reform topics) to develop recommendations for the County Board.

For each of the subject areas described in the Commission charge, there are several options for reform. As part of the fact-finding, the Commission requested background research on each of the areas to determine what choices were available. The tables included under each topic were provided to the Commission prior to the October 4, 2017 workshop and were based on research and discussion by Commission members.

The Commission’s final charge was to “provide opportunities for stakeholders and the public to share ideas on additional reforms that could be studied in the future.” Those that seemed to have the most interest and potential impact are included below.

### ***Redistricting***

Based on the expert testimony and research conducted on redistricting, four options were developed for consideration by the Commission, as outlined in Table 3.

*Table 3. Redistricting Options*

Options		Redistricting Process
<b>1</b>	No Change. Continue with current County Board Practice.	Get input from stakeholders when the redistricting committee develops a plan. The County Board reviews and approves the final redistricting plan.
<b>2</b>	Independent Redistricting Principles Commission	The County Board establishes an independent commission to develop principles consistent with fair mapping for the County Board to follow when developing a redistricting plan.
<b>3</b>	Independent Redistricting Commission	The County Board establishes an independent commission to develop a redistricting plan based on fair mapping principles. The County Board then approves the redistricting plan.

Options		Redistricting Process
4	Independent Redistricting Review Board	The County Board establishes an independent review board to review the results of its County Board-generated redistricting plan against fair mapping principles.

During his presentation, Mr. Tzanetopoulos, Partner at BakerHosteler, spoke about the importance of those who are involved in the redistricting process having a clear understanding about legal requirements. He stressed the importance of applying the U.S. and Illinois Voting Rights Act to any redistricting proposal. Because redistricting involves balancing and prioritizing many competing interests, it is important to stay informed about the legal challenges to redistricting decisions to understand what issues are most important to voters.

Ms. Greenwood, Senior Legal Counsel for Voting Rights and Redistricting Campaign, Campaign Legal Center, spoke more specifically about using an independent redistricting commission, using an electoral system that permits voters to prioritize candidates rather than choosing one candidate, and choosing a redistricting process that is transparent to voters.

One way of ensuring fairness in redistricting is to adopt principles for undertaking reapportionment discussions and decisions. Agreeing to the principles to apply should come before choosing an option for how to proceed with the process. Cynthia Canary, the executive director of the Illinois Independent Map Amendment, identified elements that are considered most important in maintaining fairness:

- Meet the requirements of the U. S. Constitution and federal or state voting rights laws;
- Represent constituents;
- Represent “communities of interest” and minority communities;
- Maximize voter choice, encourage electoral candidacy and electoral competitiveness;
- Engage the public in understanding the plan;
- Ensure the plan is transparent;
- Take a nonpartisan approach;
- Ensure contiguous geography; and
- Consider criteria for selecting independent redistricting members.

It is critical to have a transparent process that is understandable to the public when discussing redistricting. New opportunities abound to expand public education and citizen involvement throughout the redistricting process. These include using mapping technology, clear

explanations, in English and common non-English languages present in the County, and disclosure of the outcomes of redistricting and the areas of disagreement.

At least three counties, San Diego, California; Tompkins, New York; and Dane County, Wisconsin have established independent redistricting commissions to draw maps for redistricting based on the 2020 census. The San Diego County Board required legislative approval followed by voter approval to establish its commission of five members of state or federal judges. The final map goes to the voters for approval.

In Tompkins County the commission has nine members appointed by the County Legislature and the final plan must be approved by the County Legislature.

Dane County's Board of Supervisors established an independent redistricting commission of nine to 11 members after a 2014 citizen advisory referendum. The commission will be appointed by the County Board chair and the County Clerk. The County Board retains final approval of the map.

### **Redistricting Recommendations**

There is increased local, state and national attention to what assumptions or principles lie behind redistricting decisions. The term "fair maps" has emerged as a concept for creating an independent mapping approach to redistricting that minimizes gerrymandering. Although there are several variations on how a fair maps concept might apply to County redistricting, some recognized principles can be addressed at its outset.

During the Commission's deliberations, eight principles were developed by the Illinois Redistricting Collaborative that supported many of the concepts. Commission members felt these were appropriate for the County to adopt.

#### **Recommendation 1. Apply redistricting principles adopted by the Illinois Redistricting Collaborative to any process for reapportionment following the 2020 census and advocate for these principles.**

The principles published by the collaborative were:

1. *Comply with the U.S. Constitution.* The process must be in accordance with the requirements of the U.S. Constitution. All persons, regardless of age, citizenship, immigration status, ability or eligibility to vote, should be accurately counted through the

- Census. In accordance with the U.S. Constitution, districts should be populated equally, as nearly as is practicable.
2. *Comply with Federal and State Voting Rights Act.* The process must emphasize representation and be fully compliant with both the federal Voting Rights Act (VRA) and all state voting rights laws, including the Illinois Voting Rights Act. The letter and the spirit of the VRA should be reflected in redistricting to protect the rights of voters of color. To advance these foundational goals, redistricting decision-makers should exercise their latitude under the law to create majority-minority, coalition, and influence districts.
  3. *Comprise and Uphold a Non-Partisanship Process.* The process should be independent of partisan political considerations. Mapmaking must include provisions and resources ensuring independence from political parties and legislative leaders. The process must include diverse decision-makers who reflect a broad range of viewpoints and who prioritize people and communities. Mapping consultants and software contracts, paid for with public resources, should be awarded on merit rather than partisan affiliation.
  4. *Maximize Voter Choice, Electoral Candidacy and Competitiveness.* The process should result in maximizing voter choice, encouraging electoral candidacy and enhancing electoral competitiveness.
  5. *Recognize and Preserve Communities of Interest.* The process should give consideration to true communities of interest. To the extent possible, but secondary to the protection of voting rights, populations with common social, ethnic or economic interests and/or shared political and geographic boundaries should have unified representation.
  6. *Accurately Include Permanent Residence of All Illinoisans.* The process must accurately represent the permanent residence of all Illinoisans. All persons residing away from their permanent residence, such as students, incarcerated individuals, and missionaries, should be counted at their home address regardless of Census counting rules. The Census should be encouraged to expand its exceptions to the usual residence rule to include incarcerated individuals, as well as students, missionaries, and overseas Americans.
  7. *Comprise and Uphold a Transparent and Accountable Process.* The process must be transparent and accountable. Meetings of decision-makers, and their legal, political and mapping consultants, must be open and accessible to the public to the greatest extent possible. The criteria used to draw maps must be objective, clear and justifiable and districts must be drawn to offer

voter choice. Communications related to the redistricting process should be subject to the Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act. Clear conflict-of-interest rules must be adopted and applied.

8. *Provide for Open, Full, and Meaningful Public Participation.* The process must allow for meaningful public participation and have the confidence of the public. Opportunities for public education and engagement must be provided, including opportunities to offer comment and amend draft maps. Redistricting bodies must provide data, tools and ways for the public to have direct input into and impact on the specific plans under consideration.

The redistricting process requires public education and engagement from beginning to end. There are new opportunities to improve public education using computer mapping. It is critical that decisions be understandable, in English and non-English, and given by a non-elected person, who is not directly impacted by the outcome.

**Recommendation 2. Use County data and technology to support the drafting of a redistricting map that complies with federal and state voting rights and other legal requirements of redistricting.**

**Recommendation 3. Develop a process for establishing an Independent Advisory Redistricting Commission, a transparent public awareness and engagement process, and public education efforts based on approved redistricting principles.**

**Recommendation 4. Monitor the Supreme Court case (*Gill v. Whitford*) along with other legal actions and decisions related to redistricting.**

### ***The Method of Electing the Chair***

State statute identifies four methods for electing the County board chair as shown in Table 4.

*Table 4. Options for Electing the County Board Chair*

Options		Elected by	Term	Process	Chair's Duties
1	Board Elected	Peers on the County Board (55ILCS 5/2-1003)	Two years	Board decision every 2 years	Defined by state statute and board rules of order and operating procedures

Options		Elected by	Term	Process	Chair's Duties
2	Elected At-Large	County Voters (55ILCS 5/2-3002)	Four years	Referendum through Board decision or citizen petition	Defined by state statute and board rules of order and operating procedures
3	Elected At-Large	County Voters (55ILCS 5/2-3007)	Four years	During reapportionment process (no referendum required)	Defined by state statute and board rules of order and operating procedures
4	Elected At-Large as County Executive	County Voters (55ILCS 5/2-5004)	Four years	Referendum	Defined by state statute (55ILCS 5/2-5009) and board rules

The Commission considered the recommendations of prior study commissions, the experience of regional peers, available research, options allowed under Illinois law, and national models and trends.

The County is financially healthy and has professional management, which, according to public administration studies, improves County performance. It was also noted that the judicial branch of government elects the chief judge by caucus of the elected circuit court judges for a two-year term based on seniority. This similar approach works for them.

### **Elected At-Large Board Chair**

Times have changed since the 1990 Lake County Study Commission II and 2000 Modernizing Lake County recommended an at-large elected chair. The reasons cited at that time were to assure voter choice, provide a countywide perspective by the chair, improve continuity with a four-year term, and increase visibility. These recommendations in the 1990's came when the County Board was very contentious, primarily due to development issues. Since the County is now nearly fully developed, these issues have subsided and may be the reason the county political culture is less divisive.

Former Lake County Chair, Jim LaBelle, testified that maintaining good relationships with his peers was critical to being chair. It was challenging at times since he represented both the whole County and his district at the same time. Having an at-large elected chair might reduce this tension.

The Commission heard from three legislators—Representative Mayfield, Representative Yingling, and Senator Bush—who support the at-large elected board chair because it gives voters the opportunity to choose the chair and provides the chair visibility on countywide, state and federal issues. Former at-large elected Kane County chair, now Senator, Karen McConnaughay described the importance of clarifying the role of the at-large elected chair with County Board members to avoid confusion in

roles and responsibilities. At-large elected chairs Dan Cronin of DuPage County and Jack Franks of McHenry County spoke to the challenges of working as a countywide elected chair.

When the chair is elected at-large, the powers of the board members may be perceived to dissipate because the chair, not the entire board, is viewed as the person responsible for managing issues, especially financial ones.

A collaborative model of leadership, also known as shared leadership, is a principle of successful governance. This model is more likely to be obtained and maintained by a peer-elected chair because the chair relies on other board members to get elected to the chair position and they share equally in County decisions.

The current chair's practice of assigning some committee chairs to minority party members with board approval, reinforces the collaborative working relationship among board members and likely improves minority party representation in County government.

Of the six collar counties in Illinois, all but Cook have the township form of county government which allows for a peer-elected chair, an at-large elected chair, or an elected county executive by referendum. The same is true of the 22 largest counties in Illinois, where eleven of the counties have an at-large elected board chair, nine have a peer-elected chair and two have adopted county executives without home rule. One of the collar counties, Kendall, has a board-elected chair. Three of the other collar counties, DuPage, Kane and McHenry, have at-large elected chairmen; the fourth, Will, has an elected county executive. All three of the at large elected collar county chairs are former state legislators; the elected executive is also a former state legislator.

In his presentation, Dr. Zeemering, Assistant Professor, Public Administration, School of Public and Global Affairs, Northern Illinois University, stated that there are no conclusive studies finding that counties with an at-large elected chair perform better than counties with a peer-elected chair. There are studies showing that a professional manager improves overall county performance, and collaborative leadership results in successful governance. He also noted that frequently, a local government looking at reform opportunities does what neighboring governments have been doing rather than recognizing the value and positive benefits of its own individual government and culture.

State statute allows a county board to change to an at-large elected chair by a referendum or during the redistricting process without holding a

referendum. A citizen petition for a referendum on the question can also lead to this change. In addition, if the county board wishes to understand voter interest in having an at-large elected chair, the board can ask voters the question through a non-binding referendum.

The current discussion on Lake County's change to an at-large elected chair reemerged because of a legislative bill (Senate Bill 0669) that required Lake County to hold a referendum on an at-large elected chair to provide voters the opportunity to weigh in on the idea. The bill was vetoed, but could be reintroduced in future legislative sessions.

### **Elected At-Large County Executive**

State statute also allows the County to consider a county executive form of government through a referendum. The county executive is elected at-large and manages the day-to-day operations of the county. Currently, the Lake County administrator effectively manages the day-to-day operations of the County under the direction of the County Board. An elected county executive was defeated by a 2:1 margin in a 1988 Lake County referendum. The only township counties that have approved a county executive are Will and Champaign, and only Will currently operates in that manner. Champaign County will elect its first county executive during the November 2018 election.

The Illinois Constitution allows for home rule counties to have a county executive form of government (Article VII Section 6), although it is not required. A home rule county has the independent authority to regulate activities related to public health and safety, to borrow and to tax to meet the county's needs without asking for state legislative approval. Cook County is the only home rule county in Illinois. Since Lake County operates efficiently and has sound financial management, as evidenced by its AAA bond rating, the independent taxing authority and other home rules powers are not necessary or desirable for the County at this time. In addition, some County property taxpayers may value the state having some oversight over County decisions.

### **County Board Chair's Powers**

Statutorily, under either the at-large elected or peer-elected county board chair, the chair's powers come through an ordinance adopted by the county board. This allows the board to define the responsibilities of the chair so the authority can be changed and clarified as the need arises. In Lake County, the Rules of Order and Operational Procedures are reviewed by the board every two years when the chair is elected.

Experience finds that regardless of the ordinance, the authority of the chair varies depending upon the how each individual chair defines the role. Engaged chairs do more than make appointments to committees and participate in redistricting, but actively lead on economic development, regional issues and state and national legislative initiatives.

Powers for the elected county executive are defined in State Statute.

It is best practice in county government to carefully define these powers, especially if there is an at-large elected chair. If an at-large elected Lake County chair is implemented through state legislation, referendum or through redistricting, the chair's powers may be revised by the board to clearly define expectations of the chair's responsibilities.

### **Electing the Board Chair Recommendations**

While some presenters and one Commission member saw a benefit in transitioning to an at-large elected chair, the Commission as a whole did not see any benefit to making that change at this time. Nor did the Commission consider the county executive or home rule form of county government desirable options.

**Recommendation 5. Maintain a peer-elected County Board chair.**

**Recommendation 6. Should a referendum on an at-large elected chair be required by citizen initiative, County Board action, or legislation, conduct a voter awareness campaign to share information gathered by the Lake County Government Reform and Accountability Commission.**

**Recommendation 7. Clarify the Chair's duties and responsibilities in rules of order and operational procedures prior to next election of County Board Chair in 2018.**

### ***The Size of the County Board***

State statute identifies a minimum and maximum number of county board seats to be considered during the redistricting (reapportionment) process. Statutes allow for citizen advisory referenda on the size of the county board and on the method of election by single member or multi member districts (*55ILC 5/2-3002 Sec 2-3002*). The options for board size are detailed in Table 5.

Table 5. County Board Size Options

	Options	Board Size	District Types
1	No Change Maintain 21 members elected in single member	21	Single Member Districts <sup>1</sup>
2	Consider changing to a number between the statutory minimum of 5 members and statutory maximum of 29 members	5 to 29	Single or Multi-Member Districts
3	2000 Modernizing Lake County Study recommendation that the board be reduced from 23 members at the time to 12 members plus the chair	12 + chair	Single Member Districts
4	1990 Lake County Study Commission II recommendation from 24 members (at the time) to 15 members	15	Single Member Districts

<sup>1</sup> Lake County adopted the election of board members by single districts in 1991 following the recommendations of the 1990 Lake County Governmental Study Commission II.

The 1990 Lake County Governmental Study Commission II and 2000 Modernizing Lake County report recommended reducing the number of county board members to between 13 and 15 members to increase efficiency, be more visible and responsive to the electorate, and to increase political accountability. The 1990 study recommended board members be elected from single-member districts rather than from multi-member districts because this would allow for better representation of each district and improve opportunities for diverse candidates to be elected. Single-member districts were adopted by the County in 1991.

Of the 22 largest Illinois counties, all except Cook are township counties like Lake County. Statute allows for 5 to 29 board members for township counties. The number of board members in these 22 counties ranges from a low of 10 and a high of 29 with an average of 23 members. The collar counties range from 17 to 26 members. Lake County currently has 21 members on the Board. Since 1970, the number ranged from a high of 25 members in 1971 to a low of 19 members in 1991.

It is difficult to determine if reducing the number of County Board members would reduce County costs. It would remove the monthly part-time salary for the eliminated board positions, but may drive new costs, such as going to full-time County Board members or increasing staff support.

Dr. Zeemering testified that there are no conclusive studies that link the size of the county board to the performance of a county. In Lake County, the board has been as large as 37 members and is now 21 members with little identifiable difference in how the board was perceived or how it performed.

### **Single-Member and Multi-Member Districts**

Multi-member districts with majority and minority party representation were used by the County in the past. Some members of the Commission remembered this approach and believe it may provide a more reliable way to get minority parties' voices into County government. Recognizing minority parties is now addressed through the practice of appointing minority party members as chairs of some committees. A change from single-member to multi-member districts can be made at the time of redistricting. A change to multi-member districts with majority and minority parties requires legislation.

### **County Board Size and District Recommendations**

The Commission did not find evidence to suggest that a change in County Board size is needed or would be beneficial. They did, however, acknowledge that this was an appropriate question to raise during the redistricting process to promote representation.

**Recommendation 8. Conduct an analysis of districts and services in advance of the redistricting process to determine if there would be a more effective distribution of representation with attention to differences in workload in unincorporated and incorporated areas.**

Since 1991 the County Board has been elected by single member districts rather than multi-member districts with or without majority and minority party representation. The decision to go to single member districts was made, in part, to provide more electoral opportunities for ethnic minorities and to allow for better representation of individual districts. The value of having designated majority and minority representation elected to the County Board resurfaced as a possible way to assure a minority voice in County governance.

**Recommendation 9. Research the potential to improve opportunities for minority party representation through the use of multi-member districts before making any changes.**

### ***Other Reform Proposals***

The Commission was asked to gather other reform ideas for future study. Four ideas emerged that are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Other Reform Proposals

Reform Idea	
1	Appointing rather than electing some countywide elected officials in County government: Coroner, Recorder of Deeds, and Clerk of Circuit Court.  Evaluating the relationship in the duties and role of the Chief County Assessment Officer with Township assessors.
2	Explore opportunities for improved services and/or financial savings through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intergovernmental consolidation</li> <li>• Intergovernmental collaboration</li> <li>• Intergovernmental service sharing</li> </ul>
3	Multi-member Districts vs. Single Member Districts  Consider multi-member districts with majority and minority parties for better representation of minority party voters.
4	Use voting methods other than a simple majority winner for elections. There are many candidate-centric proportional methods. Here are three examples and how they might work with five districts that are combined into a single five-winner district: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ranked Ballots. Instead of seeing (probably) just two candidates on the general election ballot, and filling in a bubble for one of them, voters see more candidates on the ballot, perhaps ten, and get to rank them. The top five-win seats.</li> <li>• Cumulative Ballots. Voters can distribute three votes as they want—giving all three to one favorite candidate, for example, or giving one to each of three candidates. The five candidates with the most total votes win seats.</li> <li>• Open List Ballots. Ten to twelve candidates are listed on the ballot by party. Voters can vote for any candidate. The top five candidates win, and each party wins a share of seats proportional to its share of votes.</li> </ul>

The discussion in those four areas is summarized below.

### 1. Review of Elected Positions

The 1990 Lake County Governmental Study Commission II recommended appointing rather than electing the coroner and recorder of deeds due to the highly technical and administrative rather than policymaking nature of their work. It was also recommended that the clerk of circuit court be appointed rather than elected. The 1990 referenda questions related to the coroner and recorder were not endorsed by the County Board, but were put on the ballot. They failed 2:1. The clerk of circuit court was not put on the ballot. The 2000 Modernizing Lake County report recommended appointing the coroner and recorder. No referendum was held. The positions remained elected.

The elected County Auditor position was successfully changed to appointed by referendum in November 1978, after the 1977 Lake County Governmental Study Commission.

The potential of appointing some countywide officials that serve primarily technical and administrative functions rather than policy positions might include the coroner, the recorder and the clerk of circuit court.

## **2. Intergovernmental Collaboration**

The County has more than 219 separate taxing districts. The Chair— with approval from the County Board— appoints more than 300 people to serve on various boards, commissions, and other special purpose units of government. To increase efficiencies and cost-effectiveness, several consolidation and collaborative efforts have been discussed and undertaken by the County. In addition, recent State legislation has attempted to address some of these concerns.

The issue was brought up numerous times by Commission members, speakers, and stakeholders.

On November 14, 2017, Lake County adopted a 2018 Consolidation Action Plan that proposes consolidations that will enhance efficiency, accountability, and quality of services as well as provide cost savings. The plan prioritizes three County Board-appointed units of government for consolidation, dissolution and transfer of appointment authority along with other specific strategies to address this issue.

## **3. Multi-Member Districts**

The 1990 Lake County Governmental Study Commission II recommended electing County Board members by single districts to improve representation of localities and ethnicities. It was implemented in 1991. Prior to this, the County used multi-members districts with a majority and minority party. There may be some benefit in this multi-member model to assure that the minority party is represented in County government. To this end, the chair currently appoints minority party members to serve as chairs of some subcommittees.

## **4. Alternative Voting Methods**

The Commission’s in-depth research and discussion on methods of gerrymandering in reapportionment included the concept that other voting methods, such as ranked choice voting, could increase ethnic minority representation and competitiveness of the individual races. Additional research is needed to determine if any alternative voting methods are worth consideration and could be used under current State Statutes.

### **Additional Reform Proposal Recommendations**

The County has eight countywide elected officials: the clerk of circuit court, the county clerk, the coroner, the recorder of deeds, the treasurer, the sheriff, the state attorney and the regional officer of education. Prior studies recommended the change to appointed positions for the coroner, recorder, and clerk of circuit court. Some of these positions may more appropriately serve as appointed rather than elected officials because the job duties are more administrative (e.g. recorder) or technical (e.g. coroner) than policy-oriented. The Illinois State Constitution identifies the treasurer, county clerk, clerk of circuit court, and sheriff as elected County officers, and are therefore not under the County's authority to change.

**Recommendation 10. Review all countywide elected official positions subject to the County's authority (recorder, coroner) to understand their function, policy authority, costs and opportunities for increased effectiveness and cost efficiency to determine areas for consolidation or collaboration.**

There are several on-going discussions about how to reduce the nearly 7,000 units of local government in Illinois to minimize overlapping services, improve service delivery, and minimize taxes and fees. Finding workable ways to overcome the barriers obstructing progress on these issues is critical.

The recent change in Federal tax law will likely place more pressure on local taxpayers, by reducing deductions for local income and property taxes.

The Commission supports local efforts to identify service-sharing, collaboration, and consolidation of local government bodies, and would encourage other efforts to modernized local government, increase efficiency in service delivery, and reduce the number of taxing authorities.

**Recommendation 11. Establish a commission to actively explore potential collaboration, consolidation, or service-sharing opportunities, based on data that includes the impact on taxing bodies and potential cost savings.**

The Commission should include local government leaders, taxpayers, and representatives of the business community. The charge to the commission should include assessing current conditions, identifying best

practices, finding and reviewing opportunities for consolidation, articulating potential savings or service improvements, and recognizing pre-conditions necessary for or barriers to implementation.

Lastly, voting methods other than simple majority are evolving as part of voting reform. They will get more local, state and national attention as redistricting discussions move ahead.

**Recommendation 12. Research alternative voting options other than simple majority (e.g. ranked, cumulative, and open list ballots), using the information gathered by the Lake County Government Reform and Accountability Commission.**

## Conclusion

In keeping with Lake County's tradition of asking independent citizen commissions to study and advise the County Board on governance issues, the Lake County Commission on Government Reform and Accountability was established in March 2017 to study three reform topics: redistricting, the method of electing the chair, and the size of the County Board. It was also asked to identify other reform measures for future study that arose during the Commission's deliberations.

To accomplish this work, the Commission heard expert testimony, reviewed background information, and discussed the issues over a six-month period. The Commission concluded that the County functions well. They felt the County has the opportunity to become a leader in establishing an independent redistricting commission with clear principles for its work.

Although the Commission saw no benefit to changing to a countywide elected Board Chair or in changing the size of the Board, these issues can be changed by County Board action in a redistricting process. This means the redistricting effort required after the 2020 census provides an opportunity for an Independent Advisory Redistricting Commission to address the issues of redistricting reform, election of County Board Chair and size of the County Board based on current data per the recommendations made by the Commission and outlined in this report.