

Standards Subcommittee Teleconference Meeting Summary October 17, 2024

Participants

Jayne Schultz, Winneshiek County Recorder
Carolyn Siebrecht, Linn County Recorder
Ashten Wittrock, Carroll County Recorder

Naomi Ellis, Marion County Recorder
Katie Carlton, Union County Recorder
Cathy Voith, Calhoun County Recorder

Other Participants

Nancy Booten, Lee County Recorder
Geraldyn Greer, Shelby County Recorder
Miranda Bills, County Recorder
Lisa Kent, Wapello County Recorder
Melissa Bahnsen, Cedar County Recorder

Jamie Stargell, County Recorder
Teresa Olson, Worth County Recorder
Stacie Herridge, Story County Recorder
Travis Case, Grundy County Recorder

Census Lo-Liyong, Iowa Land Records
Phil Dunshee, Iowa Land Records
Kristen Delany-Cole, Iowa Land Records

Lisa Long, Iowa Land Records
Samantha McMahon, Iowa Land Records
Corrie Strasser, Iowa Land Records

Welcome

A meeting of the ESS Standards Subcommittee was held via web conference. The participants included the regular ESS Standards Subcommittee members and several members of the Document Formatting working group.

July Meeting Summary

The Subcommittee reviewed the July 30, 2024, meeting summary. Cathy Voith made a motion to approve the meeting summary. Jayne Schultz seconded, and the motion was approved.

Iowa Recording Fee and Business Process Modernization Project

Status of Fee Policy Proposal

The Subcommittee received an update on the status of the fee policy proposal including a review of draft amendments to Section 331.604 of the Iowa Code. The proposal included the following provisions:

1. Increasing the base recording fee from \$5 to \$10 per page.
2. Simplifying fees by eliminating the additional transactions fee, and the additional fees for Iowa Land Records and records management. The “non-standard” recording fee would also be eliminated with an amendment to 331.606B.
3. Allocating \$2 per document for recorders' technology and training.
4. Allocating \$3 per document for ESS and Iowa Land Records.
5. Allocating the remaining fee income to the county general fund.

Multiple Unrelated Transactions

Concerns had previously been expressed about possible unintended consequences for eliminating the additional transaction fee. There was speculation that some document preparers might try to take short cuts by combining different transactions into one document. Draft legislative language intended to prevent this from happening was reviewed.

Review of Stakeholder Reaction

The Subcommittee and working group received an update on the ongoing engagement with key stakeholder groups regarding the proposed recording fee and related policy adjustments.

Outreach efforts with the various key stakeholder groups were reviewed. Generally, the concepts being advanced have been openly received, and some groups have participated in more detailed discussions. While no one has said “no”, the stakeholders naturally want to see more details as the plans evolve.

Review of Advocacy Activity

An update was shared on recent advocacy efforts for the modernization and recording fee proposal, highlighting discussions with numerous recorders about their conversations with their supervisors and local stakeholders and legislators. It was noted that steps will be taken in the coming months to engage with key members of the legislative committees for Local Government and Ways and Means.

Status of Statutory Policy Recommendations

The Subcommittee received an update on the status of the modernization policy proposals including a review of draft amendments to Sections 331.605B, 331.606B, 331.606, and 558.49 of the Iowa Code. The proposal included the following provisions:

331.605B ESS Governance

The proposed legislation would consolidate all Iowa Code references to the Electronic Services System (ESS) and Iowa Land Records into section 331.605B. This is intended primarily to move current policies into one cohesive section of the Iowa Code.

The updated 331.605B would include some new policy which would authorize the establishment of a notification system, and update systems to shield certain information for the protection of certain endangered people.

331.606B (formatting, cover sheets, et al)

The proposed legislation would update document formatting requirements to reflect current practice and to provide preparers with additional flexibility. Notable changes include a change in the top margin requirement for the first page of a document, and the addition of a requirement for a minimum space for the recording stamp.

331.606 (general filing requirements)

The proposed legislation would establish a standard format for recording reference numbers, and require the indexing of parcel identification numbers, and associated references – when present in a document. Current practices, such as indexing parsed location information, would be required.

558.49 (indexing requirements for conveyances)

The proposed legislation would clarify the meaning of various terms such as date of instrument, the type of instrument, and the date and time of recording.

331.601A (definitions)

The proposed legislation would clarify the definitions of certain terms such as “page”.

331.612 (NEW SECTION – recording of surveys)

The proposed legislation would consolidate recording requirements for surveys into a new section of the Code of Iowa. The requirements would apply to all documents prepared and signed by a licensed land surveyor. Formatting requirements and requirements for the “index legend” would be detailed there.

Special Project Updates

The Subcommittee received an update on the status various projects associated with the modernization initiative.

Property Notification System

A plan has been developed to create a notification feature in the Iowa Land Records search application, allowing users to monitor property recording activity associated with names or with previously recorded documents.

Back the Blue Reform

A plan has been developed to convert the current "Back the Blue" redaction program into a "shielding" program. Access to certain records would be restricted except for certain authorized users.

Integration with GIS Systems

Plans are being developed to connect Iowa Land Records with other property information systems. Specifically, the integration would allow users of systems like Beacon to more easily access documents in the Iowa Land Records System, and conversely Iowa Land Records Users would more easily be able to access more detailed property information through the Beacon System. Similar methods could be used with other GIS systems.

Historic Surveys

The Iowa Society of Land Surveyors has expressed interest in digitizing older surveys that were not previously recorded. Iowa Land Records is developing a plan to work with surveyors to digitize unrecorded surveys and make them available online. These efforts aim to preserve historical data that may still hold value for the surveying community, particularly those dating from 1990 onward.

Data Normalization

Plans are being developed to implement a data normalization project aimed at filling gaps in indexing data to improve searchability. This could involve extracting information from other systems and filling in missing in the Iowa Land Records database. Other components of the plan would be designed to create more consistency in the processing of recording documents in Iowa's 99 counties.

It was noted that all of these topics would be on the agenda for the November 14, 2024, ESS Coordinating Committee meeting. The ESS Standards Subcommittee meeting was adjourned.