ESS

Electronic Services System – Standards Subcommittee Meeting

AGENDA
April 23, 2024
Hybrid/Virtual
9:00 A.M. to NOON

Welcome and Introductions

January 23, 2024, Meeting Summary – Approval

Iowa Recording Fee and Business Process Modernization Project

- Project Charter
  - Overview of Policy Initiatives and Purpose

- Modernization Preliminary Survey Results
  - "Very Important" Policy Ideas

- Policies to Enable Better Searching and Service Consistency
  - Better Submissions
  - Aligned Indexing
  - Consistent Service

- Consideration of Statutory Policy Recommendations*

- Modernization Project initiatives
  - Create a Recording Alert & Notification System
  - Re-establish Integration with Beacon and Integrate with Other GIS systems
  - "Normalize" County Location and PIN Information
  - BTB Redaction Program Reforms
  - Digitize and Index Historical Surveys and Plats (including unrecorded surveys)

- Other Achievable Modernization initiatives
  - Modernize the External Submitter API
  - Create Multi-Jurisdiction Plat Approval Process
  - Internalize Redaction Processes
  - SMS 2FA Notifications

Software Development Update (Time Permitting)

- ILR Cloud Migration
- Modifications to Recorder Search Functions
- CESAPI Implementation
- County Upload API Development

***Action Item**

Next Regular Meetings
Tuesday, July 23 - 10 AM to Noon (Possible In-Person)
Thursday, October 17 - 1 to 3 PM (Virtual)

Standards Subcommittee Teleconference Meeting Summary
January 23, 2024

Participants

Jayne Schultz, Winneshiek County Recorder
Carolyn Siebrecht, Linn County Recorder
Ashten Wittrock, Carroll County Recorder
Jolynn Goodchild, Plymouth County Recorder
Katie Carlton, Union County Recorder
Naomi Ellis, Marion County Recorder
Cathy Voith, Calhoun County Recorder

Other Participants

Nancy Booten, Lee County Recorder
Sheri Jones, Jones County Recorder
Erin Canfield, Boone County Recorder
Miranda Bills, Audubon County Recorder
Selena Humphrey, Clarke County Recorder
Stacie Herridge, Story County Recorder
Sue Meyer, Clayton County Recorder
Jamie Stargell, Adams County Recorder
Lynnae Buffington, Henry County Recorder
Jolynn Goodchild, Plymouth County Recorder
Bree Brandt, Adams County Recorder (Dep)

Census Lo-Liyong, Iowa Land Records
Phil Dunshee, Iowa Land Records
Kay Kelleher, Iowa Land Records
Lisa Long, Iowa Land Records
Kristen Delany-Cole, 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 other members of the Document Formatting working group.

October Meeting Summary
The Subcommittee reviewed the October 23, 2023, meeting summary. Jayne Schultz made a motion to approve the meeting summary. Katie Carlton seconded, and the motion was approved.

Iowa Recording Fee and Business Process Modernization Project

Project Charter
The Standards Subcommittee received a summary of the ongoing discussion on potential changes to recording fees as part of the recording and business process modernization project, initiated by the Iowa Country Recorders Association. A planning working group, established by the association, had its inaugural meeting in December. This group is tasked with evaluating options for adjusting the recording fee structure, aiming to prepare recommendations by mid-year for stakeholders and legislative engagement before the 2025 session.

The Standards Subcommittee and the document formatting working group are part of this process, with the goal of proposing document formatting standards that benefit both stakeholders and recorders. These changes could introduce new services or policy improvements to enhance and simplify existing services.

Additionally, a surveyor's working group has been formed. That group will focus on several key areas, including reviewing the index legend implemented in 2017. Participants were also briefed on a meeting between ICRA and ISAC leadership including Bill Peterson and Lucas Beenken. The discussion focused on facilitating dialogue with other affiliates including supervisors and auditors and aligning policy development with the ISAC legislative planning process.

The Standards Subcommittee and the document formatting working group received information about the development of ideas for special projects and ideas under the “modernization” label that could be of interest to stakeholders and policy makers. Those ideas will be vetted over the next several months.

Document Formatting and Indexing Policies
The meeting focused on discussing document formatting and indexing policies, particularly with respect to section 331.606B of the Iowa Code. Previous discussions and homework assignments were reviewed, and Subcommittee members were encouraged to revisit previously discussed items.

Section 331.606B Subsection 1

Section 1 Introduction: The Subcommittee and working group reviewed a suggested update to the introductory statement for subsection 1 of 331.606B. It was suggested that the updated language would have a more positive tone while retaining the authority of the recorder to decline a document if formatting standards were not met. The language was also intended to clarify that the purpose of the standards was to facilitate the recording and indexing process and to ensure the “recordability” of a submitted document. A discussion was held on the term that will be used to decline a document. Should it read “shall decline” or “may decline”. Some participants were concerned that the term “may” would lead to inconsistencies. Generally, the Subcommittee and working group expressed a preference for using the term “shall” decline.

Section 1 – Paragraphs a-e: The Subcommittee and working group reviewed the amendments that had been approved at previous meetings. These provisions generally made technical changes and removed some archaic terms. However, participants were asked if they wanted to revisit the use of the term “standard” white paper in lieu of the current phrase “white paper of not less than twenty-pound weight. It was noted that standard copy paper is twenty-pound weight. Participants felt that the requirement for "standard" white paper was sufficient. No other changes were suggested to the draft amendments in these paragraphs in Section 1.

Section 1 – Paragraph f – The Subcommittee and working group discussed modifying the current requirement for a three-inch margin across the entire width of a page on certain documents. Instead of enforcing this uniform margin, the proposal suggests allowing a reserved area specifically for a stamp, similar to what is required in surveys and plats. This change would permit the inclusion of text or other information in the upper three-inch area, if there is still a designated white space left clear for the required stamp. If more space is required, the submitter will need to submit a cover sheet.

Section 1 – Paragraph g – The Subcommittee and working group discussed adding language that allows the recording of documents containing PII, provided they undergo the specified redaction process as required by other provisions of the Code of Iowa. This would align the law with the existing practice, and it applies to both traditional (physical) and electronic documents.

331.606B Subsection 2

Introductory Statement – The Subcommittee and working group discussed a suggested revision to the introductory statement for subsection 2. The new language would seek to clarify that the purpose of the required information on the first page of a document (or cover sheet) was to enable recorders to appropriately index the information for the public record.

Subsection 2 - The Subcommittee and working group reviewed an amendment which would restructure the enumerated list of required information in a document submitted for recording. The principal modifications suggested related to requirements for parsed location (legal description) information, and associated references. The need for preparer information, contact information for submitters, and "return to" information for electronic documents was also discussed. The indexing of parcel identification numbers was also considered.

Participants expressed a preference to retain the "preparer" and the "return to" information in any update to the enumerated list. There was also a desire to combine the items for a full legal description with the parsed location information. It was also suggested that the instrument date be removed from the enumerated list, because it may not always be on the first page. There was general consensus in favor of the suggested closing statement to the updated subsection.

331.606B Subsection 3

Index Legend – The Subcommittee and working group reviewed a suggested modification to Subsection 3 which would clarify requirements for the use of cover sheets, and which would authorize the use of Index Legends in a manner similar to what is used for surveys and plats. The formatting requirements would apply to the cover sheet and an Index legend if authorized, and the changes would apply to both physical and electronic documents. There was general consensus in favor of the suggested changes.

331.606 and 558.49

Required Document Index Instrument Information
The Subcommittee and working group reviewed several suggested updates to 558.49. Regarding enumerated item 7, it was suggested that both the full legal description and the parsed legal description be referenced, and that the term "county" be added to a platted description in addition to city or town.

The participants also noted that with respect to the instrument date, sometimes the a document may not be executed by the parties on the same date. In such cases, which date should be used, the first or last? Further clarification of this point may be needed. Otherwise there appeared to be general consensus in favor of the suggested changes.

331.606B, Subsection 4

Surveyors Recording Requirements - The Subcommittee and working group briefly reviewed this section but no changes were suggested at this time. It was noted that these topics are expected to be explored by a separate working group of recorders and surveyors.

331.606B, Subsection 5

Exempt Documents – The Subcommittee and working group briefly reviewed this section and discussed whether any changes were needed. Groundwater hazard documents were reviewed since the format of those documents had changed in recent history. The documents generally conform to the formatting standards. No changes were suggested regarding this subsection. However, it was noted that some guidance to submitters regarding the inclusion of unnecessary attachments to Groundwater documents might be helpful in some other channel of communication.

331.606B, Subsection 6

Decline Reasons – The current language of this section requires that recorders return “rejected” documents to preparers and to provide a reason for the reject. The section was written before electronic recording and needs to be updated. Wording also needs to be updated to align with the use of the term “decline”. The Subcommittee and working group reviewed suggested changes including the addition of a reference to providing information to submitters when fees are changed (in E-Submission). The changes introduce the idea that recorders should also provide guidance to a submitter of the steps required to correct the document or instrument when possible.

331.606B, Subsection 7, Paragraph a

Non-Standard Fee – The Subcommittee and working group considered the non-standard fee authorized in this section which allows for the recording of documents which do not conform to the standards provided in 331.606B provided that the submitter pays an additional recording fee of $10.00. A review of a policy document published by the Property Records Industry Association (PRIA) indicated that the original purpose of a fee like this was to provide an incentive for submitters to follow the document formatting policies. Evidently this policy had been tried in other states. The paper suggested that the policy was not successful – many submitters continue to file non-conforming documents and they are declined. The appears to be what is happening here in Iowa and it was noted that the non-standard fee doesn’t appear to be a significant source of revenue. For this reason, it was suggested that this policy should be repealed. There seemed to be consensus within the Subcommittee and working group to take this course. The preference of the group was to return non-conforming documents and require submitters to re-submit a corrected document.

A concern was expressed that changes like this might be accepted in the legislative process while other important policies such as an increase in the recording fee might not be accepted. The concern was noted, and this risk will need to be addressed during discussions with stakeholders and policy makers.

331.606B, Subsection 7, Paragraph b

Authority to Decline – The Subcommittee and working group reviewed this section which provides that a document or instrument that does not conform to the format standards “shall not be accepted for recording.” However, it was noted that 331.606B, subsection 1 would provide clear authority for a recorder to decline a document. For this reason, it was suggested that this provision was redundant and could be repealed.

331.606

Indexing Notary Commission Information - The Subcommittee and working group reviewed the concept of indexing notary information such as name, commission origin, or commission number. The purpose would be to track data that might be useful in fraud prevention efforts. Some interest in exploring the idea was expressed, but there was also a desire to gather more information and discuss implementation options with local service providers. This will be discussed again at the next meeting.

Indexing consideration amount – The Subcommittee and working group discussed current and possible practices for the indexing of consideration amounts for transactions. It was noted that there are three main types of consideration: the transaction (or sale) amount, the mortgage amount, and the lien amount (such as state or federal tax liens). Participants indicated that the sale amount may be more commonly indexed, but not the lien or mortgage amounts. The Subcommittee members wondered whether this might be achieved if Declaration of Value documents were recorded. This topic will be researched further and may be discussed at the next meeting.

331.601A, Subsection 9

Additional transaction Fees – The subject of additional transactions was reviewed. It was noted that the definition of additional transaction is not aligned when comparing the Iowa Code and the ESS policies and procedures. It was suggested that the definition in the Iowa Code be amended to clarify that an additional transaction must involve an action and not a mere reference to a previous document or action. Participants were asked to give some thought to this for consideration at a future meeting.

331.606

Uniform Reference Number – The Subcommittee and working group discussed ESS Policy 3.7(5) which encourages the adoption of standard reference numbering system. The suggested system would start with a two-digit county code, followed by the year of recording or transaction, and then a sequential number up to eight digits, ensuring each number's uniqueness through the county code prefix. Participants considered the pros and cons and indicated that the idea would need to be explored with the local service providers. The topic will be brought forward again at a future meeting.

Policies and Procedures Update
Participants were informed that the ESS committee did not act on the policy relating to associated references and parcel identification numbers at their November 2023 meeting due to time constraints. This issue will be brought forward again during the February 2024 ESS meeting.

Software Development Update

Recently Recorded – Participants received an update to changes in the E-Submission application relating to the search for “recently recorded” documents. The creation of a county and date range search in E-Submission is being planned.

ILR Cloud Migration – The process of moving the ILR system to the cloud is underway and will be implemented beginning in February.

Next Meeting: April 23, 2024 (Regular Meeting)

IOWA LAND RECORDS

Stakeholder Survey

Some Preliminary Results

April 23, 2024

Survey will remain open until May 3, 2024 (COB)

www.iowalandrecords.org

Stakeholder Survey

Participants & Completion Rate

Insights

TOTAL RESPONSES	COMPLETION RATE	TYPICAL TIME SPENT
358	82%	13m:4s
295 of 358 completed the last Yes/ No question	18% did not hit “submit”	

Required Questions

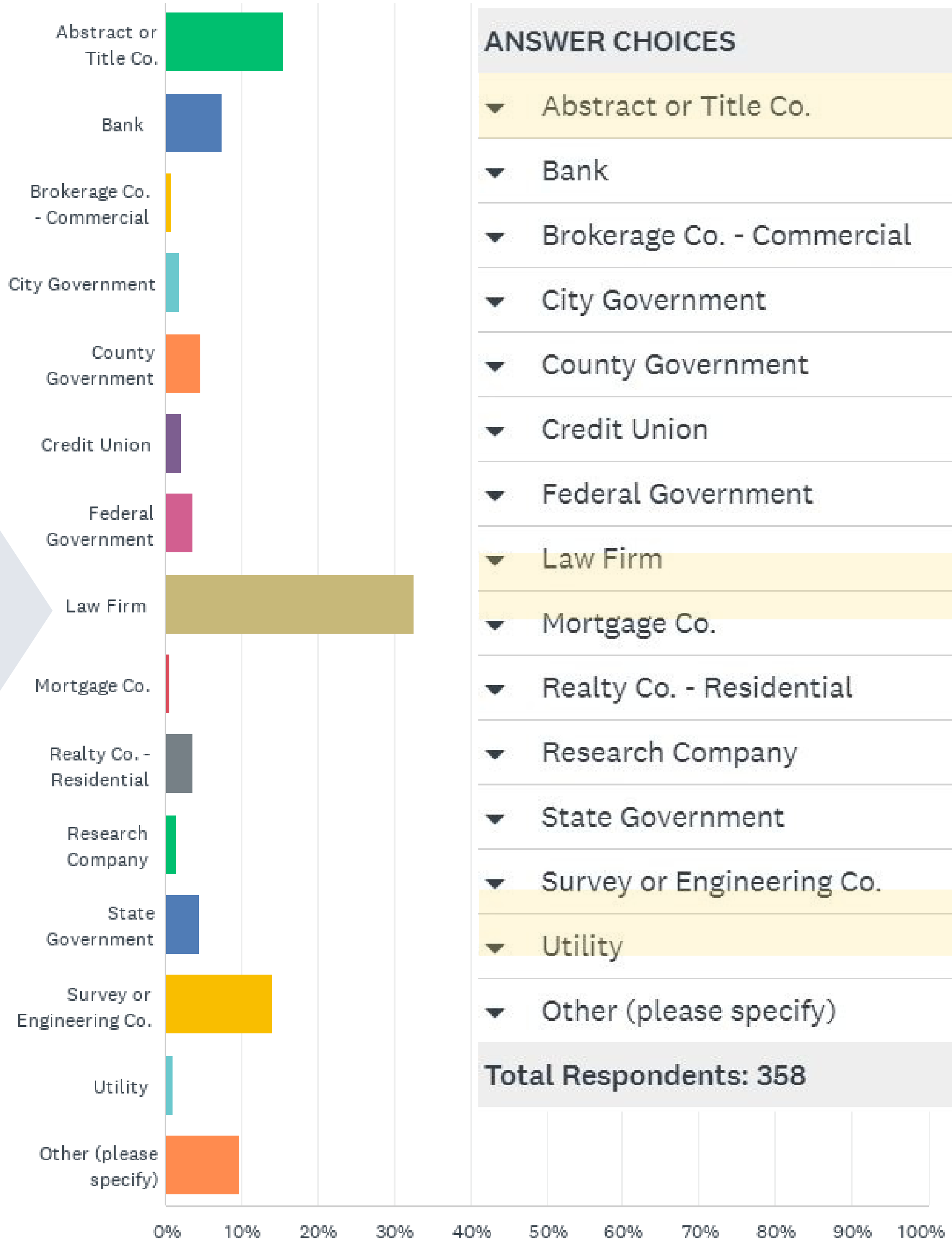
- Email
- Industry
- Uses Search, E-Sub, or both
- Confirm Search or E-Sub Use

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

Participant Industries - “What type best fits your organization or company?”

1. Law Firm 32.68%
2. Abstract or Title 15.64%
3. Survey or Engineering 13.97%



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Abstract or Title Co.		15.64%	56
Bank		7.54%	27
Brokerage Co. - Commercial		0.84%	3
City Government		1.96%	7
County Government		4.75%	17
Credit Union		2.23%	8
Federal Government		3.63%	13
Law Firm		32.68%	117
Mortgage Co.		0.56%	2
Realty Co. - Residential		3.63%	13
Research Company		1.40%	5
State Government		4.47%	16
Survey or Engineering Co.		13.97%	50
Utility		1.12%	4
Other (please specify)	Responses	9.78%	35
Total Respondents: 358			

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

SEARCH TOPICS

Q6 Over time, Iowa counties have used different methods for indexing land record information including location descriptions and naming conventions. Additionally, some information was not archived in prior years. Resources permitting, a goal is to have data for all documents posted online “normalized” – meaning the data would be complete and consistent across all 99 Iowa counties.I think the goal of making data complete and consistent in Iowa Land Records is...

2.9
average rating

	NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
	2.53% 8	8.54% 27	87.66% 277	1.27% 4	316	4.72

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

SEARCH TOPICS

Q8 Iowa counties and Iowa Land Records are adding recently recorded and historical property records to its database every workday. Resources permitting, a goal could be to have all recorded documents for all counties online dating back to at least 1980.I think the goal of putting more records online is...

Answered: 315 Skipped: 43

2.8
average rating

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
6.03% 19	12.38% 39	80.32% 253	1.27% 4	315	2.75

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

SEARCH TOPICS

Q7 Iowa Land Records (ILR) and Schneider Corporation (Beacon) are making plans to reconnect their systems. ILR users would be able to look up a conveyance document and then look up the property information on the Beacon system. Conversely, registered users would be able to look up a property record on the Beacon system and then link directly to a conveyance document on Iowa Land Records.I think getting the ILR and Beacon systems re-connected is...

Answered: 316 Skipped: 42

2.7 average rating

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
3.80% 12	20.89% 66	74.05% 234	1.27% 4	316	2.71

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

SEARCH TOPICS

Q9 The ability to search property documents by specific “parsed” location information such as section, township, range or lot, block, subdivision name or town is not currently consistent across all counties. Where possible, older records could be updated to include this “parsed” location information.I think the idea to make property location information consistent in all counties is...

Answered: 314 Skipped: 44

2.7★
average rating

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
5.41% 17	22.29% 70	71.02% 223	1.27% 4	314	2.66

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

SEARCH TOPICS

Q14 Iowa Land Records has adopted a new policy to expand the use of associated references between documents. This will allow users to quickly navigate between related documents such as mortgages/satisfactions, liens/releases, documents which have been corrected or re-recorded, companion documents such as deeds and groundwater hazard statements, and documents associated with the same property.I think expanding the use of associated references between documents is...

Answered: 317 Skipped: 41

2.7★
average rating

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
3.47% 11	26.81% 85	67.82% 215	1.89% 6	317	2.66

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

SEARCH TOPICS

Q16 Iowa Land Records implemented a system to inspect records for personally identifiable information (such as social security numbers) and then permanently redact any PII before posting a document online.I think continuing the practice of redacting PII before information is posted online is...

Answered: 316 Skipped: 42

2.7 ★
average rating

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
5.38% 17	18.35% 58	70.25% 222	6.01% 19	316	2.69

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

SEARCH TOPICS

Q13 Iowa County Recorders and the Society of Land Surveyors of Iowa are exploring ways to digitize and index historic surveys, plats, corner certificates, and other property drawings.I think developing a plan to digitize and then make older survey records available online is...

Answered: 315 Skipped: 43

2.6 average rating

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
6.35% 20	29.21% 92	62.54% 197	1.90% 6	315	2.57

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

SEARCH TOPICS

Q10 It has been suggested that the Iowa Land Records system expand the list of searchable document types in the Iowa Land Records Search application because too many records are categorized as “other”.I think the idea of using a broader list of document types in the ILR Search application is...

Answered: 317 Skipped: 41

2.3★
average rating

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
7.89% 25	47.95% 152	38.49% 122	5.68% 18	317	2.32

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

SEARCH TOPICS

Q11 Consideration is being given to the establishment of a property notification system by Iowa Land Records to alert property owners of any activity affecting their property. The notification system could help notify users of activity associated with a name or a specific property record, and could help prosecute individuals engaged in property fraud.I think the concept of having Iowa Land Records set up a property notification system is...

Answered: 317   Skipped: 41

2.2 average rating

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
18.93% 60	35.96% 114	36.28% 115	8.83% 28	317	2.19

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

SEARCH TOPICS

Q15 A new policy that would require all Iowa counties to consistently index the parcel identification number (PIN) for each property is being explored. PIN numbers could then be used to search for and retrieve property information.I think the idea of indexing PIN numbers is...

Answered: 315 Skipped: 43

2.2 ★
average rating

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
19.37% 61	36.51% 115	40.00% 126	4.13% 13	315	2.22

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

SEARCH TOPICS

Q23 Some have suggested that more should be done to shield the identities of law enforcement and court officers who may be at risk from information published online. Consideration is being given to a plan that would generally shield information from being posted online, but provide information access to certain users with a legitimate need such as a loan underwriter, title professional, or other court officer.I think the idea of doing more to shield officers who are at-risk while providing information access to trusted real estate professionals is...

Answered: 315 Skipped: 43

2.2★
average rating

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
16.51% 52	34.60% 109	34.92% 110	13.97% 44	315	2.21

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

E-SUBMISSION TOPICS

Q39 Clear communication between a document submitter and a county recorder is needed when a recorder declines a document for recording, or adjusts the fee which is charged. Instructions for correcting any errors which prevent recording, and explanations for the basis for fee changes can also be helpful.I think the goal of clear communication between a county recorder and a submitter is...

Answered: 145 Skipped: 213

3.0★

average rating

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
0.00% 0	4.83% 7	94.48% 137	0.69% 1	145	2.95

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

E-SUBMISSION TOPICS

Q28 Customers who submit documents for recording in Iowa may experience some variance in recording practices concerning recording fees, document formatting requirements, and other customer experiences.I think the goal of having efficient and consistent document processing practices in all counties is...

Answered: 147 Skipped: 211

2.9★
average rating

★★★

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
0.68% 1	8.16% 12	90.48% 133	0.68% 1	147	2.90

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

E-SUBMISSION TOPICS

Q32 Current law prohibits the inclusion of personally identifiable information in a document submitted for recording. Examples include social security numbers, bank or card account numbers and driver license numbers.I think continuing the law prohibiting PII in documents is...

Answered: 147 Skipped: 211

2.9 average rating

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
1.36% 2	8.16% 12	85.03% 125	5.44% 8	147	2.88

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

E-SUBMISSION TOPICS

Q38 Current law provides that when preparing a document for recording, it should be legible and of sufficient quality to make a clear copy of it.I think this current policy to require documents to be legible when submitted is...

Answered: 146 Skipped: 212

2.9★
average rating

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
0.68% 1	7.53% 11	91.10% 133	0.68% 1	146	2.91

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

E-SUBMISSION TOPICS

Q41 Currently, Iowa counties assign different types of reference numbers and sometimes book and page references. Alternatively, counties could adopt a standard reference numbering system, which might include a prefix number for a county followed by the four digit year and then an eight digit sequential number. Other formats could also be considered, provided they would be applicable in all counties.I think the idea of having all counties use a standard reference numbering system going forward is...

Answered: 147 Skipped: 211

2.5★
average rating

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
12.93% 19	24.49% 36	59.86% 88	2.72% 4	147	2.48

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

E-SUBMISSION TOPICS

Q42 A plan to develop a document management system where records need to be processed by more than one department is being explored. An example would be a plat which would first be presented to a zoning department, and then once approved, made available to the recorder for recording. This could create some efficiency in processing.I think the idea of creating electronic document management processes is...

Answered: 147 Skipped: 211

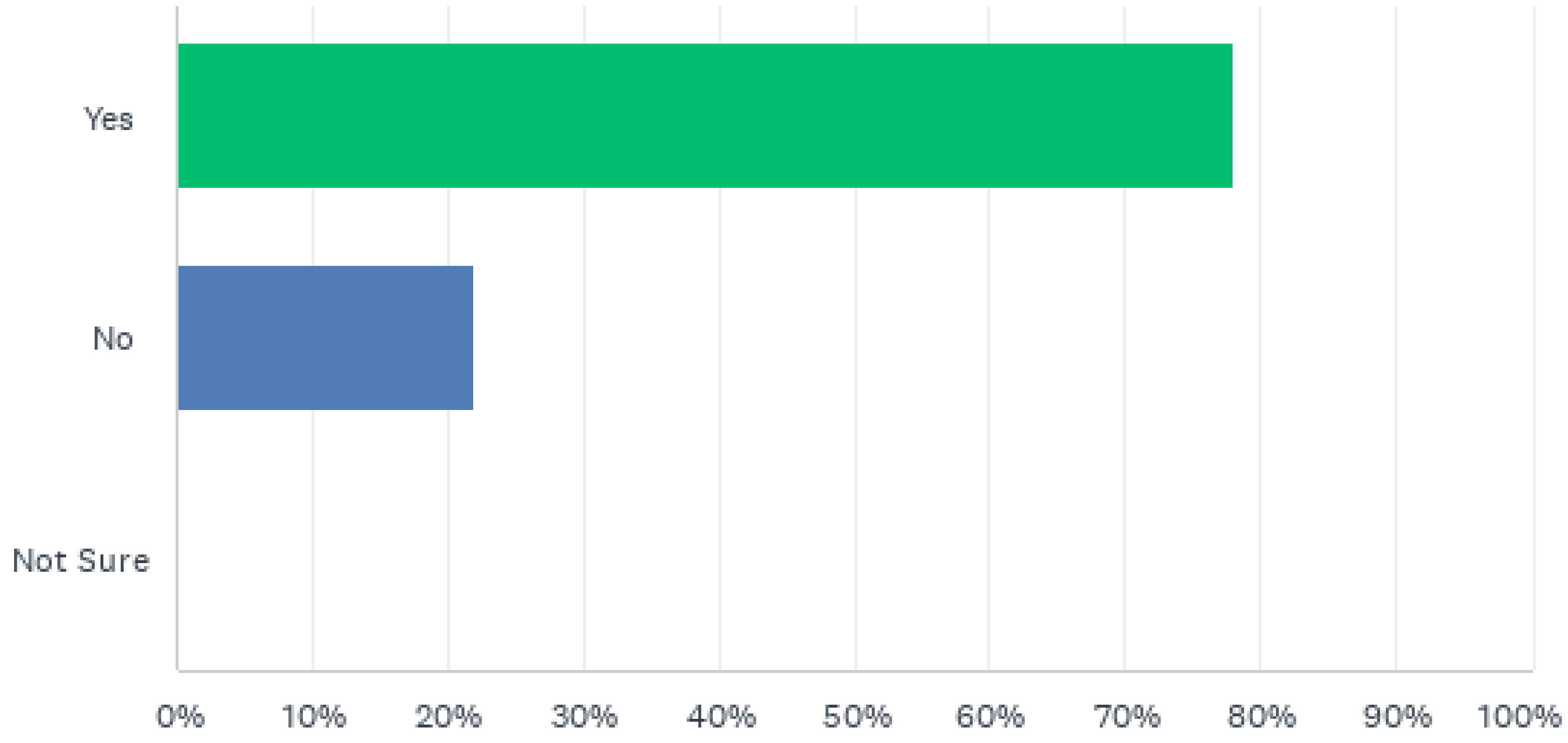
2.4★
average rating

NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NO OPINION	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
12.24% 18	29.93% 44	46.26% 68	11.56% 17	147	2.38

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

"Would you be willing to support a reasonable increase in the recording fee, if it is less than the inflation amount since 1985?"



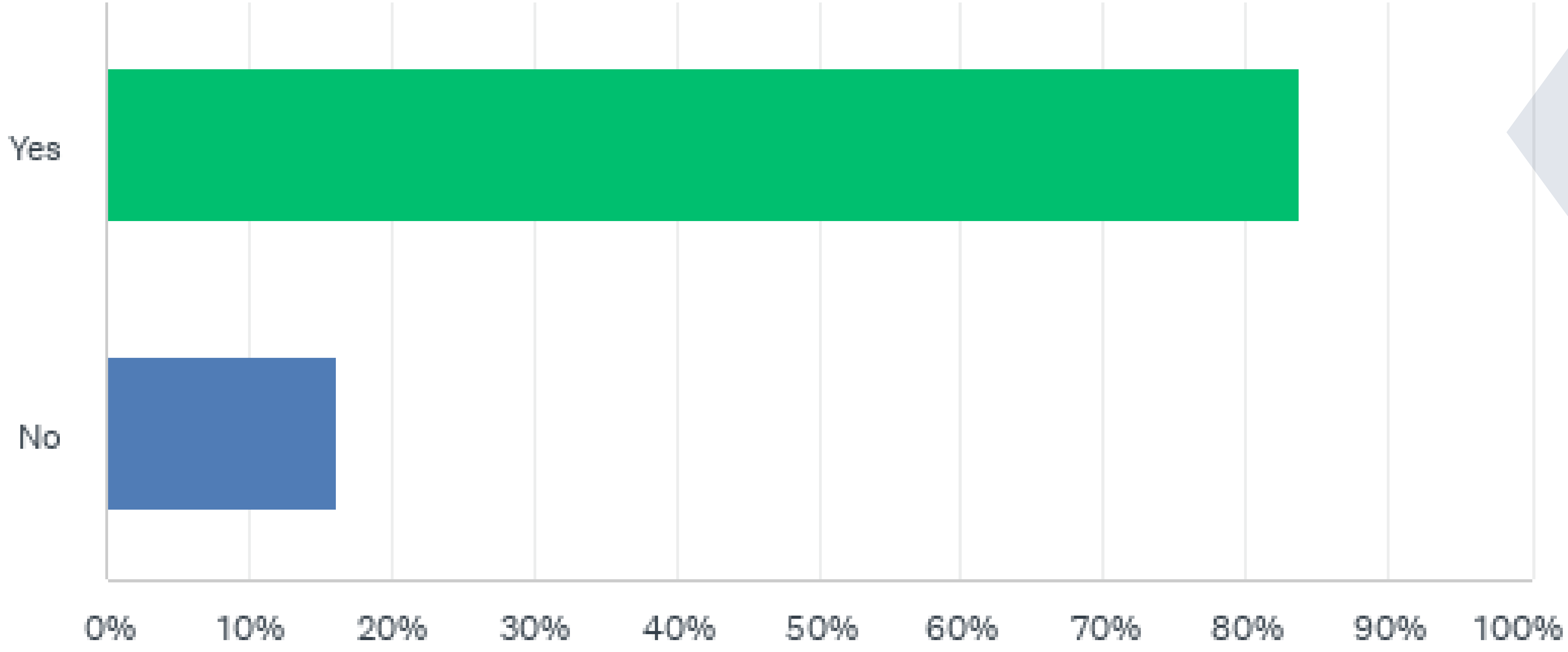
78% YES
to a FEE INCREASE
292 Total Participants

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	78.08%	228
No	21.92%	64
Not Sure	0.00%	0
TOTAL		292

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Stakeholder Survey

“Would you consider a recording fee increase to be a good investment?



84% YES
it’s a GOOD INVESTMENT
295* Total Participants

*MORE ANSWERED

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	83.73%
No	16.27%
TOTAL	

Context is in relation to "very important" modernization efforts

Data pulled on April 17, 2024

Recorders Suggested Modernization Topics

- Associated Reference Policy – will you implement it – “if the reference is present” conveyances, mortgages, liens, originals/corrections, GWH, surveys

DOCUMENT FORMATTING

- Document Formatting updates from Standards Subcommittee (subsection 1).
- Adjustment to top margin policy to allow information in the top margin if it doesn’t affect the recording. Current law says “the county recorder shall refuse”. Shouldn’t we fix that?
- Regarding PII, 331.606B(1g) conflicts with current practice. Shouldn’t we fix that?
- Wouldn’t it be a good idea to clarify (in 331.606B (2)) that submitters should provide recorders with “parsed” location information in addition to the full legal description (when applicable) to assist with indexing?
- Wouldn’t it be a good idea to clarify (in 331.606B (2)) that submitters should provide associated reference information (when applicable) to assist with indexing?
  … by the way all of the other current required information is still listed – just rearranged a bit – and probably will retain the “return to” information even for electronic documents.
- Wouldn’t it be a good idea to clarify requirements for cover sheets?
- These are all requirements for submitters … wouldn’t it be a good idea to align recording indexing requirements in 558.49 to correspond with the submitter requirements in 331.606B?
- Current law doesn’t distinguish between physical documents and electronic documents with respect to the “return requirement”, but no one “returns” and electronic document – it is just made available to the submitter. Wouldn’t it be a good idea to clarify that this practice is ok?
- Want to send a positive message to stakeholders? Repeal the non-standard fee. It is a failed policy and doesn’t appear to provide much income.

- Some may disagree with this but … Want to send a positive message to stakeholders? Rephrase a few sections in 331.606B to clarify that the purpose of formatting and content requirements is to help you do your jobs to record and index. That’s it. Bottom line, if there is nothing to prevent you from recording or indexing … record it.

PENDING QUESTIONS

- Index Legend for other documents? Hold you fire … let’s get some feedback from stakeholders.
- Notary Information? This is an emergent idea … let’s see what the stakeholders think.

- PARCEL IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS
- Submitters to include it (when applicable).
- Going forward, if the PIN is present, index it.
- When changed by the county, work with colleagues to add the new PIN(s) (to recently recorded).
- This change will add value to the recorder’s index and would benefit users and stakeholders – we can figure this out.
- Heading back to the Standards Subcommittee.

Recorders Suggested Modernization Topics

TRANSACTION DEFINITION

- A few years ago ESS created policy regarding additional transactions (a simple reference is not a transaction. Upon review, the definition in 331.601A (9) is less clear. It might be a good idea to get these aligned, and
- What will happen to additional transactions in the new fee policies? This is a topic that should be reviewed in the same context that the auditor's transfer fee may be examined.

April 22, 2024

To: ESS Standards Subcommittee

From: Phil Dunshee, ILR Project Manager

Re: Modernization of Document Formatting and Related Policies

Background
In conjunction with the role of the ESS Standards Subcommittee, a working group was formed in February 2023 to review document formatting requirements as provided in Section 331.606B of the Iowa Code. It was noted that the standards were last updated in 2004 (Senate File 371, 2004 Actions, Chapter 1069). This was prior to the inception of electronic filing and recording. Document formatting requirements were primarily developed for traditional recording practices (paper documents). The Subcommittee and working group were also presented with several topics for future consideration.

The Subcommittee and working group reviewed a matrix of the current standards and the companion ILR policy and procedures to help guide the discussion. They also conducted a systematic review of Section 331.606B, and on July 18, 2023, recommended approval of several updates to Section 331.606B, subsection 1 relating to formatting requirements. As the year continued the Subcommittee and working group proceeded with discussions about Section 331.606B and other related topics to ensure appropriate opportunities were provided for conversation and input. Results from a 2022 stakeholder survey associated with the effort to modernize the Iowa Land Records search engine were also reviewed. For example, stakeholders were asked “Do you think it would be helpful or beneficial if counties formatted their index information more consistently.” Seventy-four percent of the respondents answered “Yes.”

In the fall of 2023, the Iowa County Recorders Association approved the initiation of an Iowa Recording Fee and Business Process Modernization Project. Recording fees had not been updated since 1985, and it was thought that a fee increase request should be paired with a “modernization” plan which would show benefits and a “return on investment”. Numerous modernization projects ideas were developed and explored, and the modernization of document formatting and related formatting policies fit well with the overall initiative.

As the planning process for the Iowa Recording Fee and Business Process Modernization Project approaches completion, it is timely for the Standards Subcommittee and the document formatting working group to complete the review of the issues and ideas that have been studied, and to make recommendations for the adoption of statutory policies. It is in this context that I wish to present to you a package of recommended changes to be included with any proposal for changing recording fees.

I encourage you to review these suggestions and to express your recommendations to the ESS Coordinating Committee and the Executive Board of the Iowa County Recorders Association.

The following is a summary of the topic and my recommendations for action. Attached are the suggested statutory amendments. A companion “clean” copy of the text will be prepared in the near future. Thank you for this opportunity.

Document Formatting

1. Advance the formatting changes as previously approved by the Standards Subcommittee and working group. These changes were applicable to 331.606B, subsection *1*, paragraphs a through e as summarized here.
    a. Clarified the meaning of “continuous form” and clarified that certain requirements could only logically apply to “physical” documents (permanently bound, stabled, taped, clipped, and label).
    b. Removed the reference to “preprinted” text, and established standard for a legible font with a minimum ten-point size. Archaic references to “typewritten” text were removed. The exception to allow an eight-point font for surveys was retained.
    c. Clarified that if all or <u>a portion</u> of a document was illegible then the legible copy of the text should be provided as an attachment. Also removed is the archaic reference to “typewritten” copy.
    d. Clarified language concerning standard white paper, replaced the word “inclusions” with the term “markings” and substituted the word “legibility” for the phrase “color and clarity.”
    e. Removed archaic references to “type” and changed the requirement for signatures from “readable” to “clear and discernable.”

    Generally, these changes could be considered technical and noncontroversial

2. Change the requirement for the top margin of the first page as specified in 331.606B, subsection 1, paragraph f. The change would simply require a “blank rectangular space at the top of the first page which shall be three and three-fourth inches in width and two and one-half inches in height reserved and delineated for the county recorder’s use.” The actual top margin requirement would be changed to one-half inch. Note that the dimensions of the stamp area are more explicit when compared with the language reviewed in January, 2024.

   This change is consistent with the theme of focusing the formatting requirements on that is required for the recording process, which in this case is to provide sufficient space for the recorder’s stamp. Further, this resolves the issue of handling certain documents which have a minor amount of information spilling into the top three-inch margin. Most recorders are recording these documents, and the policy change would align the Iowa Code with current and accepted practice. I believe this change would be favorably received by stakeholders.

3. Authorize the recording of documents which may include personally identifiable information (PII) when the document is subjected to a redaction process. This modification would align 331.606B Subsection 1, paragraph g with current practice.

4. Code section 331.606B, subsection *2* requires certain information to be provided on the first page of a document. This subsection helps ensure that the recorder is provided with the information they need to index a document and otherwise perform their recording duties. During the review process various versions of this section were explored for the purpose of clarifying and simplifying things. Changes to requirements for a return address and preparer information were considered. Notably, the recommendation presented here <u>retains the requirements for a return address and preparer information</u>.

   The following changes are recommended.
    a. Clarify that the required information can be provided on the first page or on a <u>cover sheet</u>. The reference to the top three-inch margin is removed (see item 2 above).
    b. The requirement for preparer information is <u>retained</u>, but the reference to a telephone number is removed. [A requirement for contact information is added elsewhere in the section.]
    c. For clarity, the term “type” is added to the requirement for a “title” to a document. Type is the term predominantly used in industry today.
    d. A requirement for “parsed” location information (the quarter section, section, township, and range, or the section, lot, block, subdivision name and city, town or county as applicable). A weakness in the land records database is the inconsistent presence of this information – which is the basis for indexing and searching by location. Specifying more clearly the requirement for this “parsed” information, in addition to the full legal

description can aid the indexing process and improve the quality of data. This practice with surveyors has been well received since Index Legends came into use in 2016. The Subcommittee asked that the language regarding the “full legal” and the “parsed” location information be combined. This change has been made. Note that “section” has been added to the list of platted data elements.

e. A more clearly stated requirement for Associated References, when applicable, this change can aid the indexing process and improve the quality of data in the land records database. It seems to be the intent of the current language, 331.606B, subsection 2, paragraph i, which requires “A document or instrument number for statutory requirements, if applicable.” The proposed language states “A recording reference number of an associated, recorded document or instrument …”
f. The requirement for a “parcel identification number, as applicable” is <u>retained</u>, but moved to a separate lettered paragraph.
g. In addition to the preparer and return address information, organizations would be encouraged to provide contact information for the person who is best able to address any issue affecting the recordability of the document or instrument. In this version, it is presented as option in a concluding, unlettered paragraph.

Notably, a recommendation to explicitly authorize the use of an “Index Legend” for all document types is <u>not</u> included in this recommendation. While this idea may merit further consideration in the future, further input and demonstrated interest from the stakeholders is needed.

Note: Instrument Date is no longer included in the recommended list based on the January discussion of the Standards Subcommittee and working group.

5. Current law includes only a passing reference to the use of “cover sheets”. It would be beneficial to both recorders and stakeholders to insert language in the Code of Iowa to officially authorize their use and to set some uniform expectations. A modification to 331.606B, subsection *3* is proposed to do the following.
    a. Continue to authorize the use of a page reference if insufficient space exists for all the information described in subsection 2 on either the first page or in a cover sheet.
    b. Explicitly authorize the use of a cover sheet which must conform to the formatting requirements in 331.606B, Section 1
    c. Clarify that a cover sheet would be included as a part of the recorded document.
    d. Clarify that a cover sheet should not include information intended to have a legal effect.

6. No changes to 331.606B, subsections 4 and 5 are recommended here. However, The Standards Subcommittee should be aware that a working group of surveyors and recorders is working to develop some new language – perhaps as a new subsection to 331.606B which would exclusively apply to surveys and related documents. Section 331.606B, subsection 4, and language concerning the minimum font size for surveys in 331.606B, subsection 1, paragraph b could be moved to the newly created subsection.

7. Current law requires that “a document or instrument rejected for recording by a recorder shall be returned to the preparer or presenter accompanied by an explanation of the reason for rejection.” This language reflects the physical world and does not adequately address the processes associated with electronic documents. It also carries a negative message with use the term “rejected.” Section 331.606B, subsection 6 needs to be “modernized.”

    Language is proposed to indicate that when a physical document is declined by a recorder, it should be returned to the submitter or preparer. However, when an electronic document is declined by a recorder, the submitter or preparer should simply be “notified.” This reflects the current business processes in the ILR E-Submission service. Additional language is added to suggest that recorders should advise of corrective actions, or the reasons for fee changes, when applicable. This is intended to reflect positive and constructive communication between the customer and the recorder.

8. Returning to 331.606B, subsection 1, a new introduction is proposed. The change is for the following purposes:

a. To communicate that an important purpose of formatting standards is to ensure that the archive of recorded documents is accessible, legible, and searchable.
b. To communicate that an important purpose of formatting standards is to help the recorder perform their duty to effectively record and index the required information.

c. To clarify that the recorder has the clear authority to decline documents and instruments if the form or content of a document or instrument prevents the recorder from fulfilling their duty to record.

The operative sentence regarding the authority of the recorder to decline a document, as presented in this recommendation, reads as follows:

"If the content of a document or instrument does not conform to the requirements of this section, or if the form of a document or instrument prevents or inhibits the county recorder from performing their duty, the county recorder may decline to record a document or instrument."

The Standards Subcommittee, the formatting working group, and the ESS Coordinating in different discussions considered whether the appropriate term should be "may" or "shall" in this sentence. At the January meeting of the Standards Subcommittee and working group, the preference for "shall" was expressed. At the February meeting of the ESS Coordinating Committee, differing views were expressed.

"May" is recommended here. Here's why.

- Recorders should clearly have the authority to decline a document. If a document is missing required information, or if a document is illegible, it probably should be declined and there should be no question about the authority of the recorder to do so. Hopefully, with the modification of the formatting standards, this will be handled consistently across all counties.
- Recorders should not be faced with the question of declining a document because the statute says "shall". The important issue is whether the document is recordable. Is the document legible? Is the required content present? Is there room for the recording stamp? If the answers are "yes", then the decision to record or decline should default to "record".

In the context of the overall modernization initiative, this seems to be the right position to take.

9. 331.606B, subsection 7 is recommended for repeal. Subsection 7a conflicts with the very idea of having document formatting standards and the proposition that a decision to record or decline should favor recording if the document is recordable. If a document is not recordable, it should be declined, even if a customer would be willing to pay an extra $10.00.

   Subjection 7b is unnecessary if the other recommendations contained herein are adopted. County recorders will clearly have the necessary authority to decline documents when appropriate (see the updated introductory paragraph to 331.606B, subsection 1).

Indexing Requirements
With the suggested revisions to 331.606B, subsection 2 concerning the required content to be included in documents submitted for recording, it may be appropriate to make corresponding changes to the language in Section 558.49 which relates to indexing conveyance records. The following changes are recommended.

1. Section 558.49, subsection 3 should be amended to reflect the date and time a document is recorded, not when it is filed (or submitted to) the recorder. An accepted practice is to use the recording date and time in the context of the race/notice process. This is simply intended to align language in the Code with accepted practice.

2. Section 558.49, subsection 4 currently states that the “date of instrument” must be indexed. This seems to relate to the date on which the parties executed or signed the instrument. If so, perhaps it should be plainly stated. Additionally, it is possible that the parties to a document may not all execute or sign the document on the same date – raising the question of what date should be indexed. A suggested amendment is to specify that the most recent date be indexed.

3. Section 558.49, subsection 5 currently states that the “nature of the instrument” must be indexed. This seems to relate to the document title or “type” such as a deed, mortgage, etc. A suggestion is made to how this could be more plainly stated.

4. Section 558.49, subsection 7 currently states that the “description of the real estate affected by the instrument” must be indexed. A substantive amendment is suggested to state that the “parsed” location information must be indexed “as indicated by the location information associated with a property including the quarter section, section, township, and range, or the *section*, lot, block, subdivision name and city, town or county, if platted.” This addition is intended to clarify that counties must consistently index location information using these data elements. It is unclear whether recorders should be required to index a “full” legal description.

5. If the suggested amendment to Section 331.606B, subsection 2, paragraph i is adopted, document preparers and submitters would more clearly be required to provide associated references to previously recorded documents. It is proposed that section 558.49 be amended to add associated references to the list of elements required in the recorders index. The inclusion of this information in the recorder’s index would enable people to search for and retrieve associated documents more easily.

6. Section 331,606B requires that preparers and submitters include parcel identification numbers (PIN), if applicable (or required). It is proposed that section 558.49 be amended to add parcel identification numbers to the list of elements required in the recorders index, as applicable. The inclusion of this information in the recorder’s index would enable people to search more easily for documents and instruments using the PIN.

It is anticipated that real estate attorneys and other stakeholders will wish to examine this legislative language more closely. The general idea is simply to better align the requirements of what is to be included in documents submitted for recording with the requirements for indexing those records.

Indexing Requirements - Continued
With the suggested revisions to 331.606B, subsection 2 concerning the required content to be included in documents submitted for recording, it may be appropriate to make some corresponding changes to the language in Section 331.606 which relates to general filing requirements.

1. Language is added to 331.606, subsection 1 to cross reference the requirements of this section with section 331.606B(2) and section 558.49. Some terminology is modified to align with current practices.

2. A very visible demonstration of modernization would be to, on a future date certain, align the recording reference numbers used by counties to be in the same format. Language is suggested to combine the county two-digit identification number with the calendar year followed by a sequential eight-digit number. Letters and special characters would be prohibited, and counties could continue to also use book/page references along with the standard reference number, if desired.

   Note: Alternative reference number schemes may be considered. The symbolic and tangible importance is associated with a decision for every jurisdiction to use the same scheme.

3. As with the suggested changes to 558.49, indexing of associated references, parsed location information, and parcel identification numbers would be required. A suggestion that other county offices who manage parcel identification numbers be responsible for informing recorders of PIN changes is included.

4. Recording times going forward would be required to the second in all recording jurisdictions. It may be appropriate to consider accuracy to the millisecond.

It is expected that further work on the language and implementation details will be needed for these items. However, adoption of these concepts as a part of the modernization initiative is recommended.

Additional Technical Amendments
While reviewing Iowa code sections relating to document formatting, and indexing, a few possible technical updates were identified in Section 331.601A which provides various definitions.

1. The definition of a "page" is provided in section 331.601A, subsection 7. The dimension of a page in this definition is limited to "not larger than eight and one-half inches in width and fourteen inches in length." For more than a decade ESS policy has required the acceptance of documents with a dimension of eleven inches by seventeen inches in physical or electronic format, and up to twenty-four inches by thirty-six inches in electronic format. This statutory definition should be updated to include these larger dimensions.

2. The definition of a "page" is provided in section 331.601A, subsection 9. ESS policy (Section 3.14) was changed in 2018 state that "A simple reference to a prior action which is not associated with an originally recorded document shall not be subject to the additional transaction recording fee." The statutory definition of a "transaction" should be updated to state that "A simple reference to a previous action which itself takes no subsequent action is not a transaction."

Requested Action: Review the actions summarized here and determine what amendments should be advanced and recommended to the ESS Coordinating Committee.

Section 331.606B, is amended to read as follows.

331.606B Document or document formatting standards.

1. ~~Except as otherwise provided in subsection 7, the county recorder shall refuse any document or instrument presented for recording that does not meet the following requirements:~~
The purpose of document or document formatting standards is to ensure that the documents and associated images are legible and contain the necessary information for the county recorder to perform their duty to create a permanent, unaltered archive and to index of information that is accessible and searchable by the citizens of Iowa and by commercial and government organizations. If the content of a document or instrument does not conform to the requirements of this section, or if the form of a document or instrument prevents or inhibits the county recorder from performing their duty, the county recorder may decline to record a document or instrument.

   The standards may relate to the physical processing or handling of a paper document, the processing of an electronic document, or the content of a document, and they are enumerated as follows.

   a. Each document or instrument shall consist of one or more individual pages ~~not permanently bound or~~ in a continuous form. For the purposes of this section, continuous form shall mean individual one-sided pages. ~~The~~ A document or instrument in a physical form shall not be permanently bound, have any attachment stapled, taped, or otherwise affixed to any page ~~except as necessary to comply with statutory requirements~~, or contain text or graphics on the back side of a page. However, the individual pages of a document or instrument in a physical form may be ~~stapled~~ clipped together for presentation for recording. A label that is firmly attached to a document or instrument in a physical form with a bar code or return address may be accepted for recording.
   b. All ~~preprinted~~ text shall be in a legible font of at least ~~eight~~ ten point in size ~~and no more than twenty sixteen characters and spaces per inch. All other text typed or computer generated, including but not limited to all names of parties to an agreement, shall be at least ten point in size and no more than sixteen characters and spaces per inch. If a document or instrument, other than a plat or survey or a drawing related to a plat or survey, presented for recording contains type smaller than eight point type for the preprinted text and ten point type for all other text, the document or instrument shall be accompanied by an exact typewritten or printed copy that meets the requirements of this section~~. However, a plat or survey or a drawing related to a plat or survey may contain text in a legible font of at least eight point in size.
   c. Each document shall be of sufficient legibility to produce a clear reproduction. If all or a portion of a document or instrument, other than a plat or survey or a drawing related to a plat or survey, is not sufficiently legible to produce a clear reproduction, the illegible portion of the document or instrument shall be accompanied by a legible copy as an attachment ~~an exact typewritten or printed copy~~ that meets the type size requirements of paragraph “b” ~~and~~ which shall be recorded contemporaneously as additional pages of the document or instrument.
   d. Each document or instrument~~, other than a plat or survey or a drawing related to a plat or survey,~~ shall be on standard white paper ~~of not less than twenty-pound weight~~ without watermarks or other visible ~~inclusions~~ markings. All text within the document or instrument shall be of sufficient ~~color and clarity~~ legibility to ensure that the text is readable when reproduced from the record.
   e. All signatures on a document or instrument shall be in black or dark blue ink and of sufficient color and clarity to ensure that the signatures are ~~readable~~ clear and discernable when the document or instrument is reproduced from the record. The corresponding name shall be ~~typed,~~ printed, or stamped beneath the original signature.

The ~~typing or~~ printing of a name or the application of an embossed or inked stamp shall not cover or otherwise materially interfere with any part of the document or instrument except where provided by law. Failure to print ~~or type~~ signatures as provided in this paragraph does not invalidate the document or instrument.

f. The first page of each document or instrument, other than a plat or survey or a drawing related to a plat or survey, shall have a top margin of at least ~~three inches~~ one-half inch of vertical space from left to right, and with a blank rectangular space at the top of the first page which shall be three and three-fourth inches in width and two and one-half inches in height reserved and delineated for the county recorder's use, unless the document is accompanied by a cover sheet. ~~Which shall be reserved for the recorder's use.~~ The stamp area shall be adjacent to the top margin. All other margins on the document or instrument shall be a minimum of three-fourths of one inch. Nonessential information including but not limited to form numbers, page numbers, or customer notations may be placed in a margin except the top margin. The recorder shall not incur any liability for not showing a seal or information that extends beyond the margin of the permanent archival record.

g. Each document or instrument presented for recording shall meet the requirements of section 331.606A, subsection 2. However, a document which includes personally identifiable information shall be recorded provided that the document is subjected to a redaction process as specified in Section 331.606A, section 3.

2. Each document or instrument, other than a plat or survey or a drawing related to a plat or survey, that is presented for recording shall contain the following information on the first page or on a cover sheet or page as described in subsection 3 ~~below the three-inch margin~~:

a. The name and~~,~~ address~~, and telephone number~~ of the individual who prepared the document.

b. For any instrument of conveyance, the name of the taxpayer and a complete mailing address.

c. A return address.

d. The title or type of the document or instrument.

e. All grantors' names.

f. All grantees' names.

g. Any address required by statute.

h. The legal description of the property ~~and parcel identification number~~, if required. When a legal description is required, the parsed location information shall also be provided including the quarter section, section, township, and range, or the section, lot, block, subdivision name and city, town or *county* as applicable.

i. ~~A document or instrument number for statutory requirements, if applicable~~. A recording reference number of an associated, recorded document or instrument as required by the county land record information system, or for other statutory requirements, as applicable.

j. The current parcel identification numbers, as applicable.

A document or instrument may also contain the contact information of the person who is best able to address any issue affecting the recordability of the document or instrument.

The information specified in this section is for the purpose of providing the information necessary for recording and indexing a document or instrument and to facilitate public access to information. Document information necessary to execute a transaction or to have legal effect shall be included in a document as determined by the parties in accordance with established legal standards.

3. ~~If insufficient space exists on the first page for all of the information described in subsection 2, the page reference of the document or instrument where the information is located shall be noted on the first page~~. The information specified in 331.606B, Section 2 may be provided in one of the following forms.
    a. As a part of the first page of a document or instrument.
    b. As a cover sheet or page accompanying a document or instrument in a format approved by the county land record information system. A cover sheet shall be recorded contemporaneously as an additional first page to the document or instrument. A cover sheet shall conform to Section 331.606B, Section 1
    c. If insufficient space exists on the first page or a cover sheet for all of the information described in subsection 2, the page reference of the document or instrument where the information is located shall be noted on the first page or coversheet.
    d. An attestation statement, or any information intended to have legal effect shall not be included on the Cover Sheet.

Note: No changes to 331.606B, subsections 4 and 5 are recommended at this time.

~~6. A document or instrument rejected for recording by a recorder shall be returned to the preparer or presenter accompanied by an explanation of the reason for rejection.~~
A physical document or instrument declined for recording by a recorder shall be returned to the submitter or preparer accompanied by an explanation of the reason for the action to decline the document. When an electronic document or instrument submitted through the county land record information system is declined for recording by a recorder, the recorder shall notify the submitter of the reason for the action to decline the document.

Whenever practicable, the recorder shall also advise the preparer or submitter of any actions necessary to correct the document or instrument.

When a recording fee for an electronic document is adjusted by a recorder to correct an error in the calculation of a fee, the recorder shall notify the submitter of the reason and basis for adjusting the recording fee.

Section 331.606B, subsection 7 is repealed.

Section 558.49 is amended to read as follows:

558.49 Index records.
The recorder must shall keep index records to show the following:

1. Each grantor.
2. Each grantee.
3. The date and time when the instrument was ~~filed with~~ recorded by the recorder.
4. The date ~~of the~~ on which the document or instrument was executed by the parties, to the extent practicable. If there is a variance in the date of execution by the parties, the most recent date shall be indexed.
5. The nature of the instrument, as indicated by the title or type of the document or instrument.
6. The document reference number where the record of the instrument may be found.
7. The parsed description of the real estate affected by the document or instrument, as indicated by the location information including the quarter section, section, township, and range, or the *section*, lot, block, subdivision name and city, town or county, if platted.
8. Any recording reference number of an associated, recorded document or instrument, when present on a document submitted for recording.
9. The parcel identification number, when present on a document submitted for recording.

Section 331.606 is amended to read as follows.

331.606 General filing requirements.
1. In addition to the information specified in section 331.606B(2), section 558.49 and other requirements specified by law, the recorder shall note in the county land records management system the date of filing of each instrument, the number, type or title, and character of the instrument, and the name of each grantor and grantee named in the instrument. In ~~numbering~~ assigning reference numbers to the documents or instruments, the recorder shall ~~may start with the number one immediately following the date of annual settlement with the board and continue to number them consecutively until the next annual settlement with the board or the recorder may~~ start with number one on the first working day of the calendar year and continue to number the instruments consecutively until the last working day of the calendar year. Reference numbers shall not include letters or special characters. Reference numbers shall include the county two-digit numeric prefix and the four-digit year preceding each reference. In addition to the standard reference number, the recorder may also assign a book and page reference to a document or instrument.
_. When present in a document, associated recording references shall be indexed with the recorded document and with its antecedent documents. References shall also be indexed for concurrently recorded associated documents.
_. When a recorded document includes a legal description, parsed location information shall be indexed. For platted land, the indexed location information shall include the lot, block, subdivision name, the name of the applicable city, town or county, and section number. For land which is not platted, the indexed location information shall include the section, township, range and quarter section. Indexing of the ¼ ¼ section is recommended by not required. If a county department uses an additional parcel identifier such as a capitalized alphabetic character, or a character string of numbers separated by a hyphen, it shall be indexed as specified by the county land record information system.
_. When present in a document, parcel identification numbers,shall be indexed. If a parcel identification number is modified by the county, such as for a subdivision or a consolidation of a parcel, the county auditor shall timely provide updated parcel identification number information to the recorder which shall be indexed with the recently recorded document. The parcel identification number index information for antecedent documents shall not be modified unless it is for the purpose of correcting an error.
2. The recorder shall also note in the index the exact time of the filing of each instrument which shall be accurate to the second.
3. The county recorder may give the county sheriff the records filed under this chapter pertaining to the sale and registration of weapons or may dispose of those records if the sheriff does not wish to receive the records.
4. The recorder shall permanently archive an unaltered version of each recorded document or instrument. A document or instrument may be archived in its original format, as an electronic document, or in another format suitable for preserving information in the document or instrument. A person may view and copy an original or unaltered document or instrument in the office of the recorder.

By numbering and renumbering as necessary.

Section 331.601A, Subsection 7, is amended to read as follows.

331.601A Definitions.
As used in this part, unless the context otherwise requires:
7. “Page” means a writing, printing, or drawing, other than a plat or survey or a drawing related to a plat or survey, occurring on one side only and covering all or part of such side, and not larger than eight and one-half inches in width and fourteen inches in length. For the purposes of a plat or survey or a drawing related to a plat or survey, “Page” also means a writing, printing, or drawing occurring on one side only and covering all or part of such side, and with dimensions of eleven inches by seventeen inches or up to twenty-four inches by thirty-six inches.

Section 331.601A, Subsection 9, is amended to read as follows.

331.601A Definitions.
As used in this part, unless the context otherwise requires:
9. “Transaction” means a specific legal action in the form of or evidenced by one of the following:
a. A title or caption including but not limited to a deed, deed of trust, mortgage, or power of attorney representing an action such as the conveyance of property, the provision of financing, or the power to act on behalf of another person.
b. A subsequent action ~~reference~~ referring to an original action as represented by a document or instrument including but not limited to an assignment or release or satisfaction of mortgage. A simple reference to a previous action which itself takes no subsequent action is not a transaction.

Joint Recorders and ILTA Meeting
Summary
Web Conference

April 4, 2024 – 2:00 PM

Representatives of the Iowa County Recorders Association, the Electronic Services System (Iowa Land Records) and the Iowa Land Title Association met via web conference.

Participants included: Jan Gemar, Executive Director, ILTA; Sally Hertel, Mitchell County Abstract Company; Dallas Brown, Cornell Abstract Co.; Nancy Booten, President, ICRA and Lee County Recorder; Stacie Herridge, Story County Recorder; and Megan Clyman, Davis County Recorder

Other participants included: Dillon Malone, Iowa Title Guaranty Director; Mike St. Clair, ILTA; Nick Lanning, ESS; Bob Rafferty, ESS; Phil Dunshee, ESS; and Census Lo-Liyong, ICRA & ESS

In advance of the meeting documents were provided to ILTA for review including an "Abstract of Recording Modernization Initiatives" dated 031124, and a recently adopted policy change relating to Associated References. ILTA had also been referred to the February 2024 ESS packet to reference other policy materials.

On April 2, Jan and ILTA had kindly marked up and returned copies of the "Abstract" and "Associated Reference" policy to help facilitate conversation at the planned meeting, and on the morning of April 4 Phil returned information about the questions and comments received from ILTA. From the discussion it appeared that the exchange of questions, comments and answers was helpful to everyone. These documents are attached for reference.

The meeting focused on the topics which required additional clarification. A summary of the main topics and comments follows.

Associated References. ILTA sought further clarification about the definition and use of associated references. Associated references are existing data elements in recorder indexes which are used to tie associated documents together: mortgages with satisfactions; liens with releases; deeds with related documents such as groundwater hazard statements or the previous deed for the same property; or recorded documents which are corrected or re-recorded. The intent of this initiative would be to expand the usage and consistency of associated references to help users access documents that are related to each other.

ILTA pointed out that parties in such documents can change overtime and possibly there could be reassignments from one party to another, and therefore, while helpful, might not give abstractors everything they need for their research. This insight into the needs of abstractors was helpful to recorders and may be explored further.

Parcel Identification Numbers. ILTA sought further clarification about how Parcel Identification Numbers would be indexed, noting that PINs can change when parcels are subdivided or consolidated. The purpose of the indexing PINs was clarified. Indexing PINs would expand the possibility of tying property information systems together to create greater ease of access to property information, and to simply make it possible to search for documents using a PIN.

It was noted that in many cases the PINs would not change with a conveyance, but if it did, it would be possible to index those changes. The intent is to index records with the correct information in the general time frame of the transaction, but not to update all records whenever a conveyance document is recorded.

Indexing Notary Information. ILTA sought further clarification about the Modernization to index notary information. It was explained that some property fraud activity may be associated with fraudulent notarization. By indexing notary information, it could be possible to document and track notary activities and to monitor other transactions when fraud is discovered. Generally, ILTA expressed the thought that notary information best be left to the Secretary of State. ILTA representatives wondered whether the work and investment required of recorders would be justified and suggested that a property notification system (also described in the Abstract) might be a better use of resources. Dillon Malone from ITG echoed this sentiment. Appreciation was expressed to ILTA for sharing this perspective.

Digitizing Historic Surveys. Participants discussed the Abstract topic relating to digitizing and creating a database of older surveys and plates. This is a project being discussed with the Society of Land Surveyors of Iowa. One of the key insights gained from the discussion with ILTA was that effort may have value to surveyors but might not be of much use to abstractors if those older records are not actually recorded.

References to Adjacent Property. In the context of building associated references between documents, ILTA suggested that it might be helpful to them if somehow location and recording information about neighboring properties could be indexed with a survey document. Specifically, when a survey document references, in the real estate description, another document or name of adjacent property owners, the surveyor could include the recording information for that document. Instead of the description stating i.e. " to the Northeast corner of property owned by Joe Smith" it could recite “to the Northeast Corner of property owned by Joe Smith in document no. 2024-1111.” This insight into the needs of abstractors was helpful to recorders and may be explored further. It is unclear whether adjacent property information is a data element in the recorder’s index or in Iowa Land Records. This is a topic that can be shared and discussed with the ICRA/SLSI working group.

The group discussed ICRA plans for seeking a recording fee increase, which hasn’t changed since 1985. Jan, Sally and Dallas indicated that would be an issue considered by their Board. Generally, ILTA had questions about the overall cost of the various “Modernization” initiatives.

All participants expressed appreciation for the communication and for the improved relations in recent years. All hoped for this to continue.

Further updates will be provided as planning proceeds.

IOWA LAND RECORDS

ELECTRONIC SERVICES SYSTEM
8711 Windsor Parkway, Suite 2
Johnston, Iowa 50131

April 4, 2024

To: ILTA/ICRA Discussion Participants

From: Phil Dunshee, Project Manager

Re: Questions From ILTA

Jan forwarded to us a few comments and questions about associated references and "modernization" ideas. I initially responded that "the ideas and concepts come from a variety of sources: stakeholders, recorders, observations of other jurisdictions, PRIA, other county officials, legislators. They are not in priority order, and it would be premature to call them "proposals". Think of them as a menu. What looks good to you? "

I've gone through the comments and questions and have attempted to summarize and answer here for the benefit of all. Hopefully this will aid the conversation.

Associated References
Q. Who decides what is an Associated Document?

A. Generally the associations are defined in the policy and are intended to be self-evident.

- An original mortgage is associated with a subsequent satisfaction of mortgage (or perhaps a modification). A satisfaction will have a specific reference to the recording information of the original mortgage document.
- A federal or state tax lien is associated with the release of those liens. A lien release will have a specific reference to the recording information of the original lien.
- A conveyance which requires the submission of a groundwater hazard (GWH) statement is associated because the GWH is associated with the property being conveyed.
- Documents which correct or re-record a document logically are associated with the document being corrected or re-recorded.
- Survey type documents are associated when they are related to the same property. Surveyors who wish to refer to other surveys about the same property will need to reference the recording information of other surveys if they want them to be associated in the database.
- A document conveying a property, by definition, relates to a previous conveyance of the same property. (There is no intent to build associations with all prior conveyance documents.)

In most cases it will be the preparer of a document which identifies the associated reference. Associated references seem to be appreciated by users.

Q. Farm Credit, Banks and other lending institutions may go through multiple mergers, name changes over time.

A. The primary element of an associated reference is the recording information, not the name of the parties. Associated references have been used for many years, and name changes haven't been an impediment (to the best of my knowledge). Perhaps further clarification of the question/comment is needed.

Q. Referencing Page 66 of the ESS Coordinating Committee Meeting Packet: The eleven-digit document reference number will be used for the Associated Documents?

A. No. You are referencing a sample concept included in the February ESS meeting packet. Such a reference number could be an associated reference in the future, if adopted. But that is not what is used today. Currently the county systems assign a unique reference number to each document (which is not the recording information), and those unique numbers are used for associated references.

Modernization Concepts

Q. There have been improvements to the system recently and these initiatives identified -- with the project scope of work & costs estimates pending. Could a brief summary be provided of the recent improvements to include the time and costs associated; and what each of the new initiatives will benefit the general landowner.

A. The most recent improvements to the Iowa Land Records system were associated with the redesign of the search application, which we believe has been generally well received. We are reporting to our auditor that $157,856.88 was spent to make those changes.

Another recent improvement was the implementation of a new user management and registration system, including the use of two-factor authentication. These changes have made the Iowa Land Records more secure and less subject to abuse. We are reporting to our auditor that $60,998.46 was expended to make this change.

Changes have been made to benefit everyone in the real estate industry who seeks access to property information, and also individual property owners. As of February 15, 2024, 2650 new Individual User accounts have been set up, and any real person in Iowa can sign up at no cost.

The purpose of the abstract is to share information about various new ideas, and to gather feedback from industry and individuals about their value to them. That is the input we seek from ILTA as well.

Q. How was the list of initiatives created? Do the initiatives/actions/activities of Property Records Industry Association (PRIA) and/or the American Land Title Association (ALTA) influence these initiatives? If so, how?

A. The ideas have been derived from many sources including stakeholder groups and from people engaged in various ways with county recorders and the Iowa Land Records system. Other new ideas that you may have can be added to the discussion. As you know Iowa county recorders and Iowa Land Records is active in the Property Records Industry Association as is the American Land Title Association and some of the ideas being explored are discussed by PRIA and ALT**A.** PRIA has many working groups, and they often publish the results of their studies and discussions.

Q. How will the inconsistencies of technology across the county offices be addressed? Cost estimate?

A. The primary “idea” for resolving inconsistencies in data is to “normalize” data. This would involve extracting specific data elements from general data elements within ILR or identifying external sources of information that could be used to fill gaps. This will require both technical effort and staff time to coordinate, and a specific cost estimate has not yet been developed. This is a process that would have to occur over a period of time, we believe.

Q. Cost estimates are pending. Is there an estimate of how each of these initiatives will be funded? Value v. Costs: Will the costs of real estate transactions increase?

A. These and other ideas are being reviewed to determine the level of importance and interest on the part of recorders, stakeholders, and policymakers. In the coming weeks/months we expect that more detailed cost estimates will be developed.

Policy changes in recording fees (which haven't been updated since 1985) could provide a source of funding for both county recorders and special projects. Compared to the overall cost of real estate transactions, changes in recording fee policy would not be expected to significantly affect the cost of real estate transactions. The net cost could be less if efficiency could be gained.

Specific plans for fee changes have not yet been developed but are being explored.

Q. The following comment was added to the modernization section on document formatting. "Twenty (20) approved remote notary providers listed on state database. This could be helpful."

A. We may need some further clarification on the meaning of this comment.

Q. The following question was added to the DOV section of the modernization abstract. "What is the necessity of adding this to the recorders responsibilities?"

A. The idea has been discussed before with the Department of Revenue (but not implemented). It would provide public access to information about sales/consideration amounts. It is not presented as a necessity, but it could provide some value to the real estate industry. We wish to receive the opinions of stakeholders and policymakers. Nothing further at this time.

Q. The following question was added to the BTB section of the modernization abstract. "If a document is redacted and found to be in error, is it possible to un-redact? Is the original copy preserved?"

A. Yes. Unaltered versions of redacted documents are held in a private image repository. "Un-redaction" would not be necessary.

Q. The following comment was added to the "Normalize" section of the modernization abstract. "PIN's change."

A. Yes, they do. Here's how it would work. In the case of property which is conveyed, and no change is made which requires a change in a PIN, the preparer would simply include the current PIN number as a part of the document. When there is a change in the property (subdivision or consolidation) and the change requires a change in the PIN, the recorder's index could be updated shortly after the recording occurs.

The intent is to reflect the PIN and the time of the conveyance only. There is no intent to update PIN information in previously recorded documents. Think of it as a historical reference. For the most recent conveyances, the PIN could be used to link to other property information. This is the way it is being done in most of the U.S., and it is one of the ideas being advanced by PRI**A.**

Q. The following comment was added to the "Internalize Redaction Processes" section of the modernization abstract. "Government regulation of Artificial Intelligence is not where it needs to be. The threat of fraud perpetuated with AI is significant."

A. Acknowledged. There are a lot of unanswered questions about Artificial Intelligence and its effects. In this case, there should be less concern, because the idea of using machine learning to identify patterns such as personally identifiable information (PII) is not new. Optical character recognition coupled with machine learning could be used safely to extract information from documents to aid in the redaction of PII or to fill gaps in information to make things more consistent. Used smartly, it could enable many improvements.

Q. The following question was added to the "Index External Registry References" section of the modernization abstract. "What is a mortgage registration?"

A. In the real estate industry we have observed that many external systems are being developed to track property information. One is MERS (the mortgage electronic registration system – see: https://www.mersinc.org/index). Others are being developed such as https://www.figure.com/ to support real estate transactions. Another example is https://propy.com/home/. These systems use blockchain and artificial intelligence to conduct business.

As noted in one of the comments – there are "Twenty (20) approved remote notary providers listed on state database." A question is, "If you needed to find the recording of the remote notarization, or if you needed information about a mortgage or loan transaction that existed on an external platform, how would you find it?"

The concept being advanced here is that maybe the information would be easier to find if it were stored in the public land registry. Would this have value to stakeholders in the industry? We aren't certain so we are asking your opinion.

Q. The following comment was added to the "Create an ILR Blockchain" section of the modernization abstract. "New Iowa Code Chapter 554E: Digital Ledger Technology, Smart Contracts, Electronic Records."

A. Yes, we're familiar with the recent changes to the Iowa Code. The use of distributed ledger technology is legal in Iowa. From our work with PRIA and MISMO (mortgage industry standards maintenance organization), and from conversations with private sector blockchain developers, private investments are being made with the clear intent of replacing the public land registry and "intermediaries" in the lending process.

What should or can be done about this? Maybe an answer is to leverage new technologies to prevent it from happening. Make an Iowa system for the benefit of the industry in Iowa with the participation of Iowa stakeholders. Sort of a "control your own destiny before others do it to you" concept.

This isn't a proposal, it's a question. Knowing what is happening in the national/international marketplace, what can be done to work together for the benefit of Iowa property owners and Iowa industry stakeholders?

Q. The following comment was added to the “Create an ILR Blockchain” section of the modernization abstract. “Certainty - please explain. There will be errors in the process.”

A. The advocates of distributed ledger technology and blockchain suggest that its use is “better” than traditional databases. What’s stored on the blockchain is “immutable” they say, and it is more “trustworthy.” We’ve studied this question and know that all the hype can’t be believed. Garbage in, garbage out is true for any database. But … if the Iowa real estate industry, broadly, believed that the use of the technology could be beneficial what should be done? If structured properly, a “private” blockchain through ILR could be set up for mutual benefit.

Again, this is not a proposal, it’s a question. What should be done? How can we help?

Q. The following comment was added to the “Create a Statewide Fraud Alert Notification System” section of the modernization abstract. “Our understanding of SF 2065 legislation that was introduced by Senator Dickey is that it received an early subcommittee hearing at which legislators agreed that more work needed to be done, given that the Recorders Assn. said they were at least a year from being serious about implementing such a process.”

A. Iowa recorders had expressed interest in developing a notification system before the legislation was introduced. Some planning and design work has been done, but there is more work to do. Also, there was awareness that the recorders would be advancing some of these ideas in the 2025 legislative session. There should be no question that some additional resources will be required to develop and implement this project idea. In the coming weeks/months, further work will be done to develop a design and cost estimate.

Q. The following question was added to the “Digitize and Index Historical Surveys …” section of the modernization abstract. “Who pays to implement this system -- and proofing/recording of unrecorded surveys?”

A. Based on discussions thus far with the Iowa Society of Land Surveyors, it would likely be a cooperative project to digitize and develop a database. It is too soon to say for sure, but the historical records might not be “recorded”. Some resources may be needed for some aspects of a project, but the project design is just beginning, and it is too soon to provide a cost estimate. A specific source of funding has not yet been defined.

Q. The following comment was added to the Digitize and Index Historical Surveys …” section of the modernization abstract. “A working group appears to have been formed between the Recorders and Surveyors. Would you provide a brief overview of the work group and their topics? Would the Recorders welcome a work group with members of the Iowa Land Title Association?”

A. So far, the recorders and surveyors working group have discussed changes in policy and practice regarding the use of “Index Legends” and they are just beginning the review of the historical surveys topic. Future topics may include strategies for improving location searches, and the other topics in the abstract include multi-jurisdiction processes, reconnecting with Beacon (and possibly other GIS systems), The working group meets for an hour every other week.

Yes, a work group with ILTA members would be possible. What topics would you like to work on? Let’s discuss!

Q. The following question was added to the “Create a Multi-Jurisdiction …” section of the modernization abstract. “The Society of Land Surveyors supports this review process?”

A. The review process itself is not new, but it is stuck in the paper world. Surveyors are required to get approval from other offices (such as zoning departments) before they submit documents for recording. The idea is to see if it could be done electronically. Here is one workflow.

1. Electronic plat submitted to zoning by surveyor
2. Zoning approves plat and electronically notifies surveyor
3. Surveyor receives and forward plat through ILR for recording
4. Recorded plat returned to surveyor, made accessible to the public

We haven’t started work on this topic yet, but yes, the surveyors seem interested.

Q. The following comment was added to the “Create a Mulit-Jurisdiction …” section of the modernization abstract. “Speed and efficiency in real estate transactions has been the focus of many in the real estate industry, and now the federal government is making changes in an effort to reduce costs to home buyers, setting the stage for a showdown with the title insurance industry. Creating a need for a city or county to review and approve plats and surveys adds delays and costs. And each agency would need to agree to the same set of standards etc. across the state. There is little consistency across the county courthouses.”

A. As noted above, the review process itself is not new, but it is stuck in the paper world. Making the workflow electronic has the potential for making things faster and more efficient. More planning ahead. And it could evolve into a consistent process throughout Iowa.

Q. The following comment was added to the “Re-establish Integration with Beacon…” section of the modernization abstract. “Beacon is not in every county. Not all parcels in Beacon are surveyed parcels.”

A. Iowa Land Records has worked with Beacon since 2012, but the link was broken when the new ILR search application was launched. We have heard from customers who would like it back and possibly made better. Beacon does serve most Iowa counties, and things could be designed so that other GIS systems could be connected as well.

We may need a better understanding about the comment concerning “surveyed” parcels. It may not be perfect but imagine searching Iowa Land Recorders and linking to property information on the Beacon system (and vice versa). Let’s discuss!

Q. The following question was added to the “Re-establish Integration with Beacon…” section of the modernization abstract. “Who are authorized Beacon users??”

A. In recent discussions with Beacon – authorized users would only be the authorized users of Iowa Land Records. Nothing has been finalized. All things are still in the planning stages.

Q. The following comment was added to the “Create a new special purpose “text” search …” section of the modernization abstract. “Text search could be beneficial with a drop-down menu, and to the smallest description i.e. 1/4, 1/4. Each subdivision has own search. Common areas/restrictions may not show up on the deed.”

A. We may need some further clarification about this comment. But allow us to elaborate just a little further on this idea. Many counties have archived a “text” legal description in their systems, but its usefulness as a search element is limited because the information is “free form” and doesn’t follow a consistent pattern. It seems every county which did this did it differently. The Iowa Land Records search algorithm doesn’t work well with this data structure; the data can’t be indexed (in the context of computer programming) and optimized in the way that other data elements can be. For this reason, this free form legal description field was not included in the new search application (although the data is displayed in the search results).

However, we’ve learned from some users that for some periods of time in some counties there is no other way to do a location search, because there is no “parsed” location information. We believe that in the long term, the best thing to do is to work to add the missing data back into the database; this is one of the key elements of the “normalization” concept.

What can be done in the meantime? We shouldn’t add the freeform legal text into the new search application. It’s like trying to put a square peg in a round hole. The results would be unsatisfactory. But creating a separate “text” search algorithm just for this data element would work, we believe, and it could be added to the search interface. Additional investment and development will be required to do this, and that is why it is included in the list of possible “modernization” initiatives.

End

IOWA LAND RECORDS

ELECTRONIC SERVICES SYSTEM
8711 Windsor Parkway, Suite 2
Johnston, Iowa 50131

February 15, 2024

To: ESS Coordinating Committee

From: Phil Dunshee, ILR Project Manager

Re: ILR Data Completeness and Normalization Initiative

When development work on the updated ILR search application started two summers ago, we examined the frequency of search types to make sure we were putting emphasis on the types that were most frequently used. Names searches were at the top of this list. Location searches were the least used. One of the likely reasons is that searching based on location (legal description information) is more difficult due to the variability of indexing practices among counties. A significant amount of location information is unparsed and is often in a freeform text description field. For this reason, we looked to the future and built the location search on the “best practice” of using parsed location information (section, township, range, quarter section (un-platted) and lot, block, subdivision name and city/town (platted)). For the same reasons we did not include a search using parcel identification number at this time (it can be added later when it is more useful).

As we have moved forward with the new search application and as steps have been taken to retire the legacy application, we have observed that some users learned how to use the summary text description field to search for records in counties with little, if any, parsed location information to search. In the absence of a method to enable a successful parsed location search in some counties, we have permitted some organizations, including the Department of Transportation, to temporarily continue to use the legacy search application. But we need to fully retire the legacy application.

We believe the best approach to resolving this issue is to modify the ILR database wherever possible to “fill in” the missing parsed location information. There appear to be two feasible approaches to doing this. The first is to observe the freeform text location information in applicable counties and to extract the parsed information and place it in the correct data elements in the ILR system. A second approach would be to work with partner organizations who have already extracted the information for their own purposes, and, with their permission, copy and insert it into the ILR database. Either (or both) approaches would make parsed location searches possible. The document summarizing possible ICRA-ESS Modernization Initiatives includes the following project description.

> “Normalize” County Location and PIN Information; Iowa Land Records provides access to more than 23 million records. However, the formatting of certain data may not be consistent across all counties, making searching more difficult. For example, in prior years counties may not have parsed location information such as section, township and range into separate fields. A special project to fill in and “normalize” the electronically indexed data is proposed. A primary focus would be on the following data elements: section, township, range, quarter section, and lot, block, subdivision, city/town and the applicable parcel identification number(s).

“Normalization” can also include changes to the format of numeric data to create more consistency, such as establishing common rules for the use of leading zeros (or not), and document type mapping. All of these changes would be made in the ESS/ILR database – NOT local indexing systems.

Making these changes is a substantive, nontrivial project and therefore it is included in the list of possible "Modernization" initiatives. More resources will be needed to make it happen. The following is a description of the primary steps for implementation.

Data Analysis
The indexing data for each county in the ILR system would be analyzed to identify missing data or data in a format that deviates from established standards. This review would be coordinated with each county recorder and their local LRMS service provider.

The data review would also examine any data the county may have not yet transferred to ILR for whatever reason. This might include parcel identification numbers, and other requested data elements, or perhaps index data and images from prior years.

Data Review and Modification
Where present, either in the county system or within Iowa Land Records, unparsed data or missing county data would be isolated, extracted, parsed or re-formatted – whatever was necessary – to make it complete and formatted to established standards. At this stage, no changes to the ILR database have yet been made. The "normalized" data would be reviewed with the county recorder and their local LRMS service provider.

Data Insertion
Once reviewed and verified, the data would be inserted into the appropriate elements of the ILR system. Test searches would be performed to verify that systems were working, and that data was being displayed correctly.

Option for County Updates
Given the investment that would have been made in the "normalization" and parsing of the data elements, it seems appropriate to provide each county with the option to insert the updated information into their local indexing systems. We envision this being a function of the updated County Upload API (CUAPI) which we hope to move into production in 2025. Generally, if authorized or directed by the county, the local LRMS service provider would make a "call" to receive the updated data from ILR. In doing so that county indexing data could also be enhanced. This would be OPTIONAL for the county.

Time Line
Updates to the CUAPI to enable the new transfer functions could be completed by December, 2024 and the process of working with each county would require an effort that would extend from July, 2025 through December, 2026.

Updated County Error Correction Process
In the normal course of business, county recorders may identify indexing errors, e.g., spelling, that need to be corrected. County recorders sometimes append new information to an older electronic index record, such as an associated reference to a related and recently recorded document. It is suggested that these updates be received by ILR through the CUAPI, and then placed in a queue for review by a member of the ILR customer support team. Routine updates would be quickly approved, but the updated process would provide a "failsafe" against erroneous or unintentional changes in data. This control would be applied well after the normal time required for a county to complete indexing, such as 30 days following the recording date.

Priority ILR Steps
While a systematic county by county process will take time and resources to implement, in the near term the ILR team would focus on counties with limited parsed location information. This action is needed to facilitate needed location searches that will allow for the full retirement of the legacy search application. Additionally, it would be appropriate to update ESS policies – primarily with respect to Chapter 2 of the ESS Policies and Procedures. These topics will be addressed in upcoming meetings of the ESS Standards Subcommittee.

Requested Action: No action is requested. Comments and guidance from the ESS Coordinating Committee are desired at this time.

Chapter 3
Policy and Procedures County Data and Information Standards

1. Section 3.1 of the ESS Policies and Procedures is amended correct a spelling error in the definition for the term “Public”.

Public – The term used to reference the citizens of a County in the land record index by a County Recorder with respect to the document type Corner ~~Certficates~~ Certificates.

2. Section 3.10 of the ESS Policies and Procedures is amended to require the indexing of parcel identification numbers.

ESS – 3.10 Parcel Identification Numbers.
(Iowa Code Section 331.604, 3(a))

3.10(1) The purpose of establishing standards, policies and procedures for Parcel Identification Numbers is to ensure that the information is accurate, complete, consistent and accessible through the county land record information system, and to ensure that information about Parcel Identification Numbers can be used as link or reference to other property information systems. Parcel Identification Numbers can be used as a ~~search criteria~~ data element when searching for information in the county land record information system. ~~In some cases, the retrieval of document or property information will be implemented through a search link using the parcel identification number. Therefore, the~~ The ~~format of~~ Parcel Identification Number information must be maintained in a format which is identical to the format used in other County systems which assign or maintain Parcel Identification Number information.

3.10(2) ~~When practicable, each~~ Each County indexing system shall provide for archiving parcel identification numbers as specified herein. All parcel identification numbers associated with a property which is described in a recorded conveyance document shall be archived. The parcel identification number shall be the number assigned by the County or City Assessor to the property ~~at the time of recording~~. Parcel identification number(s) shall be added to the appropriate document index as soon as possible.

~~3.10(3) Parcel identification numbers shall be archived in exactly the same format as the parcel identification numbers archived in the applicable County or City Assessor database.~~

3.10(4) In the event that parcel identification numbers associated with a property are subsequently changed by a County or City Assessor, the County Recorder shall not modify the indexed parcel identification number associated with ~~the recording of~~ a recorded conveyance document. The indexed parcel identification number is intended to be a historical reference concerning the property at the time of recording.

3.10(5) This section shall be effective ~~January 1, 2016.~~ January 1, 2025.

Section 3.10(5) amended 12.11.13.
Section 3.10(2) amended 8.12.15.