

COOK COUNTY FARM BUREAU® ADVOCATING FOR A CHANGE IN VEHICLE LICENSE COST

Numerous farmers and farm vehicle owners have contacted the Cook County Farm Bureau® after receiving citations for overdue Cook County Wheel Tax. Members concerns include the following:

FEE ENFORCEMENT

After receiving the notices and the information concerning an administrative hearing, several members contacted the Department of Revenue to discuss the amount due. It's been brought to our attention that individuals have been told the following:

- To pay the total due (license cost, late penalty, and citation amount)
- To pay the wheel tax and late penalty
- To pay the wheel tax and the citation amount

In addition, those individuals who paid the total amount prior to the administrative hearing date have since been told to pay the administrative hearing cost.

When administering a program, the most important thing is consistency. What the above information demonstrates is that individuals receive a different answer depending on who in the department they speak to regarding overdue wheel tax.

RATIONALE BEHIND THE LICENSE COST

Funds from vehicle sticker purchases have long been used for roadway repairs. But despite the income, many municipalities have eliminated the program citing the cost of enforcement, staff time, and the printing of stickers. Vehicle stickers are also one of the most hated fees a unit of government can implement, which begs the question of why Cook County government still assesses motor vehicle licenses.

According to the Fiscal Year 2019 preliminary budget estimate, the county is facing a deficit of \$82 million. That same document provides that the wheel tax is estimated to raise a little more than \$4 million or less than five percent of the deficit. Given the limited revenue combined with unequal enforcement and the cost of enforcement, is the tax a necessary burden on the residents of unincorporated Cook County?

In addition, revenue from vehicle stickers are typically used to fund road improvement projects; bridge repairs; or public safety in the areas the fees are being collected from. Can Cook County demonstrate the projects that have been funded with revenue from this license cost?

LICENSE COST

An additional concern brought forward by members is the cost of the license. Individuals in unincorporated areas are subject to a license fee through the Secretary of State and a license fee through Cook County. Although the Cook County wheel tax is a two-year license, Cook County Farm Bureau® believes that the cost is excessive, especially for non-commercial recreational trailers, motorcycles, and passenger vehicles. Additionally, vehicles used on a limited basis such as a semi-tractor and trailer should not be taxed as heavily as vehicles driven on a daily basis.

LICENSE CLASSES & FEES	FEES* COOK COUNTY	FEES ILLINOIS
Smaller passenger vehicles with a curb weight under 4,500 pounds.	\$80	\$101
Larger passenger vehicles with a curb weight of at least 4,500 pounds.	\$100	\$101
Motorcycles.	\$80	\$41
All commercial trailers regardless of gross weight.	\$150	
All non-commercial recreational trailers.	\$60	\$41

When examining the cost per mile, Illinois is home to 57,915 square miles. At a license renewal cost of \$101 it costs \$0.002 per mile to cruise the state. Granted that figure ignores gas, maintenance, insurance, etc. Cook County on the other hand is home to 1,635 square miles. At a Cook County license fee for larger vehicle of \$100, it costs a motorist \$0.06 to travel all of Cook County.

However, Cook County's license fee is only for residents living in unincorporated areas. There's 125.8 square miles in unincorporated Cook County. It costs \$0.80 to travel in the unincorporated areas.

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Cook County lost over 20,000 people in 2017, continuing its three-year losing streak. While some lost can be attributed to an improve economy and individuals relocating due to a job change. Equally, it's entirely possible that a portion of the population can be attributed to extensive fees and unequal enforcement of said fees.

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IN AND AROUND COOK COUNTY AGRICULTURE



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FARM BUREAU NEGOTIATES CHANGES TO COOK COUNTY ZONING CODE

Farm Bureau actively engaged with Cook County Commissioner Peter Silvestri, Chairman of the Committee on Building and Zoning and the Building and Zoning Department to minimize the impact of zoning changes on Cook County agriculture.

The amendment provides:

- Reasonable requirements for apiaries located on smaller residential lots.
- Reasonable minimum lot sizes for individuals interested in keeping livestock or horses.
- Reasonable minimum requirements for animal enclosures.

In February, Farm Bureau submitted comments regarding minimum lot sizes for the keeping of bees. The proposed ordinance stipulated that bee hives were limited to lots with an area of at least two-acres. This lot minimum, along with limits regarding the number of hives was eliminated in the final draft of the ordinance.

A subsequent draft provided that livestock and horses could only be kept on lots with a minimum area of five-acres and that an acre of space was required for each horse.

Almost all horse-riding stables, horse tracks, and carriage barns in Cook County have fewer acres of land than horses. Midwest farmers use a combination of limited time grazing and supplemental feed (hay, grain, etc.) to maximize the number of animals they can house. Farm Bureau successfully negotiated a change to the ordinance to reduce the lot size requirement and to eliminate the requirement for an owner to have an equal number of acres and horses.

Farm Bureau worked closely with Commissioner Silvestri and his staff and Building and Zoning staff to negotiate the changes. Members are encouraged to contact Bona Heinsohn at 708-354-3276 or via email at bona@cookcfb.org.



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