



**Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook**

**N E W S L E T T E R**



**December 2019 Volume 3 Issue 12**

**HAPPY NEW YEAR ISSUE**



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## Terry's Message

### School Resource Officers, RRISD and the County

Round Rock ISD's Board of Trustees have faced the decision of whether they should seek School Resource Officer (SRO) support from the County Sheriff's office, create their own internal police department, or pursue an alternative. A school safety taskforce gathered information in 2019 from the public, RRISD administration and peer ISDs to aid the Board in their decision making.

Earlier, both Round Rock's Police Department and the County had announced that their provision for SRO presence in the current schools would terminate on June 30, 2021.

This fall the Board of Trustees decided that pursuing SRO support from the County was the preferable choice, leaving the focus of RRISD on education. They revised the existing contract and, working with the Sheriff and his second in command, Tim Ryle, pursued a revised contract with concessions for much of the Sheriff's concerns, the Trustees desire for

training to include some of that which the ISD's staff would have, and reimbursement funding at 100% of costs for each SRO as identified by the County. The school district sought coverage of all middle and high schools, which required assignments of 27 officers through the 2025-2026 school year.

I put consideration of the revised contract on the agenda after checking with the Sheriff and Tim Ryle and speaking with several of the Trustees. I, too, believed the cost of the proposed direction for SRO support was the best deal for the taxpayers of RRISD.

There are, however, many downside issues with extending the County's resources through the 2025-2026 school year. Here's a few:

- While health and safety are core county functions per the Texas Constitution, providing school campus security is not specifically assigned to cities nor counties. It is not specifically excluded either. This leaves room for local law enforcement jurisdictions to consider providing coverage.
- School Resource Officers are a special breed of Texas Commission on Law Enforcement certified peace officers. They, first and foremost, must have tender hearts for young people and be tops in de-escalation techniques with them. The judicial world is recognizing that brains are not mature until around age 25. Opportunities to mentor, rather than incarceration, is nearly always preferable. Secondly, these officers must have strong political skills in working with teachers, parents and administrators who may not be on the same page, as is true for any organization. Communication is critical in navigating those waters. All law enforcement is TCOLE (Texas Commission on Law Enforcement) certified, but all certified officers do not make good, effective SROs. Staffing up and keeping these officers could be a substantial workload for our Sheriff's staff.
- There are 12 ISDs in Wilco, although Bartlett ISD campuses are in Bell County. Some have no SRO presence on their campuses. Some are using law enforcement from police departments, including Austin Community College. Others have internal police departments to provide SRO support. What if other ISDs ask for SRO support? We could easily be asked to provide 50 (a platoon of) SROs or more. When do you say no more?
- The County would have to add responsibilities for identifying and assess annual costs for SROs, invoice the RRISD, and verifying reimbursement payments and resolving discrepancies to existing staff. This would fall on the Sheriff's department and our Auditing department (whom I would put up against any auditing group in the world). The bandwidth within a 40-hour work week is constrained today already.

So, on Tuesday, December 17, when I moved to consider the revised contract, I wasn't surprised that the other Court Members did not want to go there. I was hopeful for at least a public discussion on the pros and cons. Through Wednesday, December 18, I received 47 e-mails/phone calls from people supporting the county providing SROs for RRISD. Not a single contact voiced concerns about the Sheriff providing the SROs. I want to thank each person for taking the time to contact me.

My best wishes for success of the RRISD Board of Trustees and Superintendent Steve Flores in establishing a RRISD police force.



## Terry's Message

### Hairy Man Road/Brushy Creek Road Safety Improvements Project

Link to the recently updated project page:  
<http://roadbond.wilco.org/Projects/Precinct-1/P284-Hairy-Man-Rd-Brushy-Creek-Rd-Safety-Improvements>  
(scroll down on roadbond.wilco.org destination above for all documentation)

As you may know, the 1.7-mile stretch of road from Sam Bass Road to Great Oaks Drive is called Hairy Man Road, and there's a story there – attend next year's Hairy Man Festival at Brushy Creek MUD's Cat Hollow Park, probably on Saturday, October 17, 2020 around 3:30PM just before the Hairy Man competition. There you will hear a dramatic telling of the Tale of the Hairy Man. Locals have driven this curvy, narrow road and enjoyed its natural beauty for many years.

This peaceful ambiance is now threatened by sheer volume of traffic with many vehicles speeding. Much of the traffic is using it as a cut-through road rather than a brief respite from urban living. This road is not constructed nor intended to be a metropolitan street. Trees line the asphalt and any drift in driving likely takes you into a tree or on-coming traffic.

Safety improvements were first raised by Precinct 1 Commissioner Lisa Birkman, following a death on Hairy Man Road in 2012. Many citizens requested for this 1.7-mile stretch of rural road to be considered for a safety project in the next road bond package. Indeed, it became a 2<sup>nd</sup> tier project, not listed in name on the ballot bond language, but was included in the list of 2013 road bond projects and added .5-mile of Brushy Creek Road west of Great Oaks Drive.

From the beginning, discussions led with protecting as many trees as possible while determining the technical approach to reducing crashes and saving lives. Current design changes include some shifting of both lanes left or right to avoid tree removal. Many compromises have been made with each iteration of the long-running roadway designs since 2014. This is a safety project, there are no plans to increase capacity on this road.

Many trees along Hairy Man Road have tin labels with a unique number identifier. This is the result of tree surveys and measurements over many years. The tags don't mean these trees will be removed. These tags show they have been counted. On Hairy Man Road between Sam Bass Road and Great Oaks Drive, there are 67 trees that have been identified as being within the new pavement design. You can see specifically which trees have been identified in the exhibit on the [project page](#). The trees circled in green have been counted and the ones in purple are the ones slated for removal. The number of trees to be removed has decreased since 2014. Two damaged and dying trees from earlier accidents were removed. Furthermore, an SUV knocked down another in 2019.

I want to assure you that not all the trees in the County's right-of-way will be removed. The project calls for some tree removal to allow the two lanes to be increased in width by approximately .5 feet each and for 2' shoulders with rumble stripes to be added on the centerline and shoulders to alert drivers who drift out of lane. While 12' wide lanes are recommended for safety in today's standards, the lane width will only be increased to 11.5' to balance safety with maintaining the historical look and feel of Hairy Man Road. These three, small changes have consistently been demonstrated to decrease crashes and significantly increase safety for drivers. The Creek-bend extension and bridge has reduced the traffic volume on Hairy Man Road but development of neighborhoods keeps the supply of vehicles growing on this road.

Many have asked about speed mitigation techniques commonly found in neighborhood roads and parking lots. The current layout of Hairy Man Road implements two fundamental strategies to lowering the speed limit: narrow lanes and many curves (no straight-line of sight). Common sense tells us to reduce speed and be alert. There are two posted speed limits along Hairy Man Road: 35mph (four signs) and 30mph (two signs).

Recently, I held a meeting with the Steering Committee of the "Save the Trees on Hairy Man Road" group. I have asked the engineering team to walk areas of Hairy Man Road with members of this group in January to study any further opportunities to impact fewer trees. I will continue to emphasize saving as many trees as possible, while keeping safety in the forefront.

Please drive responsibly and enjoy this remnant of rural Texas.

# GET UP AND GET OUT THERE!



City of Leander

Polar Bear Plunge

Saturday, January 4, 2020  
at 1:30-3:30

Take part in a Leander tradition and make a splash at the Robin Bledsoe Pool. Pre-registration for this event is recommended and admission is free for spectators.

Registration is \$10 and includes membership in the "Polar Bear Club" along with a Polar Bear Plunge shirt and a ticket for door prizes. To register, click [here!](#)

#### Schedule of events

1:30 p.m. Pool gates open  
1:55 p.m. Line up for the Polar Bear Plunge!  
2:00 p.m. Polar Bear Plunge!  
3:30 p.m. Pool gates close until Memorial Day weekend!

## City of Round Rock 33rd Annual Commemorative Walk and Celebration Saturday, January 18 at 1:00-3:30

The celebration includes a commemorative walk followed by a program at the First Baptist Church of Round Rock, located at 306 Round Rock Ave in Round Rock. The walk depends on the weather.

The commemorative walk is tentatively scheduled to begin at the City of Round Rock McConico Building, at 301 W. Bagdad Ave. Parade participants and marchers will assemble at 1 p.m., and begin the march promptly at 1:30 p.m. The march will last approximately 15 minutes and will end at the First Baptist Church.

The public is invited to participate by attending the walk, bringing banners, and attending the program. Attendance is free of charge and all are welcome.

### RECYCLE YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE



The Williamson County Landfill, 600 Landfill Road in Hutto, will accept Christmas trees for recycling December 26, 2019, through January 19, 2020, free of charge for Williamson County residents. Flocked trees are not accepted for recycling. The landfill will be closed on Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Call (512) 759-8881 for more information.

### 15th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community March in Taylor

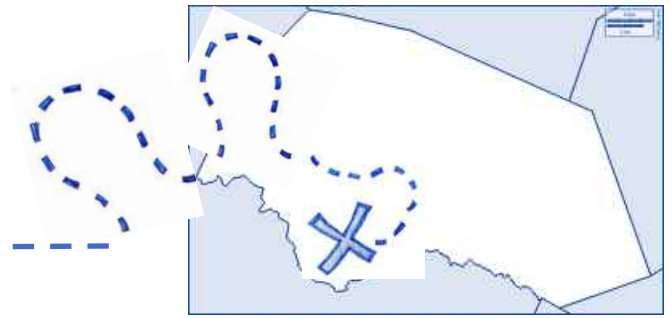
Monday, January 20, 2020

Line up at 8:45, March begins at 9:00

Dickey-Givens Community Center at Fannie Robinson Park, 903 E. MLK, Jr. Blvd.

Celebration Program begins at 10:00 at Heritage Square Amphitheater, corner of 4th and Main St. (weather permitting), otherwise moved to Taylor City Hall, 400 Porter St.

## Where is Commissioner Cook?



**Healthy Williamson County** is a coalition of community members and organizations representing health care, government, education, business, and the faith-based and non-profit communities to have collective impact on improving the health of Williamson County residents using local health data and resources.

The new Executive Leadership Team, which includes Commissioner Cook, had their first meeting. Please see the members of that team below.



**Left to Right: Rhonda Mundhenk– CEO, Lone Star Circle of Care; Derrick Neal– Executive Director, Williamson County and Cities Health Department (WCCHD); Amy Brandes– Manager of Community Benefit, Ascension; Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook; Abena Asante– Senior Program Officer, St. David’s Foundation; Amy Einhorn– Senior Program Officer, St. David’s Foundation; Leslie Janca– CEO, The Georgetown Project; Suzy Pukys– VP of Strategic Philanthropy, Georgetown Health Foundation; Ann-Marie Price– Regional Director of Project Management and Community Development, Baylor Scott & White; Erika Pratt– Executive Director, Samaritan Health Ministries; Jodee O’Brien– CEO, United Way of Williamson County; Cynthia Flores– WCCHD Board of Health Member; Williamson County Judge Bill Gravell. Not pictured– Andrea Richardson, Executive Director, Bluebonnet Trails Community Services.**



# Brushy Creek Trail



The trail is really coming together now as you can see in these pictures. This is a section of the boardwalk, where the trail leaves ground level and gently elevates to be level with the bridge (ADA compliant). Concrete columns have been placed for the boardwalk up to the bridge on both sides. In the far left, the beams have been placed on the columns. Sections of it are over a Round Rock wastewater line.



The boardwalk is being made with concrete treads called PermaTrak®, a concrete boardwalk system. They are made in Houston and shipped here. Each panel is made to exact specifications so it fits onto the trail like a puzzle. This is where all that math that one learns in high school (OK, maybe college) comes into play. These pictures are showing workers placing the PermaTrak® panels onto the rails leading up to the bridge.

Why all this concrete? Remember we're in a floodplain.



Here is a finished section of the trail at ground level. It's really coming along nicely.

We're hoping to open this trail in February, weather holding and product deliveries continuing on time.

I'd love to have a lunchtime hike and we all bring a picnic lunch on a sunny day then! I'll try to keep you posted!

FINAL  
EDITION

# Times

EXTRA!  
EXTRA!

## Cook: Williamson County officials, staff share family holiday traditions

I reached out to our county departments to see if anyone would share a warm, holiday tradition. A few did. Enjoy!

For Christmas, 425th Judicial District Court Judge Betsy Lambeth said she and her three siblings would take turns playing the piano and singing carols for the family. "I think we probably sounded like the Salvation Army band, but my parents and grandparents loved it!"

Oftentimes, Lambeth said she and her siblings went to her grandparents' dairy farm on Onion Creek to play and sing for them. Her grandfather would join in, playing his French harp or harmonica.

Cortney Husband, an accountant with the county auditor's office, said she, her mother and sister have been attending [Christmas at the Caswell House](#) in Austin for the past 25 years. They make it a fun "girls" day by dressing up and partaking in the three-course champagne brunch, while listening to live Christmas music.

Cortney and her husband will welcome their first baby next spring — a girl. One day she too will dress up and join the girls at the Caswell House.

For the last 16 years, Pam Navarrette, assistant financial director at the county auditor's office, said her stepfather assembles his miniature Christmas village. His collection started as a window seat display at home and has grown to a garage-sized village with an airport resembling the Georgetown Airport.

Since he was a boy, her stepfather collected match cars that are part of the village. Every holiday, parked in front of what looks like the Williamson County Historic Courthouse, is a tiny replica of her first car, a 1969 blue Camaro. Navarrette called his collection the "most fabulous decoration tradition" of her family's holidays.

County District Attorney Shawn Dick said growing up, his family always put up Christmas decorations the weekend immediately following Thanksgiving. "Our house was filled with the warm sounds of Christmas music as the family decorated," he said.

As a music aficionado, Dick said his family passed down to him his grandparents' record player cabinet and plenty of old albums.

"I begin each holiday season — much to the chagrin of my wife and kids — with the nostalgic playing of John Denver's "Rocky Mountain Christmas" album as we decorate our tree."

To read the rest of the story, click [here](#).



620 at Railroad/Chisholm Trail– Right of Way acquisition and design are complete. This is a TxDOT project with county and City of Round Rock financial assistance (cash only). Utilities are now clear! Construction start is anticipated in early 2020. Start making plans NOW on how you will avoid this area. It will be open for traffic during construction, but it's going to be VERY slow. This will be a multi-year project.

Great Oaks Bridge at Brushy Creek Rd.– All plans are complete. Utility relocations will be concurrent with waterline relocations. Interlocal agreements (ILAs) with Brushy Creek and Fern Bluff MUDs have been executed. The old bridge will remain in use during construction. The construction is fully funded through the 2013 bond and is anticipated to begin Spring 2020 and take 18-24 months to complete and set to finish in Spring 2022.

Hairy Man Rd./Brushy Creek Rd. Safety Improvements– Everything you could possibly want to know about this project is at [this website](#).

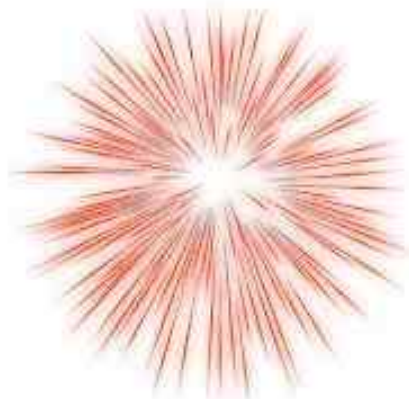
N. Mays St. Extension from Paloma Dr. to Oakmont Dr.– The bridge, a long, 4-lane project over a flood plain, is being constructed; concrete beams and bridge deck panels are being installed. Concrete deck panels and spans continue to be placed on the bridge. A 5-foot wide sidewalk and 10-foot wide shared path for the bridge has been formed and poured. Concrete rails for the bridge are being poured and put in place. THANK YOU City of Round Rock and Spectrum for moving your lines! C'mon AT&T! We need for you to move your lines, please! This is a joint project of the City of Round Rock and Williamson County that runs parallel to I-35 to take some traffic off of the interstate. Substantial completion slated for Spring 2020.

University Blvd. widening from IH-35 to Sunrise Rd.– Design and right of way acquisition are complete, and utility relocation efforts are ongoing. Construction start is anticipated Spring 2020. University Ave., which turns into Chandler Rd., takes you to Texas 95 north of Taylor, making this a very important East-West connector. Project slated to finish in early 2022.

Pond Springs Road Area Drainage Improvements– A meeting with the City of Austin, TxDOT, and the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) has taken place to discuss shared use of a retention pond already in the area. We are searching for alternative storage, too. Commissioner Cook made this one of her top 4 priority projects in Precinct 1 for the 2019 bond list. This has been a long-time drainage/flood area issue.

Forest North Drainage Improvements Phase III– A geologic assessment, karst survey, and an endangered species report have been finalized, as has a survey. Easement agreements are on-going, and a public involvement plan meeting was held on December 5, 2019. This project is Commissioner Cook's #1 Priority in Precinct 1 for the 2019 Bond Program. It is to complete the massive drainage program in this flat, slightly sloping neighborhood established in the 1970's and subject to flooding. **Anderson Mill zone is complete.** Further work on Tottenham Ct. will resume after the start of the new year, so City of Austin water line shut-offs and testing should not have impacted any residents over the holidays. Substantial completion is anticipated early 2020.

## ***FIREWORKS***



Most jurisdictions have city ordinances prohibiting the use of fireworks within or near the city limits. If you are unsure of the ordinances, it is always safer to check with the city or local fire department prior to the purchase or discharge of fireworks. Please be safe!

LEARN MORE, INCLUDING SAFETY TIPS AND A MAP WHERE FIREWORKS ARE BANNED IN THE COUNTY, BY CLICKING [HERE](#).



The Mission, Vision,  
and Value Statements  
of the Williamson  
County Commissioner  
Precinct 1 Office

## MISSION

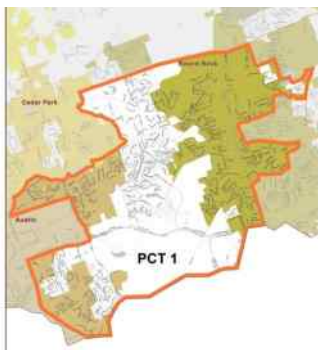
To lead pro-actively on the Williamson County Commissioners Court while advocating for the constituents of Precinct 1 and the county at-large from a foundation of collaboration and respect.

## VISION

To transform Williamson County government into a more accessible, responsive, transparent, and well-managed organization for our residents, so that we become the community recognized as the best in central Texas to live and enjoy.

## VALUES

Accountability, commitment, integrity, and respect form the core values that guide the Williamson County Commissioner Precinct 1 office.



## CONTACT US!

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## SEE US ON THE INTERNET!

Williamson County's Website! - [www.wilco.org](http://www.wilco.org)

Our office's web site- [Terry Cook, Commissioner Pct 1](http://Terry Cook, Commissioner Pct 1)

Commissioner Cook  
keeps meeting with many  
MUD Boards and HOAs.  
To invite her to your  
meeting, contact Doris at  
[doris.sanchez@wilco.org](mailto:doris.sanchez@wilco.org)

In case of  
Emergency  
DIAL 911

## Important Phone Numbers (non-emergency)

Austin Fire Department	512-974-0130
County Judge Bill Gravell	512-943-1550
Jollyville Fire Department (ESD 1)	512-258-1038
Round Rock Fire Department (ESD 9)	512-218-5590
Sam Bass Fire Department (ESD 2)	512-255-0100
Williamson Central Appraisal District	512-930-3787
Williamson County Landfill	512-759-8881
Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter	512-943-3322
Williamson County Sheriff's Office	512-864-8282

Want to know even more about what's happening in Williamson County?

Sign up for the WILCounty Line E-newsletter! Click [here](#) to sign up!