

Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook

NEWSLETTER

March 2020 Volume 4 Issue 3

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Get Up
Out

CANCELLED

and Get
There!

The Last Page and sign up for the
WILCounty Line E-newsletter

BUT..



In times such as we are living in now, there can be so much misinformation floating around, some of it purposeful, but much of it forwarded by well-meaning people through email and social media.

Below are trusted sources where you can see updated information as we move forward. *This is by no means an exhaustive list.* Please be sure that when you post or forward any information that it comes from a credible source.

Be safe everyone. Frequently, wash those hands, stay at home as much as you can, and when you have to go out, keep yourself at a safe distance from the next person.

Click on the logos to get more information.



**Williamson County &
Cities Health District**



**WILLIAMSON
COUNTY**
1848



ROUND ROCK TEXAS



TEXAS
Health and Human Services



DID YOU KNOW that Commissioner Cook has a Facebook page? Other information regarding responses during this pandemic can be found [here](#).



The Message



We've reached the end of March, all hunkered down, or though we thought, or should I say hoped. In my neighborhood, I see groups of mothers gathered together with their kids, two teenage girls walking side-by-side. Cars parked in front of a home indicating a gathering. It is believed that only 50% of us are actually maintaining that social distance of 6' and staying home (or at least in the neighborhood). I went to early bird shopping at Costco in Cedar Park last Thursday. The line of people with their carts wrapped that enormous building. Approximately 6' between persons was maintained. But, oh my, once inside the building, all was abandoned. Old shopping habits assumed their established behavior and, of course, those with high anxiety flooded the cleaning and the toilet paper aisles. As I waited to go in, every – I mean EVERY – cart left the building with huge pack of paper towels. I hope they weren't planning on trying to flush those down the toilet. When I went to check out, an elderly gentleman crashed right in between me waiting and the 6' space between me and the counter that Costco personnel wanted to maintain as they cleaned it between shoppers. Sigh.

Old habits are hard to forgo in these new times. The recent study by a group at UT showed that we have to get up to 90% of us maintaining that social distance AND staying home to bring down the rate growth in victims of this virus. The flattening of the curve is currently all we have to help our hospitals not have to make choices on who lives and who dies. Today, on-line, there's a 3D image of a man's lungs with COVID-19 from a CAT scan – it's terribly frightening. The virus is lingering everywhere sneering "show me the beef".

Williamson County is in full battle mode. Headquarters is at the Emergency Services Operations Center. Temperatures are taken in the lobby before you are allowed past the locked door. Sometime during the day you have your second temperature taken and blood pressure reading. Spread out throughout the building are various groups and individuals with specific responsibilities whether it be answering questions from the public, organizing the stockpiles of necessary supplies, lawyers – yes always needed, public information representatives handing the press and releasing information to the rest of us, EMS personnel, purchasing, logistics, Williamson County and Cities Health District personnel (premiere), County Judge, IT support, representatives of the Sheriff's department, and of course Auditing as you don't see any reimbursement at all from governmental units without the paperwork to back up the ask. Some had been working 7-straight long days when I arrived on Friday. Newbies were easily absorbed and brought up to speed with their just acquired responsibilities. And of course all were supported by a 55-gallon drum of hand sanitizer created by a distillery continuously being used to refill small soap pump bottles.

First round of conference calls started at 8:30 a.m., then 9:30 a.m. to elected officials and department heads. Representatives of the health district were at 10, at lunchtime it was conference calls out to the mayors whose economies are severely threatened by the loss of sales tax.

At 2 p.m. I accompanied the County Judge and Sheriff Chody to Celebration Church to record the Judge's daily message in their recording studio. Afterwards, we went to HEB on Round Rock's University Drive. No lines. Every cart was wiped down before next customer took it into the store. The shelves, produce area and meat coolers were loaded with groceries, toilet paper excepted. The Judge sought out the store manager to find out their strategy. CJ strode up to the produce department looking worn but not worn out. Turns out, HEB starting planning back in the 2000's for pandemics, hurricanes, or other catastrophic events even performing tabletop exercises with suppliers, store personnel and law enforcement looking for the omissions and errors in planning. They were perhaps the first to limit purchases of some items in early March. The one thing they missed was the panicked hoarding of toilet paper and cleaning supplies. Oh, we humans are sure to surprise.

We returned to the ESOC to finish out Friday with an end of the day meeting with all – dutifully spread out. What did they need? How are they feeling? Can't take care of anyone else if we don't take care of ourselves. Then they were updated with Friday's regional news.

Central Texas is not peaking in this pandemic yet. We, like everyone else, has neither enough test kits, test labs, personal protective gear, ICU beds or medical personnel. It is us, staying home, staying vigilant. Staying isolated but not alone. Thank goodness we have smart phones, the internet, YouTube and streaming whatever to occupy the slowly passing time. Good news is that the new test kits being delivered take only 15 minutes for results and can be done right in doctors' offices without personnel needing protective gear.

My team of 3 is tasked with coming up with things to help the Wilco family weather this storm. Whether it be useful things to do with toddlers or pre-school kids- how about Kid Yoga on YouTube, or meditative visualization watching the Monterey Bay Jelly Cam, standup comics or great music to lift your spirits and get you out of your chair, we're searching for it and plan to release weekly newsletters to each person's inbox.

So let's end this thing. If we just hunker down, persevere for another month and stay clean and clear, we can be winners. Even the New York Times published a full-page pictorial guide to 20 seconds of handwashing – the timer doesn't begin before wet hands with soap applied. Find some of those newly penned or re-written songs with catchy lyrics to play on your phone to keep your family members engaged in the handwashing for twenty seconds. Will we be able to come out of this singing at the top of our lungs, in the words of Queen, "We are the Champions"?

Discipline - perseverance - determination. Be a survivor with the cleanest skin on the planet.

WEBINAR



Mind Matters
at Home

Helping Kids (and Yourself!)
Cope with Coronavirus

Thursday, April 2, 7:30 p.m.

Dr. Roshni Koli
Medical Director for Pediatric Mental Health
Dell Children's Medical Center

Register at:
namicentraltx.org/mind-matters

USA



DID YOU KNOW that you can see the events that are attended by Commissioner Cook on her official Williamson County office's website? You'll also be able to read her poems, too. See that [here](#).

Where is Commissioner Cook?



Great things are happening in Leander! The City is undertaking a project called [Northline](#), which will be a new city center that will include retail, office and green space, entertainment, and residential. This 115 acre development will be just north of the northern-most end of the MetroRail Red Line.

The current vision for the development includes 300,000 sf of retail, 700,000 sf of office, 150,000 sf for hotel, 2,000 apartments, and 300 townhomes. Truly a place where one could live, work, and play without using a car daily.

Along with the construction of a city center in Hutto, and major similar developments in Cedar Park and Round Rock, Leander joins the other vibrant communities of Williamson County.



At the groundbreaking ceremony is Alex Tyndale (upper left) from Tyndale LLC, which has partnered with the Northline Leander Development Company to bring this vision into reality. At right is the actual groundbreaking.



Last year, Commissioner Cook was invited to make a few remarks at the grand opening of a Firestone in Round Rock on US 79. Her poem about her experience at Firestone was so well-received that she was asked to speak at the grand opening at another Firestone in Georgetown!



This time she wrote a humorous poem based on how they describe themselves on their website. Even got use of the Firestone App in it. Now they are building another Firestone on 620 actually in Precinct 1. Don't know what she'll do if invited to speak at that ribbon cutting!



Where is Commissioner Cook?

N. Mays Street Extension



Up on the long bridge between Paloma and Oakmont Dr. Still some utility work that's hold up project on the north end. The bridge rails are almost completed.

Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area invited Commissioner Cook to give the keynote speech at a celebration of a new registered apprenticeship program at TDIndustries of Round Rock. This program will be the training for HVAC technicians enrolled in the apprenticeship in Central Texas. Congratulations to all and good luck to all of the apprentices!

Commissioner Cook not only spoke to the impact in our economy due to lack of skilled trades workers, but she finished her speech with a rewrite of Willies' tune, "Mommas Do Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Tradesmen."





Where is Commissioner Cook?



620 (Round Rock Ave.) to I-35– 2 bridges, 1 roundabout, and additional lanes...Oh My!

As usual, Commissioner Cook tried to spice up a mundane ground breaking. For this one, a 2-year project (learn more about it on the Road Projects page), she re-wrote “With a Little Help From My Friends”- with a nod to the collaboration between the City of Round

Rock, TxDOT, and Williamson County– using the powerful Joe Cocker intro music, but switched to the peppy Beatles version in the rhythm of the re-write. All of the engineers were left laughing.





It's the little things. Pictures below show some of the smaller things that have happened in the building of this trail.



It looks like hay up close above, but buried within it is grass seed. There is a dissolvable binding netting that keeps it all in place. As you can see in the pictures to the right, grass is growing up along the trail.



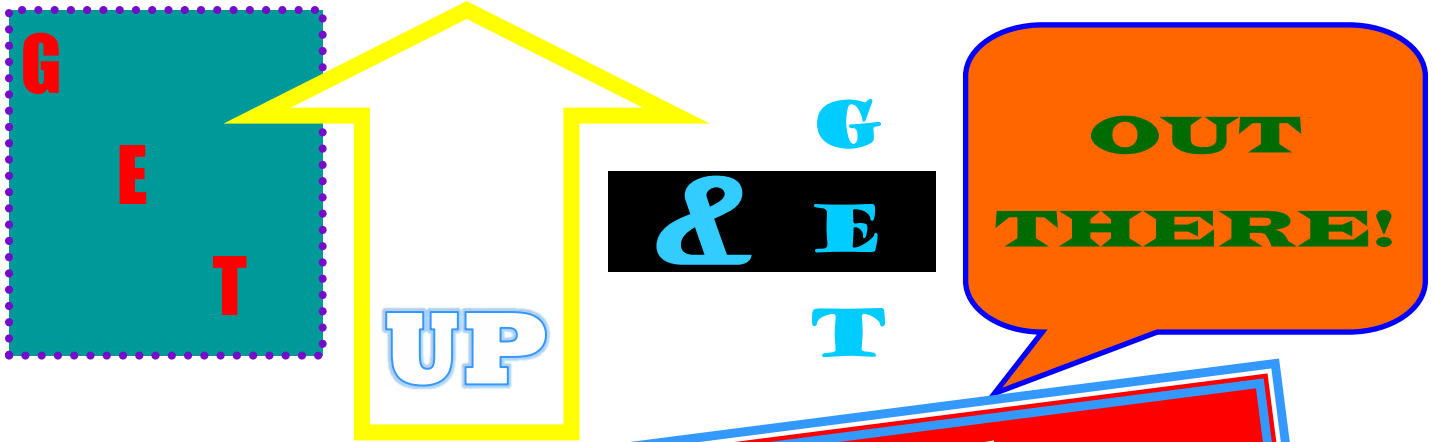
Above, in an area that collects water during a significant rain event, a mini spillway was built to direct that water into the creek. In the top picture, those rectangular slabs of concrete are where a water line is located.



Hopefully soon, you, too, will get to view the creek from the bridge like these pictures indicate.

At right, we found an area where rain was washing dirt across the trail. To fix that, riprap (the large rocks) were placed in the area to slow the rate of flow, and a pipe was installed under the trail to move that water into the creek. *Fingers crossed—end of April...*





**Everything has been cancelled.
Please stay home as much as you can to fight the
spread of COVID-19.
#FlattenTheCurve**

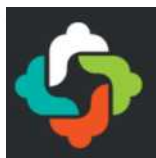
DID YOU KNOW that there are a number of museums, zoos, safaris, parks, and aquariums from around the world that you can visit virtually? You can also find things like yoga with kids and other workout routines! AND if you're into opera, the Metropolitan Opera from New York City is showing nightly different operas through April 5.
Computer search engines are giving us all life through this crisis!



City of Round Rock, Dell, Round Rock Community Foundation and the Round Rock Chamber each have contributed \$25,000 to establish the initial funding for an initiative to help small businesses weather the storm of COVID-19 business restrictions and closures.

<https://www.roundrocktexas.gov/news/mayor-morgan-community-leaders-announce-small-business-support-program/>

Round Rock Cares is a charitable fund, managed by the Greater Round Rock Community Foundation. Those wishing to contribute to the fund can do so on-line at <https://rrcommunityfoundation.org/project/round-rock-cares/>





Williamson Central Appraisal District (WCAD) Suspends Services Inside Office

WCAD encourages property owners to use electronic options

The Williamson Central Appraisal District will continue operations but will no longer provide face-to-face services to the public inside the building, effective immediately, as part of the effort to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

"The appraisal district will continue operations, and we are committed to being responsive to our property owners. However, we believe it to be in the best interest of our community and our employees to temporarily suspend direct face-to-face contact with the public while continuing to provide services through other options, such as our website, online chat and phone services," said Alvin Lankford, Chief Appraiser.

Forms and applications are available on the District's website; www.wcad.org. A drop box will also be available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the building entrance at 625 F.M. 1460 in Georgetown.

"Social distancing is one of the best ways to support the health of the entire community. We have also postponed the mailing of our appraisal notices to property owners. April 14th will be the earliest these notices will be mailed. The valuation notices we plan to send in April will represent property values as of January 1, 2020 per the property tax code. Any impact on values from the current health crisis will be reflected in the 2021 property valuations. There are currently no provisions in the tax code to allow for reduced values for 2020 based on an event such as the current health crisis. The property owner walk-in period for the 2020 appraisal protest season will also be eliminated," Lankford said. "We will continue to have employees available to answer your questions through our online chat option or by phone during regular business hours," Lankford said.

Many services are available on the District's website at www.wcad.org. If you require assistance, please feel free to use either the online chat feature or contact the District's office at 512-930-3787. Please also monitor our website for continued updates on WCAD's plan for the 2020 appraisal protest season

In Commissioners Court



The Williamson County Commissioners Court has proclaimed March as Purchasing Month. The Williamson County Purchasing Department participates in procuring goods and services; developing, executing, implementing and tracking contracts; and conducting an annual inventory for all county assets. The public procurement function focuses on public trust, public services and justice, which in turn serve as the basis for the six values of accountability, impartiality, ethics, professionalism, service and transparency.

The Williamson County Purchasing Department has received the prestigious Achievement of Excellence in Procurement® (AEP) Award from the National Procurement Institute, Inc. (NPI) for 20 consecutive years making it one of the top organizations at all levels of public purchasing (city, county, school district, state, higher education and non-profits) in the country. The Achievement of Excellence in Procurement award is nationally and internationally recognized as the gold standard for the achievement of excellence, innovation and best practices in the profession of public procurement.

Great professional work by Randy Barker, our Purchasing Agent, and his staff. Williamson County is lucky to have such wonderful and hard-working staff!

In The News

Cook: Williamson program reduces 911 calls, improves patient care

<https://www.statesman.com/opinion/20200312/cook-williamson-program-reduces-911-calls-improves-patient-care>

To address the frequent 911 calls by people who didn't require emergency care, Williamson County has created Community Health Paramedicine.

CHP's mission is to reduce non-emergency ambulance usage and hospital admissions by working with those who were calling 911 too often — and sometimes daily.

Paramedics with CHP are trained to evaluate the situation before directing frequent EMS callers to more appropriate resources. They also periodically check on patients to ensure they are using their medicines properly.

Many CHP clients have mental health needs in addition to physical problems and long prescription lists. It's a team effort with CHP, the Williamson County Mobile Outreach Team and various community partners.

For example, an elderly man was calling EMS frequently and began calling daily after being discharged from an emergency room last year. He was experiencing memory problems and mental health issues. He lived alone in a rural part of Williamson County, with little family support. His memory loss was contributing to his anxiety about living alone. He was unable to recall he recently had visited the emergency room and been declared medically stable. CHP coordinated with the elderly patient, his family, neighbors, caregivers, Meals on Wheels, and the Williamson County and Cities Health District to connect him to services.

Based on a patient's needs, CHP staff provide medication education, evaluate the home environment for fall risks and prevention, offer nutrition education for specific health conditions, and advocate for the patient with mental health and health care providers.

"We have three employees in the program who together have many years of experience which contributes to the success of the program. They are able to connect with patients and put them at ease to get to the root cause of their issues," said Williamson County EMS Director Mike Knipstein.

CHP began in 2014 under a grant through the Medicaid 1115 Waiver that allows the state to expand Medicaid managed care while preserving hospital funding. In its first year, CHP focused on high utilizers of EMS and a readmission reduction program with two local hospitals. Though the grant ended in 2017, the county saw success and value in the program.

CHP continued as a critical part of the Wilco EMS system, with funding from the county's Tobacco Settlement Fund and uncompensated care money from the Texas Department of State Health Services.

CHP continues to reduce unnecessary transports to hospitals, which decreases emergency room crowding while saving taxpayers money. In 2019, CHP saw tremendous growth and success. CHP showed a reduction of 79.1 percent for EMS use among 228 patients who accounted for 872 EMS calls in a 90-day period prior to enrollment in services. Those same patients made only 182 EMS calls in a 90-day period post discharge from CHP services.

Participating patients answer satisfaction surveys after their last CHP visit. The results are reported quarterly and for the fourth quarter of 2019, the paramedics and their services received a perfect score of 100.

I commend the work of the founding fathers of CHP to get out of the way and let our EMS paramedics and mental health specialists develop the program with the flexibility necessary for each unique case. Texas counties are responsible for providing health and safety services. Many counties operate an Emergency Medical Services department, like Wilco does.

An EMS system treats people with illnesses or injuries that require an urgent medical response and often transportation to a hospital for further medical care, but for many other mental or health care needs, CHP is the best alternative.

ROAD UPDATES

620 at Railroad/Chisholm Trail– Utilities are now clear, and the City of Round Rock has notified TxDOT that the project is clear to move to construction. This is a TxDOT project with county and City of Round Rock financial assistance (cash only). A groundbreaking ceremony has taken place and work has commenced. Start making plans NOW on how you will avoid this area. It will be open for traffic during construction, but might be slow going. Estimated completion date is Summer 2022. Initial construction is away from the current lanes.

Great Oaks Bridge at Brushy Creek Rd.– BIG NEWS! The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has given its final approval for the plans for the bridge! 5 utility companies are working on their relocation designs, and the movement of waterlines will be the first step and is underway. 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. Learn more about this project [HERE](#).

Great Oaks Water Line Relocations– The county parks department closed a portion of the Brushy Creek Regional Trail at Great Oaks Drive for this relocation project. Water lines for Brushy Creek and Fern Bluff MUDs are being relocated prior to the start of the Great Oaks Drive bridge replacement over Brushy Creek. For safety in and around the construction area, the Trail will be closed at the boardwalk at Creekside Park to just east of the Great Oaks Drive and Hairy Man Road intersection. **Fern Bluff water line**: trenching has completed, 12” pipe has been laid, and area has been backfilled. **Brushy Creek water line**: excavation has taken place and both the 12’ and 24’ pipes have been laid. Connection to new waterlines will not occur until access to bottled water supplies is easy again (and we’re getting close to calm at the stores). A boring technique will be utilized to place pipes under the road and tree roots. Substantial completion is anticipated May 2020.

Hairy Man Rd./Brushy Creek Rd. Safety Improvements– Everything you could possibly want to know about this project is at this [website](#). We’re still considering a few options in road alignment to maintain as much of the canopy over the road as possible. Design will be revised then send project to bid. Construction start is slated to begin Spring 2020.

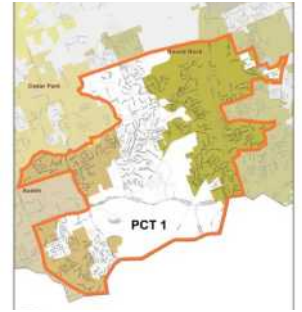
N. Mays St. Extension from Paloma Dr. to Oakmont Dr.– This is a 4-lane bridge project over a flood plain with concrete rails and curb and gutters, as well as an approach slabs, being poured and put in place. Bridge rail and sidewalk were formed and poured on the southbound side of the bridge. Capital Excavation worked on erosion control items throughout the project. Capital Excavation backfilled curb and gutter and placed topsoil from the north side of the Chandler Branch Bridge to the new intersection of North Mays and Oakmont Drive. AT&T’s work is almost complete on the north end, and Spectrum should be completely done by the end of March. This is a joint project of the City of Round Rock and Williamson County that runs parallel to I-35 and will take traffic off of I-35 by supplanting Oakmont Dr. with N. Mays St. across University Ave., to Westinghouse Rd. Substantial completion slated for Summer 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 Summer 2020. This is a City of Round Rock project in which the county has contributed \$5M towards. Project slated to finish in early 2022.

Pond Springs Road Area Drainage Improvements– The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) has notified us that we will not have access to their retention pond already in the area, so we are working with TxDOT to find an alternative. Construction start, though, is slated to begin late 2020. Preliminary drainage study continues; surveying is complete; utility relocations are unknown at this time. A project on the 2019 bond list, this has been a long-time drainage/flood area.

Forest North Drainage Improvements Phase III– All easement agreements are done. Waterline designs are with the City of Austin, because they own the lines and thus, are responsible for their design. We expect their approval in April. Service agreement for construction will be brought to Commissioners Court in April. This project is to complete the massive drainage program in this flat, slightly sloping neighborhood established in the 1970’s and subject to flooding. Construction start is anticipated Spring 2020.

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 values that guide the Williamson County Commissioner Precinct 1 office.

CONTACT US!

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EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT: Garry Brown
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SEE US ONLINE!!!

Williamson County's Website! - www.wilco.org

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

Non-Emergency Phone Numbers

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!

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

In case of
Emergency
DIAL 911