

Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook

NEWSLETTER

February 2020 Volume 4 Issue 2



In This Issue

This Month's Message

Get Up and Get Out There!

Texas Primary Voting Info

Champion Park Update

Ozone Season begins March 1

In Commissioners Court

Where is Commissioner Cook?

In the News

**Community Development
Block Grant Calls for Projects**

Road Updates

Brushy Creek Trail

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



This Month's Message

Veterans Court

The mission of the Williamson County Veterans Treatment Court is to enhance public safety and empower veterans to be productive members of the community by providing a judicially supervised therapeutic court that ensures accountability and recovery.

ductive members of the community by providing a judicially supervised therapeutic court that ensures accountability and recovery.

Why a specialty court for Veterans? Evidence-based data shows this court works to reduce recidivism at a much higher rate when Veterans are treated in a group environment of veterans. Treatment programs with criminogenic and clinical interventions need to be culturally sensitive to them for increased effectivity. Specialty courts, in general, are focused on populations with substance use disorders, drugs and/or alcohol, and/or mental health issues. Additionally, many Veterans bring PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury, TBI, into the mix at high rates.

For the last three days of February, I attended an intense training on the concepts and strategies for an effective Veterans Specialty Court, having been invited by Judge Laura Barker, Judge of County Court at Law #2, where she presides over 2 Veteran Court dockets. I have attended as many Veterans Court Graduations as I could in the past 3+ years, eager to shake their hands and congratulate them on their accomplishment and new direction in life. I have now sat in training with all of the staff involved with this specialty court.

This training was taught by two judges and a veteran law enforcement individual with a PhD of Education in Organization Sociology, all from Montana, and a clinical social worker who is an Air Force veteran working with specialty courts. Together they team as Justice for Vets, Veterans Treatment Court Planning Initiative. It was definitely a tag-team effort with an incredible amount of information covered.

This 3-day event was at zero cost to Williamson County; funded by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. The goal was to learn best practices and assess our specialty court as we worked with them. The last session even covered grants available to cover a variety of programs within a Veterans Specialty Court. In the end, we are not in bad shape but have steps and strategies to implement and refine to step up to more best practices.

Areas covered included which targeted population of veterans are most appropriate for the intensive work and therapies of this court. High Needs (addicted to drugs and/or alcohol and at high risk for reoffending), High Risk (have struggled to succeed in less-intensive supervision or treatment programs) are actually the demonstrated best population. Secondarily, High Needs, Low Risk individuals where public safety is less of a concern, but harm to self is. When a Veteran is recommended for the specialty court, an initial assessment is performed to predict risk and needs. Sometimes a Veteran's needs are more than the court can provide in its services and programs. Alternative programs must then be sought for the Veteran.

Veterans Justice Outreach, VJO, is a Veterans Affairs employee and a member of the specialty court's team providing eligibility information, VA services availability, and coordinates referrals for a veteran's participation in all VA services (surprisingly broad, including housing) as a member of the team.

Other members of the team are the Judge, a prosecutor, a defense attorney, program coordinator, probation (drug testing and community service), licensed counselor, treatment representative and law enforcement. Additionally, Veteran mentors are also components of support to these Veterans. Others may be needed as this treatment program is specific to a Veteran's needs. Much of the costs are covered with grant funding. Note that we, the taxpayer, are saved ~\$100/day with the Veteran not in the jail.

Williamson County's Veterans Specialty Court team is highly motivated and determined to continuously improve. I will walk into the next court graduation on March 20th with an all new understanding of what it took for each Veteran to graduate.



Water, Water Everywhere and not a Drop to Drink

That is just the condition we seek to avoid in Central Texas. On Friday, February 21, the Lone Star Regional Water Authority hosted a Water Summit in the Round Rock Chamber of Commerce Board Room. A full house of individuals including city water managers, Jarrell's Mayor Bush, potential and current water providers and a host of others, including me, pushed occupancy to the max.

With growth showing no signs of slowing in Williamson County, all municipal parties, the County, Municipal Utility Districts (MUDs), water providers and residents want to avoid uncertainty in our water supply. It is necessary for health, safety and life. Our water source across the northern swath of the county is shallow Granger Lake. A single water line now runs from Centerville (north of Taylor) over to Sonterra MUD on the eastern side of I-35 and under I-35 into Jarrell.

All other sources are shallow wells. As home to a high density of quarries, we see much of the well water being shot into the air to control dust in that region. These shallow wells have been going dry, including one of three serving the town of Florence.

This summit provided an opportunity for potential water providers using deep wells, 1,800-3,000 ft. deep, using water from the Carrizo-Wilcox Aquifer in Lee and Bastrop Counties, to describe availabilities of volume and present potential delivery capabilities. That means there must be demand, long-term contracts, and easements for adding pipelines into and through Williamson County.

Now the cities of Bryan & College Station have been piping in that water for over half a century. The water is very clean and also soft. The San Antonio Water System, SAWS, is under a long-term water contract for this aquifer's water through the Vista Ridge pipeline system.

No new reservoirs are on the horizon for surface water. It is alleged that it requires about 25 years of permitting because of the many federal, state and local regulations, that is if you can even find the land to start a reservoir creation process.

We have to move – and I mean all of us, together, to make sure our water supplies are available, sufficient, and clean. I sure felt like the cities were amenable to working together.

I requested a map of all the water pipelines in Williamson County from our premier GIS department – looks like a plate of spaghetti – but a lot of pipes are already in and on the ground. There is a network; with planning, additional segments, and a whole lot of agreements, we could have a future water distribution plan to support our continued growth. Of course, in the background would be a host of water treatment plant expansions.

It might just take willpower.



The Texas Primary is Tuesday, March 3.

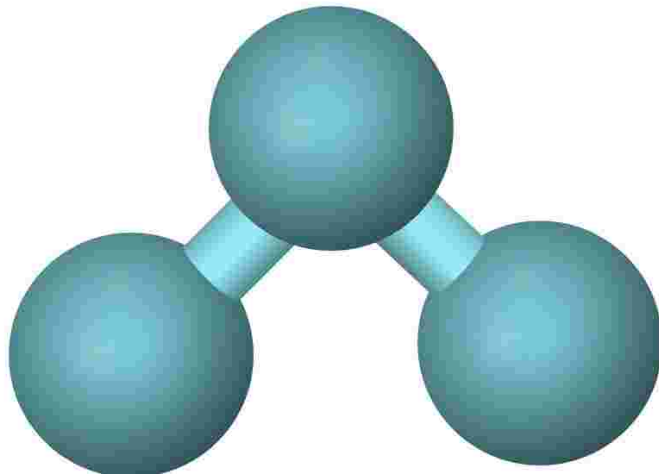
Everything you wanted to know about when and where to vote and what's on the ballot is [HERE](#).

NOTE!!!

Even with our new voting machines, we'll have a long ballot, and it's projected that it'll take 8 minutes per person per machine to get through the ballot. Please plan accordingly!

If you don't vote, someone else will make the choices for you.

EARLY VOTING ENDS (-ED) AT 7:00pm ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28 (TODAY!). IF YOU HAVE NOT VOTED DURING THE EARLY VOTING PERIOD, TUESDAY, MARCH 3 IS YOUR LAST CHANCE TO CHOOSE YOUR FAVORITE CANDIDATE TO BE IN THE NOVEMBER ELECTION.



Z O N E

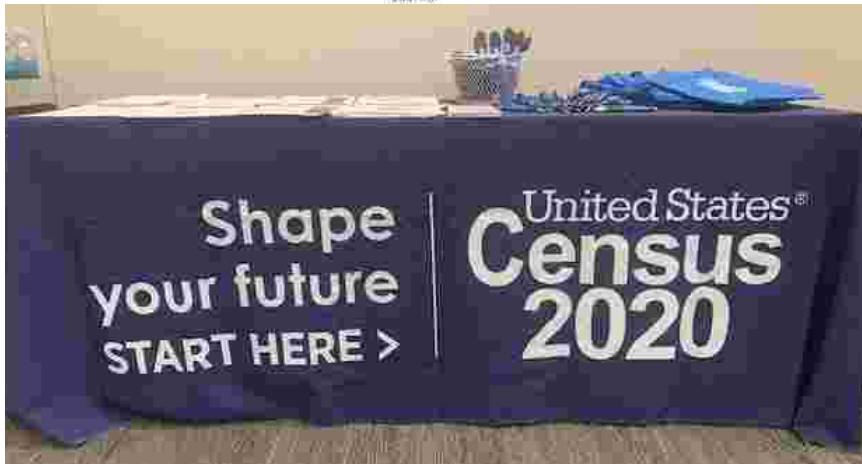
Ozone season begins on March 1. Click [HERE](#) to learn more about ozone, and there's a link to sign up for Ozone Action Day Alerts. On Ozone Action Days, to the extent possible, please limit your driving to before 8:00am and after 5:00pm, especially avoiding use of vehicles between 9:00am and 11:00am (ozone is created most during these hours). Also, fuel up your cars and trucks early in the morning or at night. Other actions you can take may include:

- ⇒ Telecommute, if your supervisor approves it.
- ⇒ Bring a lunch to your office.
- ⇒ Carpool or take public transportation.
- ⇒ Don't idle your vehicle.
- ⇒ If you can, postpone your off-site meeting to another day or conference in by phone if there is the capability.

Let's all do our share to keep the manufacturing of ozone at a minimum! Your lungs and those of your family and friends will thank you!



Where is Commissioner Cook?



The Williamson County Census Complete Count Committee (CCC), which has already been hard at work, held its official public kickoff on February 5, 2020. The event highlighted the importance of the public to answer the census and the work being done by the CCC.

The CCC is composed of community leaders appointed by Commissioners Court, and their job is to create awareness of the census in the community all across the county. Their extra special mission is to focus on those hard-to-reach populations and get them counted, that includes people of color, apartment dwellers, and the homeless amongst other groups of people.

Municipal leaders from every corner of Williamson County joined 2 county officials in encouraging residents to answer the census call. **Left to right:** Commissioner Terry Cook, Hutto Mayor Doug Gaul, Taylor Mayor Brandt Rydell, Cedar Park Mayor Corbin Van Arsdale, Bartlett Mayor Landry Pack, Jarrell Mayor Larry Bush, Granger Mayor Trevor Cheatham, Round Rock City Council Member Will Peckham, Florence Mayor Mary Condon and County Judge Bill Gravell.

Municipal leaders from every corner of Williamson County joined 2 county officials in encouraging residents to answer the census call. **Left to right:** Commissioner Terry Cook, Hutto Mayor Doug Gaul, Taylor Mayor Brandt Rydell, Cedar Park Mayor Corbin Van Arsdale, Bartlett Mayor Landry Pack, Jarrell Mayor Larry Bush, Granger Mayor Trevor Cheatham, Round Rock City Council Member Will Peckham, Florence Mayor Mary Condon and County Judge Bill Gravell.



Be on the lookout for a census card in your postal service mail during the month of March!
That card will have a number that is coded only to your address.
When you receive it, you can go online or make a call to fill out your census form, and be sure to list everyone in your home.

REMINDER: There is no citizenship question!



Where is Commissioner Cook?



The Chartering of the Special Interest Group, the Williamson County Pearls of Excellence of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

I have attended many events over the past 3+ years at the Georgetown Sheraton, but never before have I seen the hallways and ballroom tables more beautifully decorated than at the AKA Chartering ceremony for the special interest group, Pearls of Excellence on the afternoon of February 8. This chartering ceremony brought the volunteer group of women, into the sorority as a graduate chapter and gave them the Greek designation of Alpha Alpha Nu Omega Chapter of the AKA Sorority, Inc. (yes four Greek letters).

With humor, grace and celebration, sorority leadership commended these 53 local ladies for their service to the communities within Williamson County for performing their mission to be of "Service to All Mankind". Indeed, since that small meeting in November of 2014, the former sorority sisters have formed effective partnerships with school districts, local businesses and individuals through their special interest group. The magnitude and effectiveness of their efforts earned them the chartering into AKA, Inc. this February.

I was so honored to be invited to join this special event and so proud to have the Alpha Alpha Nu Omega chapter call Williamson County home.

Following the chartering, substantial donations were presented to several Williamson County non-profits.

In January, the Commissioners Court recognized the Pearls of Excellence special interest group for their work in Williamson County. Additionally, Senator Charles Schwertner also introduced a proclamation in February congratulating their chartering into AKA's sisterhood.

AKA Sorority is an international service organization founded in 1908 on the campus of Howard University. Today, their global membership approaches 300,000 distinguished and successful women from many walks of life.

WilCo Community Development Block Grant Issues Call for Projects

Williamson County's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program will be allocating \$1,596,257 in funds in fiscal year 2020. The fiscal year runs from October 2020 to September 2021. Cities, non-profits and other entities can apply for that funding now through April 16, 2020. Funds will be made available to approved projects on or around October 1, 2020.

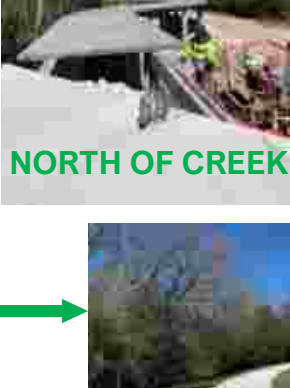
Projects will be selected using the following 2019-2023 priorities:

- Public Facility and Infrastructure Improvements
- Increase Access to Affordable Housing
- Decrease Homelessness
- Public Services
- Affirmatively further Fair Housing

Projects should be located in participating cities or in the unincorporated areas of Williamson County. Online applications can be found at www.wilco.org/CDBG and should be submitted electronically. Submission deadline is April 16, 2020.



Let's take a walk!
 All of these pictures are in order from the east end at Creekside Park (behind the former 620 Café) in Round Rock, going approx. one mile to the west end. There will be one disabled parking space created. Progress marches on!



**G
E
T**

UP

& E

**G
T**

**OUT
THERE!**

MARCH TOWN HALL TAXES & APPRAISALS

*featuring special
guest speakers*

LARRY GADDES
WilCo Tax Assessor Collector

ALVIN LANKFORD
Williamson CAD Chief Appraiser

MONDAY, MARCH 9 AT 6:30 PM | VISTA RIDGE HS - CAFETERIA

State Rep. John Bucy will be hosting a Town Hall on Property Taxes and the Appraisal Process in the Cafeteria at Vista Ridge High School, 200 S. Vista Ridge Blvd, Cedar Park, TX 78613. He will be joined by Williamson County Tax Assessor Collector Larry Gaddes and Williamson Central Appraisal District Chief Appraiser Alvin Lankford who will each give a presentation, followed by a moderated discussion and an audience question and answer session. In addition, Williamson County staff will be on hand to answer questions from residents after the program.

TRADES DAY CAREER FAIR

Wednesday, March 4, 2020
at the Williamson County Expo Center in Taylor



This Trades Day Career Fair at the Williamson County Expo Center has been organized to introduce local students who have shown interest in the trades to the exciting opportunities in the industry. By participating in the Career Day event, students will be able to experience the real story of working in their trade of interest, view hands-on demonstrations and learn more about a rewarding career path.

Click the logo to register!



March 14 and 15 at Old Settlers Park

\$5 Admission to all concerts and attractions! Children under 12 get in FREE!

Click the logo to learn more!



The City of Round Rock invites you to review the draft of *Round Rock 2030*, an update to the City's comprehensive land use plan prior to commencement of the adoption process. The Plan is a policy guide and framework for land use decisions for the next decade.

Two Open Houses will be held March 7 and 10, to give feedback and tell your vision for Round Rock's future. The Open Houses are not formal presentations. Rather, the community is invited to arrive, review plan content, interact with staff, and give their input at any time during the event. **Click logo to learn more!**

Open Houses dates, times, and venues-

March 7 at 10am—2pm: Baca Center, 301 W. Bagdad Ave./March 10 at 6pm—8pm: Rabb House, 151 N. A.W. Grimes Blvd.



U P D A T E

As mentioned in last month's newsletter, the splashpad at Champion Park is being dug out and replaced with a brand new playscape. Work has begun, and below are pictures of that work.



In Commissioners Court



Congratulations to Pct 1 Constable Vinnie Cherro-ne and his staff for achieving Re-recognition Status for compliance with the Texas Law Enforcement Agency Best Practices Recognition Program from the Texas Police Chiefs Assoc. (TPCA) Out of more than 2,400 agencies statewide, only 164 are recognized by the TPCA's Best Practices Recognition Program. The Constable Precinct 1 Office is only 1 of 3 constables offices in Texas to be certified and the 2nd one to be re-certified.

The Law Enforcement Recognition Program is a voluntary process where police agencies in Texas prove their compliance with 168 standards for law enforcement best practices. These best practices were developed by Texas law enforcement professionals to assist agencies in the efficient and effective delivery of service, the reduction of risk, and the protection of individual's rights, and they include use of force, protection of citizen rights, vehicle pursuits, property and evidence management, and patrol and investigative operations. ***We couldn't be more proud of our friends across the hall!***

In The News

[Statesman-Leader Online](#)

This is the first time ever that we can respond to the census online.

The U.S. Constitution requires the U.S. Census Bureau to count every resident living in the country every 10 years. Between March 12 and July 31, 95% of U.S. households will receive an invitation in the mail to complete the 2020 Census.

Depending on how likely your area is to respond electronically, you'll receive either an invitation to respond online or by phone, or an invitation with a paper questionnaire.

Households not responding will be mailed reminders. Then between May and August, census takers will visit households that have not yet self-responded.

Since Texas didn't establish a statewide Complete Count Committee like most states, including Washington D.C., it was left up to our communities — like Williamson County — to ensure every Texan is counted.

Last September, the Commissioners Court created the WilCo CCC, to which our county judge appointed the chair and each commissioner appointed three members. Our committee's focus is to raise awareness of the urgency of comprehensive census information and encourage people to complete it, particularly residents in hard-to-count areas.

Census data will determine how more than \$675 billion in federal funds will be spent to support vital community programs nationwide.

The 2010 Census revealed Texas added 4.3 million known new residents since 2000, increasing our population to 25.1 million. Texas' population is second only to California. However, demographers believe we could become the most populous by 2045 if California's growth continues to lag behind Texas.

After the 2010 Census, we gained four congressional seats, and experts believe we could gain up to three more seats this time, increasing our representation. Our county population for 2020 is estimated to be over 600,000, and if everyone is not counted, we could lose both representation in Congress and much needed federal funding.

The census count impacts the redrawing of not just congressional district lines, but also state senatorial and legislative districts, county electoral and voting precincts, and some city council member districts. It also determines how many electoral votes we will have in presidential elections.

It also determines how much of the federal tax dollars will flow back to our state and communities that help fund schools, the construction of highways, bridges and airports, and much more.

If Texans are undercounted, both state and local governments risk cuts to much needed services that many of our communities rely on. Groups historically undercounted include children, renters, ethnic minorities, rural residents and people with limited-English skills. Today, 25% of Texans (over 6 million people) live in hard-to-count neighborhoods.

Completing the census also helps build our economy. Companies use population and demographic data to set up, expand and create jobs. Without accurate data, businesses can't make the best decisions for growth, and this stifles our economy.

Real estate developers use census data to determine where to build new homes and revitalize old neighborhoods.

Even an undercount of one percent can result in significant loss in federal funding—at least \$300 million per year over the next decade.

Filling out the Census form is safe. By law, the federal government protects our responses which are used solely to produce statistics. Your information cannot be shared with immigration enforcement agencies, law enforcement agencies or to determine your eligibility for government benefits. There is no citizenship question on the Census.

When completing the census, you must include everyone living with you, even if not related, including anyone living with you temporarily.

In December, our WilCo Census Committee and the Williamson County and Cities Health District received a \$30,000 grant from the United Way of Greater Austin. We will be using those funds to reach hard-to-count populations and encourage them to complete the census.

The Census Bureau increased its national recruiting efforts to hire up to 500,000 temporary, part-time census takers in communities across the country. To learn more about or apply for a temporary census taker job, visit 2020census.gov/jobs or text Texasjobs to 313131.

We've come a long way from the first U.S. Census held in 1790, when 350 marshals counted 3,929,214 residents in the 13 states and territories.

Make sure you're counted!

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 is slated for March 11, 2020, but no location yet. Start making plans NOW on how you will avoid this area. It will be open for traffic during construction, but might be slow going. This will be a multi-year project.

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 should occur very soon. 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– Starting this week, the Williamson County Parks & Recreation Department closed a portion of the Brushy Creek Regional Trail at Great Oaks Drive for a utility 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. A boring technique will be utilized to place pipes under the road and tree roots. To make this possible, a 20' x50' pit will be necessary to get the boring equipment in place. 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](#). Construction start is slated to begin Spring 2020.

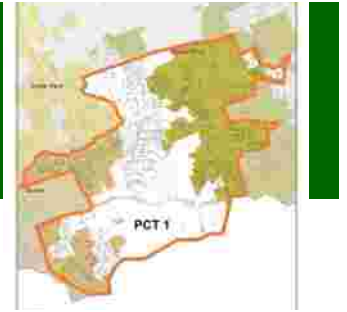
N. Mays St. Extension from Paloma Dr. to Oakmont Dr.– The bridge, a long, 4-lane project over a flood plain, is being constructed; concrete rails and curb and gutters for the bridge, as well as an approach slab, are being poured and put in place. Concrete pipes have been placed under the structure on the northbound side. AT&T's work on moving their lines are scheduled to be done this week on the north end. Spectrum has moved their lines from the old poles to the new poles from Jeffrey Way to Paloma Drive, and only relocations at the north end remain. This is a joint project of the City of Round Rock and Williamson County that runs parallel to I-35. It will take traffic off of I-35 by supplanting Oakmont Dr. with N. Mays St. across University Ave., providing a link between Round Rock and Georgetown. 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. 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– 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. Likely delay in construction start. 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, and a public involvement plan meeting was held on December 5, 2019. 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. 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!

LOCATION: Williamson County Jester Annex
1801 E. Old Settlers Blvd., Suite 110

MAIN PHONE: 512-244-8610

EMAIL COMMISSIONER COOK:
commissioner1@wilco.org

COMMUNICATIONS/SCHEDULING: Doris Sanchez
512-244-8610, doris.sanchez@wilco.org

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT: Garry Brown
512-244-8615, garry.brown@wilco.org

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