

**Williamson County
Commissioner
Terry Cook**

N E W S L E T T E R

**October 2020
Volume 4
Issue 10**

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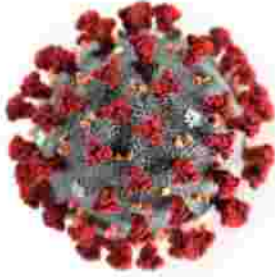
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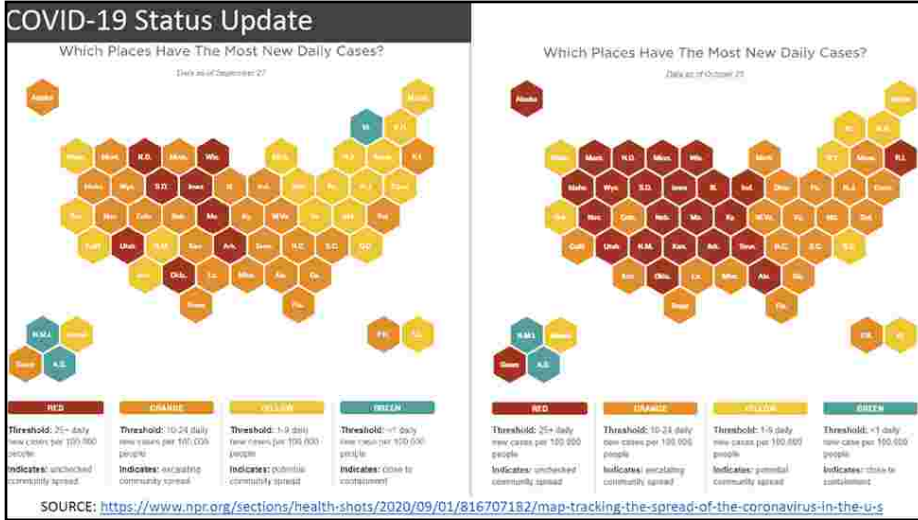
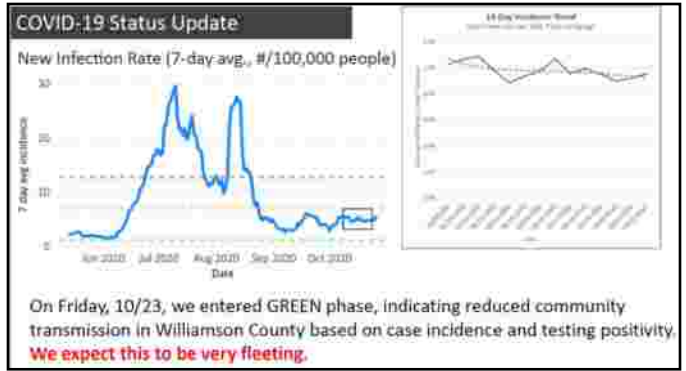
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**The Last Page and sign up for the WIL-
County Line E-newsletter**

Confederate Statue Committee



WCCHD reports that we should not be lulled into complacency. Upticks in hospitalizations are happening here in Williamson County. Is it just lack of robust testing and participation? Under-reporting? Or is the pandemic picking up steam?



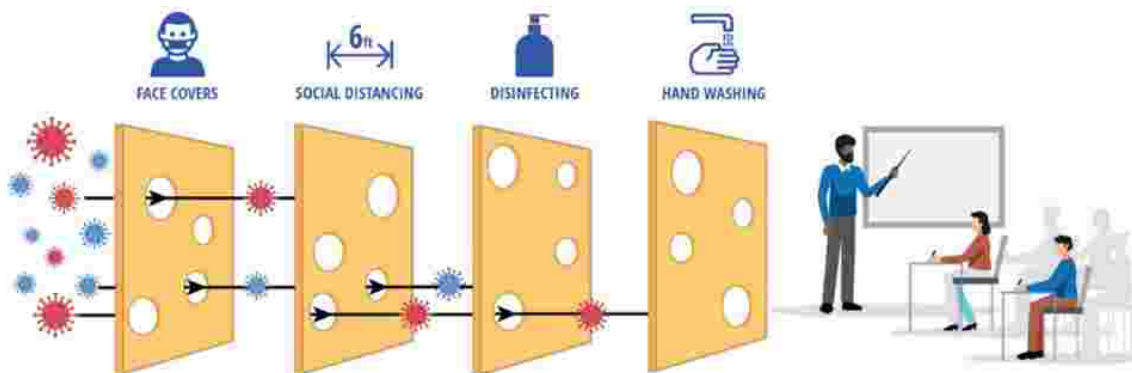
Nationally, we're changing rapidly in cases from September to October

As of October 27, here's the growth in numbers:

STATE	AVG. NEW CASES/DAY				TOTALS SINCE JANUARY	
	3 weeks ago	2 weeks ago	Last week	This week	CASES	DEATHS
United States	43,089	49,243	56,067	68,767	8,636,957	225,236
California	3,260	3,211	2,929	1,411	906,795	17,359
Texas	4,491	4,033	5,083	5,429	882,006	17,955
Florida	2,271	2,570	2,933	3,374	778,636	16,429

So warning to us - remember the 4-layered swiss cheese model?

1. Mask of 2-layers of cotton at least 170 thread count; if you can hold a mask up to light and see that light thru the mask, the mask will not protect you
2. Social distance of at least 6' apart (unless you live with them)
3. Disinfect items in your environment
4. Handwash, handwash, handwash





The Message



Oh—that Election Day can't come soon enough. Are we more weary of the pandemic or the political scramble? I am so proud of everyone who has voted so far! Combined with mail-in ballots, the County passed a total of 65% of all registered voters with Ballots-by-Mail and in-person voting on the morning of October 30.

Seems that gone are the days where Texans primarily didn't vote.

On MLK Day in 2015, 599 VDRs and I attended the Travis County VDR Recognition and re-training program to renew as Deputy Voter Registrars. The keynote speaker, Regina Lawrence, then the executive director of the Annette Strauss Institute of Civic Life at UT, gave a message that still resonates with me. In the 2014 gubernatorial election, only 28.5% of Texas registered voters voted and 1/3 of them only voted the top of the ballot. Texas was 49th in the nation in voter turnout. A failure for all.

So why didn't we vote? Some countries hold elections on a weekend – our early voting should have helped there. We were 44th in the nation in political competitiveness. The attitude of Texans seemed to be “why bother?” Further, the Pew Charitable Trust polled and found that 34% of Texans didn't realize their voter registration wasn't updated through the Postal Service when they move.

Texans seemed to feel there was nothing they, individually, could do to effect change. The political system is unresponsive and impervious to change.

Well this year, that has all changed. The divisiveness of our country has awoken those silent.

Williamson County led Central Texas counties in voter turnout this October. As of the close of voting on Thursday, October 29, 2020, 24,157 ballots-by-mail (BBM) had been received by our elections office (walk-in and USPS, etc.) in the 2016 election, a total of 9,272 BBM were received.

By close of voting Thursday night, 222,484 in-person votes had been cast, including provisional, across Williamson County. Adding those to the BBM received by Thursday close of business, we're looking at over 65% of the registered voters in Wilco having done their civic duty in voting!!!

2020

376,931 Registered Voters
246,484 votes cast by Thursday, Oct 29, at close of voting
65.43% of all registered voters have voted by Thursday night

2016

306,811 Registered Voters
205,862 votes cast
67.1% turnout

Special shoutout to Precinct 182 – You're in the lead for voter turn-out in Precinct 1 with a 69% Thursday night – 71.3% as of this writing at 3PM Friday

In summary, voting does matter; it is a practical act of civic inspiration. Some of the races in Williamson County in 2018 showed us that **every vote does count**, so make sure to get your vote in on Tuesday, November 3, if you haven't already!



Williamson County's CARES program to distribute grants to entities to offset unplanned costs due to COVID-19 is still alive and funding until December 30, 2020.

Phase I - to small businesses ended June 30, 2020 coming in just under the \$35M allocated for it.

»FORWARD»

Phase II Reimbursements - to Cities, Emergency Services Districts (ESDs), Health District, Bluebonnet Trails Community Service (mental health), YMCA, and County

- Up to \$536,665.30 in reimbursements with Hutto and Cedar Park still outstanding but under review and are expected to be approved. \$20M has been earmarked for this.
- Reimbursements to ESDs has climbed to over \$85K from just under \$25K last month. They are really figuring out what they can be reimbursed for in their spending since March. \$500K allocated.
- WCCHD \$1M allocated
- Bluebonnet Trails Community Services \$500k allocated
- YMCA \$750k allocated

Phase III Community Assistance Program - Funding for rent and unpaid utilities (payable to companies, not individuals; 3 months max per applicant). County is divided into three sections and grants administered by 3 non-profits:

- The Caring Place in Georgetown: 114 families (27 during Oct 5-19) for total of \$151,346.73
- Round Rock Serving Center: 761 families (\$282,933.64 during Oct 5-19) for a total of \$657,317.64
- Salvation Army: 55 families (21 during Oct 5-19) for \$113,984.03 **Note:** County paid for 3 temporary workers to aid Salvation Army, so there has been a slow start and large backlog. Concerted effort to work thru backlog is underway.

If the intensity of need for housing assistance isn't worrisome enough, have you had opportunity to observe the lines at any of the food distribution areas around the county? Food and housing needs are enormous and growing. So many are caught between some and none.



You must register to receive a flu shot.

Drive-thru only, No walkups

Clicking on the picture to the left will take you to the registration page.

ELECTION 2020 CENTRAL

VOTE NOW

WILLIAMSON COUNTY HAS MORE REGISTERED VOTERS THAN EVER BEFORE

(thank you deputy voter registrars and a campaign to register residents in apartments spearheaded by Judge KT Musselman!),

AND WE ARE BREAKING RECORDS FOR VOTER TURNOUT (thank you voters!)

Election Day is Tuesday, November 3. If you have not voted yet, you only have 2 options now:

1. In-person voting on Tuesday, Nov. 3 at 7:00am—7:00pm. You'll still be able to vote at any voting location. **REMEMBER: You may vote after 7:00pm, BUT ONLY if you are in line before 7:00pm.**
2. If you are voting ballot by mail, and have not mailed your ballot, you must physically drop it off in the Elections office at 301 SE Inner Loop in Georgetown. **THE ELECTIONS OFFICE WILL NOT BE OPEN OVER THE WEEKEND.** The hours of operation to drop off your ballot are Monday, Nov. 2 at 8:00am—5:00pm and Tuesday, Nov. 3 at 7:00am –7:00pm.

VOTING BY MAIL: Photo ID laws are applicable to all voters that hand-deliver their ballots. TO BE CLEAR: YOU CAN HAND-DELIVER ONLY YOUR OWN BALLOT (NOT ANYONE ELSE'S) AND ONLY AT THE ELECTIONS OFFICE AND YOU WILL NEED TO SHOW YOUR OWN ID TO DO IT. Voters may also use a contract courier (like FedEx, UPS, DHL, etc.) to return their ballot to Elections. For these Ballots to be counted, they must be received by the Elections office by 5PM the day after Election Day as long as it is postmarked on or before Election Day. Voters who are returning their ballots from outside of the United States must have their ballots postmarked at or before 7PM on Election Day, and the ballot must be received in the Elections office no later than five days after the election. And now you can track your mail-in ballot [HERE](#).

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Sample ballots available [HERE](#)

League of Women Voters of TX General Election Guide available [HERE](#).

REMINDER: You may bring in your sample ballot or a voter guide into the polling location. At no time, may you use your phone inside.



Center for Disease Control Suggestions for a happy Halloween

Make trick-or-treating safer

- Avoid direct contact with trick-or-treaters.
- Give out treats outdoors, if possible.
- Set up a station with individually bagged treats for kids to take.
- Wash hands before handling treats.
- Wear a mask.

Wear a mask

- Make your cloth mask part of your costume.
- A costume mask is **not** a substitute for a cloth mask.
- Do **NOT** wear a costume mask over a cloth mask. It can make breathing more difficult.
- Masks should **NOT** be worn by children under the age of 2 or anyone who has trouble breathing.

Wash your hands

- Bring hand sanitizer with you and use it after touching objects or other people.
- Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Parents: supervise young children using hand sanitizer.
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds when you get home and before you eat any treats.

Please follow these guidelines for a

**HAPPY
HALLOWEEN**

And keep this jack o'lantern smiling!





IN COMMISSIONERS COURT

October is Substance Use Awareness Month, and this is the 2nd year that Commissioner Cook has offered a proclamation to bring awareness to this important topic. Drug addiction is preventable and treatable. Thank you LifeSteps for your incredible work in Williamson County!

Picture above front row L-R:

Shannon Martin, Diversion Investigator with the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)

Gina Giachetti, DEA Special Agent

Kelly McCaffery, LifeSteps Executive Director

Rosana Sieloff, LifeSteps Coalition Prevention Program Director

Chief Audrey Foushee, Texas Joint Counterdrug Task Force

Last Saturday, **National Take Back Day**, where people could take old medications to be disposed of properly, 3,412 lbs of medications were collected in Williamson County as follows:

Sun City – 830 lbs

Sheriff's Office – 845 lbs

Round Rock PD – 900 lbs

Leander PD – 354 lbs

Cedar Park PD – 483 lbs

LifeSteps also distributed 1600 medication disposal bags to local police departments for public distribution.

EXCELLENT WORK!



PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, October is Substance Use Prevention Month, promoting prevention efforts and demonstrating commitment to healthy and drug-free lifestyles; and

WHEREAS, According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health in 2019, 20.4 million people aged 12 and older had a substance use disorder the previous year, and from those, only 2.5% received any substance abuse treatment; and

WHEREAS, the 2019 Williamson County Community Health Assessment reported that 22.2% of adults in Williamson County reported excessive drinking compared with 18% nationwide, which indicates that substance use disorders should be a primary concern county-wide; and

WHEREAS, Research shows that drug addiction is preventable and treatable. According to Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, for each dollar invested in an evidence-based prevention program, there can be a reduced cost between \$2 and \$20 in treatment and other health related expenses; and

WHEREAS, Since 1978, LifeSteps has been working in Williamson County to improve our community's health, safety, and well-being by preventing substance use disorders and supporting long-term recovery; and

WHEREAS, LifeSteps Substance Use Prevention Coalition knows that prevention goes beyond "Just Say No" slogans and knowledge of the negative effects of drugs; they work to engage, inform and empower the community to prevent substance use and remove or minimize risk conditions by changing social norms, and investing in wellness and in the community where you live, work, and play; and

WHEREAS, #iLiveRed, a campaign launched by the LifeSteps Coalition that encourages Resilient, Empowered, and Drug-free lives, seeks to raise awareness of addiction and promote positive drug-free messages that will engage Williamson County citizens in leading healthier lifestyles; and

WHEREAS, Organizations such as the Drug Enforcement Administration – Austin, the Joint Counterdrug Task Force, and LifeSteps Coalition partners are collaborating to promote #iLiveRed activities to raise a commitment to a healthy and drug-free lifestyle; and

WHEREAS, no one with a drug addiction should be held up for derision and scorn, but should be met with love, understanding, and support for recovery;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Williamson County Commissioners Court supports LifeSteps Council on Alcohol and Drugs and hereby proclaims October 2020 as Substance Use Prevention Month and encourages its citizens to engage in prevention efforts that promote positive lifestyle changes.

Signed on this date: _____

Bill Gravel, County Judge

On behalf of the Williamson County Commissioners Court

The facts in the proclamation are startling:

In Wilco, 22.5% of adults admit excessive drinking (that was pre-Covid-19); 18% nationwide

Only 2.5% of people with Substance Use Disorder receive treatment

CONFEDERATE STATUE COMMITTEE

Commissioners Court will establish a committee to determine whether to move the confederate statue or not from the Williamson County Courthouse grounds in the Georgetown Square. **TO BE CLEAR**, this committee's charge is NOT to determine whether to tear it down, but whether the statue stays in its current location or moves elsewhere. Each Court Member gets to choose 3 appointees from their own precinct to this committee in December 2020. Our office will use a blind application process to determine Commissioner Cook's appointees.

To express your interest, please email Garry.Brown@wilco.org, and an application will be sent back to you.

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS IS FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13 AT 5:00



Georgetown Salamander



Salado Salamander

US Fish and Wildlife Service proposes new rules regarding critical habitat units for the Georgetown and Salado salamanders

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed new rules related to the Georgetown and Salado salamanders. The proposal has been published in the Federal Register with comments due by November 16, 2020 at 10:59PM if submitted electronically or postmarked on or before Nov. 16.

You can learn much more and submit your comments [HERE](#).

The Williamson County Conservation Foundation (WCCF) will be reviewing the proposal and submitting comments.

To learn more locally, contact the WCCF at wccf@wilco.org.

Commissioner Cook: Agency offers hope by serving victims of domestic, sexual violence

<https://www.statesman.com/opinion/20201008/commissioner-cook-agency-offers-hope-by-serving-victims-of-domestic-sexual-violence?rssfeed=true>

Williamson County has the well-deserved reputation as a great place to live. But beneath the surface, as well as across the world, there is a dark and sinister underbelly of family and youth violence and abuse.

Serving those victims in our county is Hope Alliance in Round Rock, a crisis center that assists victims of domestic or sexual violence and their families. This nonprofit offers safety, counseling and ultimately training and skills to break the cycles of violence in which individuals live. They give victims hope for a safe and healthy life.

Don't think this happens that often here? The data is startling and has no socio-economic boundaries: 1 in 3 women, 1 in 4 men and 1 in 3 teenagers have been victims of a violent relationship. Domestic violence is the leading cause of injuries to women ages 15 to 44, and one-third of female homicides are the result of violence from an intimate partner.

While abuse is often physical — 1 in 10 high school students have been purposely hit, slapped or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend — emotional or verbal mistreatment by a partner frequently occurs. Together they exceed the rates of all other types of youth violence. Social media greatly facilitates the mistreatment at all ages.

For these reasons, in September, the Williamson County Commissioners Court proclaimed October as “Domestic and Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.” This past Saturday, Hope Alliance's kickoff for its second annual 5K was held in San Gabriel Park, where I had the pleasure of delivering a poignant message, setting the tone for this virtual race and cause via Facebook Live.

Of dating college women, 43% report experiencing violent and abusive dating behaviors, and that's just what gets reported. Often access to one's online accounts has been shared with a partner, facilitating misuse and abuse.

Experiencing violence and abuse while young often increases unhealthy behaviors and generational continuation of this type of relationship in adulthood. How does one grow up to be well adjusted in this sort of environment? For those victims and children who are fortunate enough to reach out to Hope Alliance, there is hope for recovery.

Hope Alliance serves more than 2,500 women, men and children annually, yet in 2019 had to refer over 1,000 to another county for help and shelter. The demand for services for those victimized by family and/or sexual violence is always greater than the ability to meet them.

Central Texas agencies serving victims of abuse have memorandums of understanding with each other to take clients from other areas when possible. In 2019, Hope Alliance served 253 clients with Austin addresses, although many may have been Williamson County residents, and SAFE Alliance in Travis County helped 187 Williamson County residents.

Now under the cloud of the pandemic, even fewer can be served. For those needing safe shelter, the 30-bed unit that generally was always full, has been reduced to 50 percent capacity for social distancing needs.

The robust 1-on-1 counseling has been converted to virtual sessions with many people in need unable to participate for lack of technology. And the number of victims has only increased with COVID-19 forcing domestic victims to be with their abusers more hours of the day with stay-at-home orders and loss of jobs.

Now there is hope for Hope Alliance. The organization is in the process of purchasing or building a larger facility, which would allow it to consolidate services and expand the shelter in one location.

This project will require major fundraising, and needs our help. A multi-agency center would allow multiple organizations to co-locate under one roof for centralized services.

This consolidation of services like legal and employment assistance, childcare and counseling would improve efficiencies, simplify the path to recovery and provide increased emergency safety provisions for individuals and families.



WILLIAMSON COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Williamson County Historical Commission is looking for few, new appointees to serve a 2-year term starting in January. They are looking for a wide range of people– age, ethnicities, geographic diversity, etc., who have an interest in the preservation of the history of Williamson County. The Commission is needing, especially, a person or two who lives in Round Rock.

Meetings are held at 4:00pm on the 2nd Thursday of every month. Currently, the meetings are held virtually.

You can learn more about what the Historical Commission does and find an application [HERE](#). Please send completed applications to your precinct commissioner:

Precinct 1	Commissioner1@wilco.org	1801 E. Old Settlers Blvd., Ste. 110, Round Rock, TX 78664
Precinct 2	clong@wilco.org	350 Discovery Blvd., Ste. 201, Cedar Park, TX 78613
Precinct 3	comm3@wilco.org	100 Wilco Way, CO 201, Georgetown, TX 78626
Precinct 4	russ.boles@wilco.org	3001 Joe DiMaggio Blvd., Unit 1300, Round Rock, TX 78665

New commission members will be appointed in December 2020, so get your application in today!



Each year, the Fur Ball helps the Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter raise funds to increase the lifesaving opportunities for the homeless pets in our area. Your ticket purchases, bids on our silent and live auction items, and donations have improved the lives of the animals in their care, year by year.

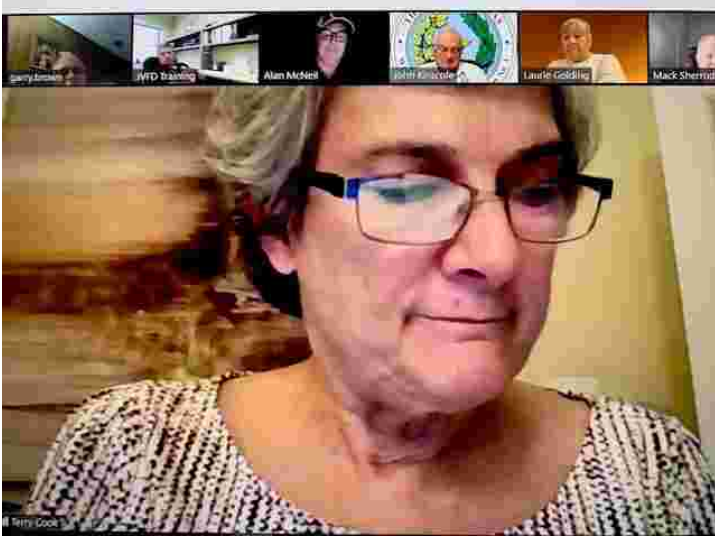
This year will be a virtual event.

This year's virtual Fur Ball will raise funds for two programs - the Kitten Coordinator position and the Honor Roll program. The Honor Roll program serves the shelter dogs who need one-on-one training from a positive reinforcement-based trainer to help them cope with the stress of the shelter and prepare them for a loving home. Funds raised at Fur Ball will be used to continue this life-saving work. For sponsorship and ticket information, go [HERE](#).



DID YOU KNOW that you can see the events that were attended by Commissioner Cook on her official Williamson County office's web-site? You'll also be able to read her poems, too. Although she's not attending anything in-person right now, you can see all past events [here](#).

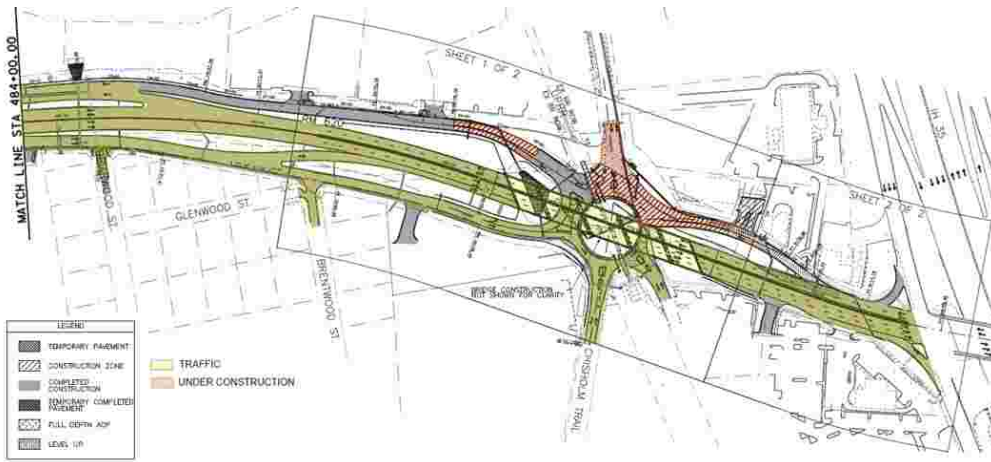
Where is Commissioner Cook?



Emergency Services Districts (ESDs) provide fire service for those Williamson County residents who live in some of our smaller communities and the unincorporated areas of the county. The business of ESDs are run by 5-member Boards of Directors, appointed by county commissioners, and they are funded primarily by property tax monies by those living inside their districts, but have additional options.

Due to a resignation on its board, ESD #1, aka Jollyville Fire Department, needed a new commissioner to be appointed. The new appointee, Alan McNeil, in the 3rd picture from the left at the top, is being "virtually" sworn in. here while other ESD commissioners look on.

ROAD UPDATES



620 at Railroad/Chisholm Trail– As you drive by, think water: drinking water, wastewater, storm water. This is a City of Round Rock, Wilco & TxDOT project. Estimated completion date is Summer 2022.

Great Oaks Bridge at Brushy Creek Rd.– Originally, AT&T, Charter, Grande, and Oncor were supposed to be done in September, then it was October, then November. They are all still saying December, except Oncor. Cross your fingers! Atmos Gas has completed construction of their new gas line near the BCMUD maintenance yard on the north, under Brushy Creek, and along the right-of-way on the east. The old bridge will remain in use during construction. The construction is anticipated to begin early 2021 (pending utility moves) and take 18-24 months to complete. Learn more [HERE](#).

ROAD UPDATES CONT'D

Great Oaks Water Line Relocations– Fern Bluff water line: DONE, except for a few minor items, like sidewalk repairs!

Hairy Man Rd./Brushy Creek Rd. Safety Improvements– Learn more about this project at this [website](#). Final plans have been approved by Commissioners Court to go out for advertising. Those plans include design work to modify road alignment to protect the designated tree canopy. This is a 100% county job. Construction start is anticipated January 2021.

N. Mays St. Extension from Paloma Dr. to Oakmont Dr.– Sidewalks and curb ramps were placed at the south end of the project and at the intersections of Paloma Dr. and Oakmont Dr. Finishing touches are being done in the detention pond on the north end. Asphalt pavement has been placed on both ends. This is a Round Rock—County project. We are looking at late Fall for substantial completion. Virtual ribbon cutting is being planned.

University Blvd. widening from IH-35 to Sunrise Rd.– Utility relocation efforts are still ongoing and taking longer than anticipated. Hoping to start construction in latter November. This is the city’s project for which the county has contributed \$5M. Project is slated to finish in early 2022.

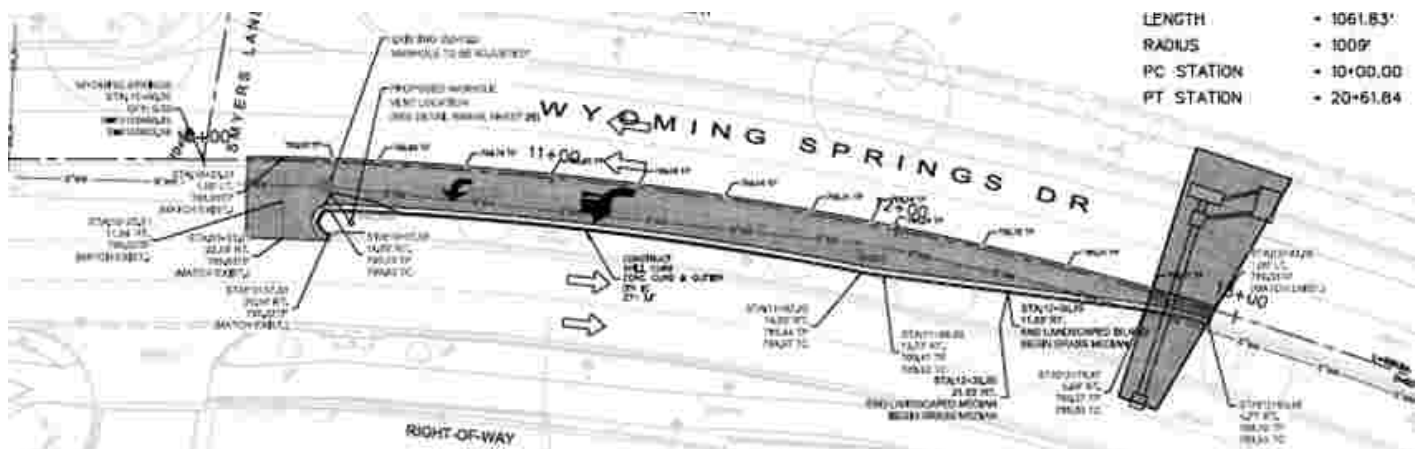
Pond Springs Road Area Drainage Improvements– The agreement terms between the County, the City of Austin & TxDOT seem to be a back-burner project. A conflict assessment has shown that there are a number of utility conflicts, so a plan is being drafted to minimize impact. Construction start is still anticipated Spring 2021.

Forest North Drainage Improvements Phase III– Waterline work galore! No issues to solve. Substantial completion is anticipated in early 2022.

O'Connor Drive Traffic Signals– Nearly ready to drill to install base poles once conduit lines are all connected. Current date of January 1 for having lights operational! Cross your fingers.

Sam Bass Rd. Interim Signal Project– An interim traffic signal will be installed at the intersection of Sam Bass Rd. and Walsh Ranch Trail/Arrowhead Circle and at Sam Bass and Great Oaks. Construction of the interim traffic signal at these intersections do not include road improvements such as crosswalks. The construction on the new road design for Sam Bass Road itself will include items such as crosswalks, but it is not anticipated to begin before 2022 because of utilities. (Sam Bass Road became designated officially as a corridor road on the 2016 Corridor Map of the county’s Long-range Transportation Plan.) Construction start for temporary lights is anticipated Fall 2020. Cost for temporary lights is almost \$320k—not cheap, but needed.

Wyoming Springs @ Smyers Lane–A left turning lane will be created by removing a section of the median and 4 trees. This is in response to many near and actual accidents for those trying to turn into Walgreens. Must get approvals from Round Rock and TCEQ for the Water Pollution Abatement Plan (anytime you add impermeable surfaces).



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