

# Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook

## NEWSLETTER

December 2021 Volume 5 Issue 12



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Shopping Experience

Road Updates

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newsletter

In the News

AND a SPECIAL Last Page  
from our office to you!

Where is Commissioner Cook?





# The Message

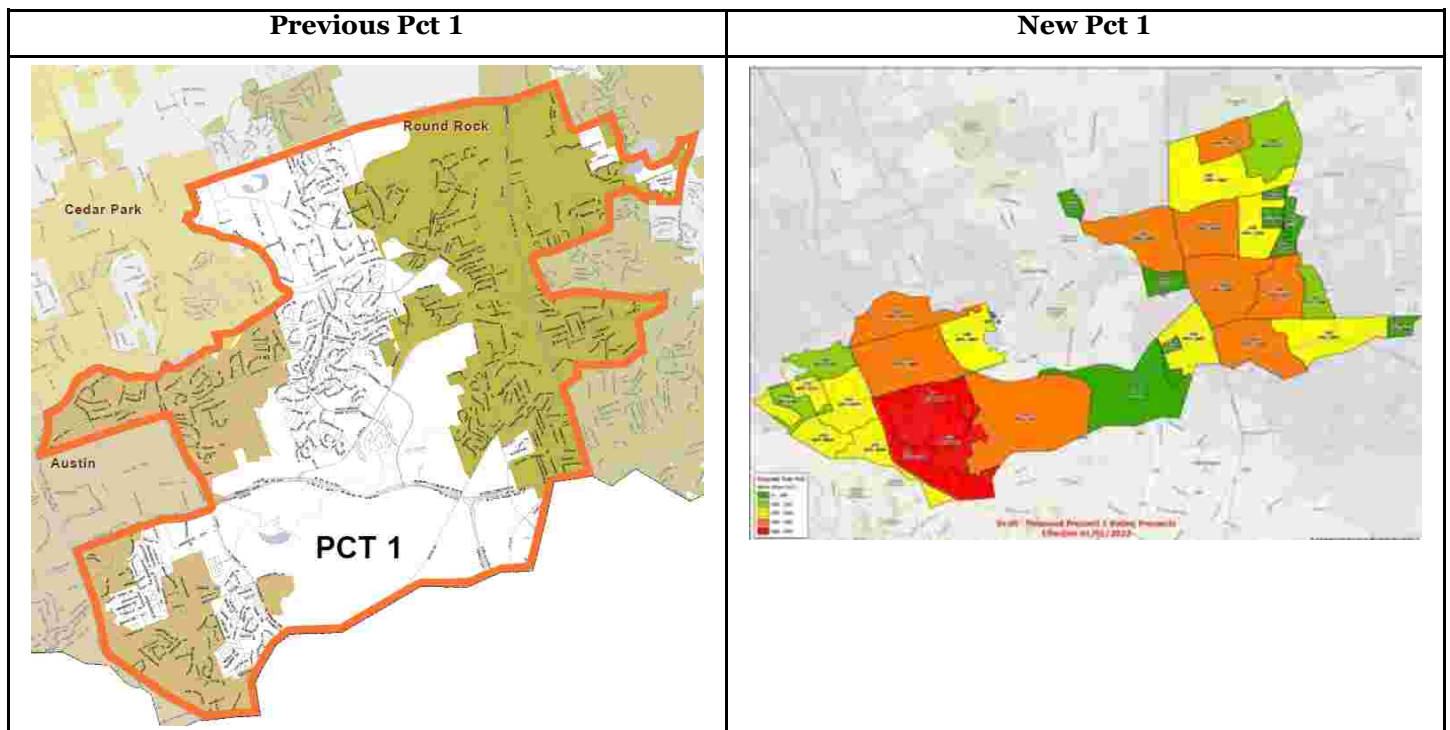


## Terry's Past & New Year's Message

Goodbye and good riddance to 2021. 2022 can only get better, *right?* The new year brings all the redistricting into our new reality.

With this newsletter, I say goodbye to my representation on the Commissioners Court for Fern Bluff MUD, Brushy Creek MUD, most of my HOA (Behrens Ranch), Woodglen and Hidden Glen, Brushy Creek North, Sendero Springs, Great Oaks Neighborhood, Brushy Bend and a hunk of Avery Ranch residents. I would like to publicly thank the Brushy Creek MUD board for presenting me with a plaque of gratitude for the strong working relationship we developed over these past 5 years.

I now represent most of Round Rock, most of Austin in Williamson County and a bit of south Cedar Park.



As the Omicron variant of the Covid-19 virus spreads thru our neighborhoods, we struggle to accept the isolation it requires to limit further spread. Our personal responsibilities bring back masking, social distancing and hand washing. We are so weary of this new normal. Where's our joy?

We are now experiencing a mental health breakdown. With our Mobile Outreach Team moving to Round Rock to provide mental health and substance use crisis responses within Round Rock's Community Risk Reduction program, Bluebonnet Community Services will be increasing their presence in the county for crisis response. Additionally, they are now providing 911 call response for mental health crisis calls. Depression is not limited to youth in middle & high school but is being increasingly identified in elementary students. We need to create our own environments of FUN within the walls of our homes. How about game nights – whether board or on-line gaming? Storytelling. Research ancestors. Hit the outdoor pickleball courts – all ages can play and play against each other. Bicycle trips. Our newest county park, River Ranch, is close to opening just outside of Liberty Hill with its NE corner along the south fork of the San Gabriel River. With trails, picnic tables, restrooms, pavilion, it's great for hiking, biking and equestrian activities, and camping; we'll have a state park experience close to home. Get a bird feeder – I've added one just outside our family room window and we laugh and laugh at the squirrel trying to get to the seeds and we have a field guide laminated foldout sheet of birds commonly found in central Texas to help us ID the birds. Speaking of squirrels – search youtube/markrober for great videos (at least 2) - here's a guy with too much expendable income and knowhow and a group of squirrels in his neighborhood who are game to participate in great squirrel mazes in his backyard – I want one!



## *Christmas for the Williamson County Child Advocacy Center Families*

Our Wilco Child Advocacy Center, CAC, is a non-profit, 501c(3), providing safety, counseling, Sexual Assault Exams, and support to children and non-offending family members. Working with our District Attorney office and law enforcement, protection and healing is brought to families and children who have suffered sexual violence – and way too much of that is happening in our county.

Each Christmas season brings the CAC family store for those families they serve to come and “shop”. Gifts are donated to CAC to support this endeavor to bring joy, cheer, and healing to families who are suffering from unspeakable assaults. Shop was set up at the Jester Community Center for gift giving this December.

CAC is at the beginning of a Capital Campaign to raise funds for expansion of their facility on Georgetown’s Inner Loop @ Wilco Way. If you are able, consider helping them with your tax-deductible contribution in 2022 at <https://wilcocac.org/donate>



**Williamson County residents can dispose of their Christmas trees for free by dropping them off at the Williamson County Landfill, located at 600 Landfill Road in Hutto. Residents have until January 21, 2022, to recycle their trees at the landfill. Before taking a tree to the landfill, residents are asked to remove all lights and ornaments. Flocked trees are not accepted for recycling. The landfill will be closed on New Year’s Day. For more information, please call 512-759-8881.**

## IN THE NEWS

### Williamson Commissioner Cook: County jail lauded after unannounced inspection

[Williamson Commissioner Cook: County jail lauded after unannounced inspection \(statesman.com\)](#)

Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook says that after a recent inspection, the jail was determined to be functioning at a level equal to its top peers.

Jails are like living organisms, breathing and moving 24/7/365 days a year. Needing constant care and feeding, a jail requires a committed community to provide safety both to county residents and inmates.

The Texas Legislature created the Texas Commission on Jail Standards in 1975 to implement a statewide policy for all county jail facilities to conform to minimum standards of construction, maintenance and operation. Its nine diverse members are appointed to staggered six-year terms by the governor with concurrence by the Texas Senate. This commission establishes, revises and documents these minimum standards, including jail inspection procedures, enforcement policies and technical assistance.

The standards have been established for:

- 1. Construction, equipment, maintenance, and operation of the jail
- 2. Custody, care and treatment of inmates
- 3. Programs of rehabilitation, education and recreation for inmates

Inspections may be scheduled or unannounced and may require most of a week to accomplish; written reports are received by the sheriff after the review. Recently, after three days of scrutiny, the inspector announced to our county judge, Sheriff Mike Gleason, and in the presence of Chief Deputy Ken Evans, that our Williamson County Jail is the one in the state he would recommend anyone tasked with oversight and administration of a medium to large jail to visit. Wow. Another department showcasing the best in staff, strategy and administration joins our many departments such as EMS, the Juvenile Justice Center, and the purchasing and budget offices as being recommended to other counties to study and emulate.

So how has this turnaround occurred? The county sheriff is ultimately responsible for the county jail. Sharing this responsibility with Sheriff Gleason is Evans and the heavily recruited Assistant Chief Deputy Kathleen Pokluda. Our sheriff started with Williamson County as a corrections officer and wound up as the chief jail administrator before advancing to other leadership positions in the sheriff's office. Pokluda served as a Williamson County jail employee before retiring to join the Commission on Jail Standards. As I mentioned in a previous article, she was part of a team who wrote the training materials for mental health in the correction's environment, traveling the state training corrections officers. Our administrative team for corrections are seasoned veterans and have instituted an environment of continuous improvement and training for all staff.

Those improvements are especially apparent in the care of the inmates. In November, the Commissioners Court approved the funding of a full-time physician's assistant on the corrections staff. No longer are harsh techniques employed in the treatment of the inmates. An environment of compassion and personal respect has been modeled and established with strong emphasis on mental health improvements for all inmates. This time of year is especially harsh for many inmates. Their current movie list is heavy on heart-warming and spirit-lifting Christmas movies.

Additionally, there's the impact of COVID-19 on the jail population. For nearly two years, Pokluda has essentially been operating two jails, isolating those testing positive for COVID-19. Both staff and inmates need to be protected. Her administration and procedures have effectively contained the virus within the jail. Additionally, our community paramedics team, under leadership of Amy Jarosek, come into the jail to vaccinate inmates against COVID-19 as they did to seniors in centers once vaccines became available in 2021.

However, administration alone cannot sustain a large jail to adhere to and meet jail standards. Our facilities department instituted staffing and procedures to maintain the building and equipment that are under constant wear, tear, and use. This jail is relatively old but no longer has that "feel." Facilities converted a day-time position to nightshift with an office space and instituted maintenance and testing schedules and checklists for components in the jail.

Think about all the equipment required to meet the daily demands: heating/cooling/emergency power, equipment including large dish washing systems, water softeners to protect the plumbing, industrial-size washers and driers, doors, automatic locks and card readers, alarm systems, lighting, intercoms, fire alarm systems – then there's walls and floors needing constant attention. Through diligence and commitment, our facilities group has done much of the heavy lifting to bring and sustain our jail facility at the highest standards.

The Monday after Thanksgiving weekend brought that unannounced inspection to our jail. After the inspection, all the efforts above proved our jail is functioning at a level equal to its top peers. The passing inspection validated the collaborative work and success of the team approach to continuous improvement in the Williamson County Jail.



# Where is Commissioner Cook?



## Electric Trucks in Round Rock



We've got that sexy Tesla operation being built in South Austin, vehicle battery production at Voltabox in Cedar Park, and mini electric trucks in Round Rock at Ayro. The Commissioner 1 office visited this firm just south of our office on Old Settlers Drive in front of a UBCWCID dam in the small industrial park on the North side of the street. We participated in a presentation of the who, what, where (college campuses, parks, ski resorts, etc) these small vehicles are limited to 25mph and the customer determines the customization of the back – will it be a flat bed, a customized box truck, or a normal pickup bed on the back? You can even order one with air conditioning. Four of these beauties can fit into one normal parking slot. These trucks would be excellent for our trail systems delivering supplies and for hauling trash away. Doris even got to drive one. I had to leave for another meeting but I did climb into one – believe it or not, 2 adult men can comfortably fit into the cab. No pollution, minor sound per government standards so you don't creep up on the unaware. Very limited maintenance costs. [www.ayro.com](http://www.ayro.com)



# Neighborhood Association of Southwest Williamson County Christmas Parade



Doris and I joined the fire department of ESD 1, members of the Sheriff Department and escorted by our own Constables for Precinct 1 on Saturday, December 18. It was a day starting out with cold winds and scattered showers - ominous for a good turnout. But as I arrived at Forest North Elementary to decorate my van with its 319k+ miles on it, the clouds dissipated and the temperature began to rise. The parade wove through Forest North (between RR620 and Anderson Mill) to Rattan Creek, MUD 1 area west of Parmer. I had Christmas lights lit and in the grayness of the day they were actually visible! Many residents turned out to cheer us on.



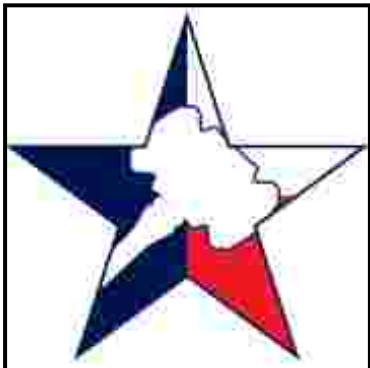
## Retirement of Michelle Porter

After 22 years in the county's 911 and dispatch operations, Michelle Porter has hung up the phone. Imagine the stories she could tell about the highs and lows of receiving those incoming calls to 911 and dispatching service. She even assisted, by phone, the delivery of a baby on one Mother's Day. Those 12-hour days are now behind her. Oh, the changes she witnessed in the county over those years. There was a sizeable turnout to tell her good-bye from law enforcement, fire departments across the county, and our own 911 center employees. There's an opportunity to grow our next warrior for the people in the call center!



## Sheriff's Office Promotion Ceremony at the DAWG Dec 3

This was an event of much cheer and enthusiasm for members of the staff being promoted or inducted into the brother or sisterhood of law enforcement, marking that milestone of hard work. Short and sweet, it is a time where hard work and leadership are recognized. Families filled the seats and camera's snapped those quick pics out at the Deputy A.W. Grimes Academy building on Chandler Road. Even Chief Deputy Ken Evans was smiling – those who know him know him as all business and serious.



## Veterans Court Graduation

December 2<sup>nd</sup> brought another Veterans Specialty Court graduation at the Justice Center. This court operates under the supervision of Judge Laura Barker and her crack team for County Courts at Law #2. I attend whenever possible and just love to hear the graduates give a speech about lessons learned, skills gained to change the trajectory of their lives.



## Competition – Count us in!

Couldn't resist joining in the Ugly Christmas Sweater competition – they're never really ugly – more like tacky Christmas Sweater Competitions or gaudy or "I'll never wear again" Christmas sweaters. I didn't even own a Christmas sweater – hit Goodwill and snagged a sweater and a gaudy stocking, then ripped the "drunken" snowman off the stocking and sewed it on to the sweater - \$13 investment. It was really too warm to be wearing a sweater as we left home that Friday morning. Yay, Christmas in Central Texas – appetizers on the patio.

## Tree of Angels Celebration

The sixth annual Tree of Angels tree decoration and night of remembrance of those lost to violence took place at the Historic Courthouse in the District Courtroom. Having missed 2020 due to the coronavirus epidemic, the room was filled with supporters and family members. Organized by the staff of our District Attorney's office and Victims Advocate groups from the SO and DA's office, this event encourages family members to hang an ornament on one of two Christmas trees to commemorate the life of their loved one(s) lost to violence. It is a somber, moving, and joyful time. I watch from the balcony as families file in. Law enforcement personnel participate in events from the opening prayer to closing comments, then row after row of family members file forward to the trees to hang their ornaments. They nearly always return to their seats with smiles on their faces. In the end, the trees are fully laden with ornaments.







## **Commissioners Cook and Boles Join in Celebrating the Hutto Education Foundation Fund Reaching Million Dollar Mark**

The Hutto Education Foundation, a 501c3, is primarily funded by small portion of the tip fees at the Williamson County Landfill. They use a portion of the foundation funds each year to create student scholarships and staff grants for innovative work. By reaching the one Million dollar mark, the amount of annual

funding increases significantly for their work.

On December 15, they held a community celebration on Farley Street in Hutto complete with live music (that was actually background music – conversations and laughter abounded) with food trucks. Russ Boles and I represented the Commissioners Court for the event – smiles abounded on this pleasant, warm evening – perfect night, perfect celebration.



## **Texas State Technical College – East Williamson County Held at Kalahari Resorts in the Convention Center December 10, 2021**

I attended my 4<sup>th</sup> (I think) graduation ceremony for graduates with associate degrees or certificates from strong technical programs this time under pandemic conditions which really switched up how the course materials

were presented and accomplished. Our own Scott Kerwood, PhD, Fire Chief for Hutto Fire & Rescue was the guest speaker and delivered with a good dose of humor.

These graduates succeeded to complete their chosen program resisting the relentless poaching attempts by industry so hungry for employees with nearly any levels of skills. Achieving their diplomas raises substantially their starting salaries.

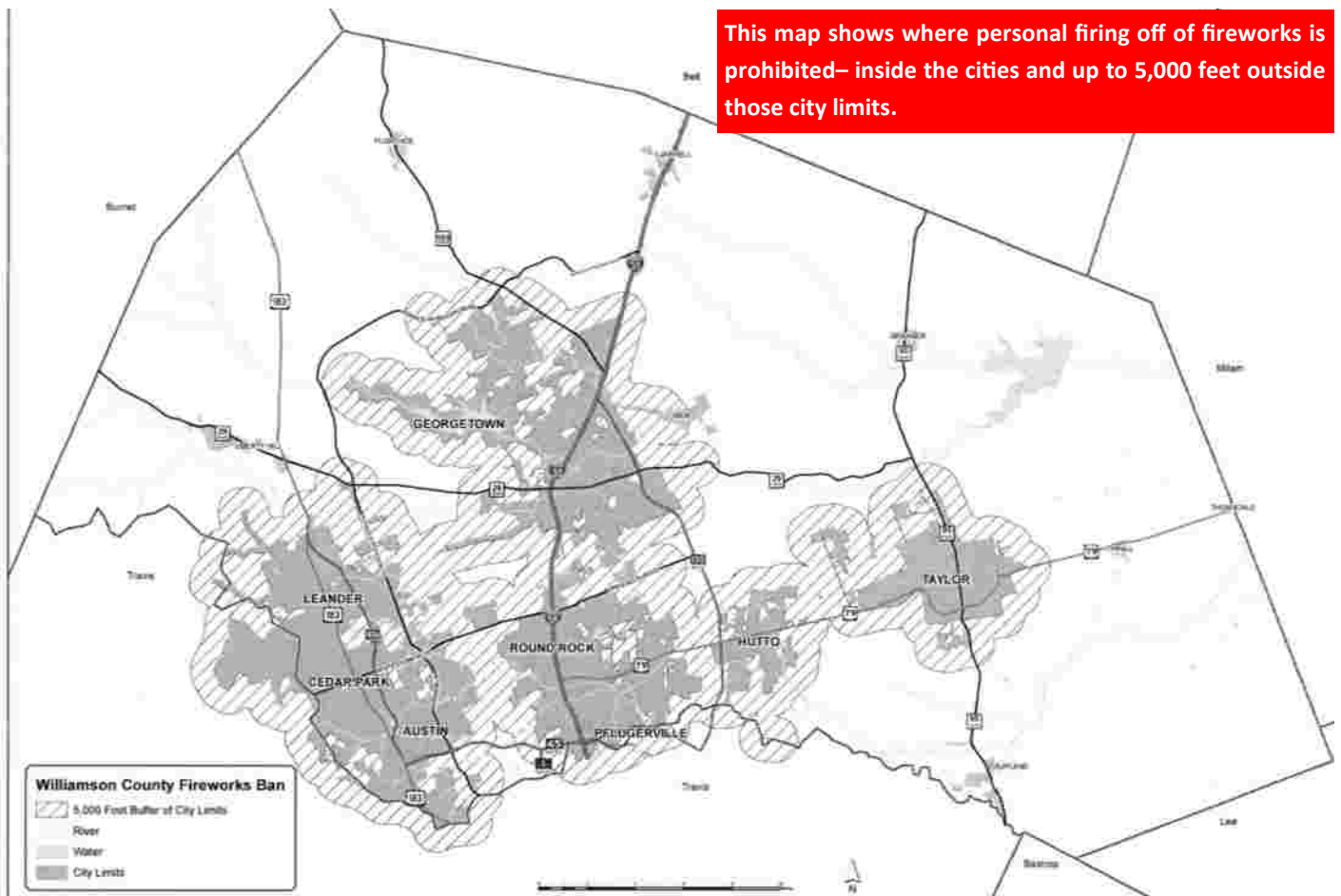
Previous graduations have been held at EWCHEC, the Eastern Williamson County Higher Education Center, just on the east side of SH 130. Such a nice touch at Kalahari, speaking of which, they have been hiring many graduates from the culinary arts program at TSTC. The treats at the reception were prepared by those individuals and were very delicious. Interpreters for the deaf were also present for the graduation.

# FIREWORKS

The Williamson County Fire Marshal's office encourages our residents to prevent a needless tragedy! Leave Fireworks to the professionals.

## Recommended Safety Tips

- Obey all local laws regarding the use of fireworks.
- Know your fireworks; read the cautionary labels and performance descriptions before igniting.
- A responsible adult SHOULD supervise all firework activities. **NEVER** give fireworks to children.
- Be sure other people and pets are out of range.
- Wear safety glasses when shooting fireworks.
- Light one firework at a time and then quickly move away.
- Use fireworks OUTDOORS in a clear area; away from buildings and vehicles.
- **NEVER** try to relight or handle malfunctioning "dud" fireworks. Wait 20 minutes and then soak it in a bucket of water.
- **ALWAYS** have a bucket of water and charged water hose nearby for emergencies and for pouring on misfired or spent fireworks.
- **NEVER** carry fireworks in your POCKET or shoot them into METAL or GLASS containers.
- **DO NOT** experiment with homemade fireworks.
- Dispose of spent fireworks by wetting them down and place in a metal trash can away from any building or combustible materials until the next day.



# ROAD UPDATES

[OUR LAST REPORT ON THESE PROJECTS , SINCE THESE WILL BE LOCATED IN PRECINCT 3 STARTING JANUARY 1, 2022. That would be Commissioner Covey's office. The contact information for that office for any questions and concerns is 512-943-3370 and comm3@wilco.org.](#)

Great Oaks Bridge at Brushy Creek Rd. (Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC)– Existing sidewalk, trail, and roadway is being removed along Great Oaks Dr. and Hairy Man Rd. Drilling for drill shafts for construction of the new bridge has begun. Estimated cost is \$11M. At this early stage, construction completion is expected to be Spring 2023. Learn more [HERE](#).

The lanes on Great Oaks Drive from Brightwater down to Hairy Man/Brushy Creek Roads have been reduced to one to provide room for the bridge construction.

Brushy Creek Rd. Safety Improvements (Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC)– Learn more about this project at this [website](#). For all practical purposes, this is DONE!

Hairy Man Rd. (Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC)– Hairy Man is closed to thru traffic for the next 9 months to accommodate the construction work at the bridge. Soil retention blanket has been installed.

Wyoming Springs @ Smyers Lane— Learn more [HERE](#). Feedback on the two options ended on December 8, 2021. The technical team is going over the responses and finalize plans for the improvements. Construction is slated to begin in early 2022.

## THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS REMAIN IN PRECINCT 1.

620 at Railroad/Chisholm Trail (TxDOT with primary contractor Bridges and Roads LLC)– Efforts have focused on the bridge over the railroad tracks. Dirt and other material is being placed in support of the backwall and areas leading up to the bridge. Much concrete work in various places along the project, including curbs and gutters. Go [HERE](#) to learn more. Estimated completion date is STILL summer 2022.

Pond Springs Road Area Drainage Improvements– As said last month, the design is being updated to divert flows to the Woods Pond outflow to accommodate CTRMA's 183N Project. The design will largely remain the same, however outflow will be diverted downstream of Woods Pond. The cost of the project is anticipated to be significantly less expensive, going from \$4.17M to \$3.25M! Construction start is anticipated early 2023.

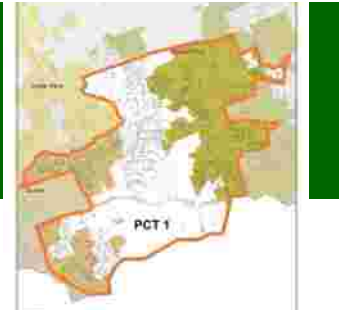
Forest North Drainage Improvements Phase III (Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC) – We are so close to finishing that DeNucci is performing work in the last zone to have work– the Shasta Zone! This is a county job to create drainage in this very flat area with an estimated cost of \$4.9M. Substantial completion is still anticipated in early 2022.

## THE FOLLOWING PROJECT WILL BECOME A DIVIDING LINE BETWEEN PRECINCTS 1 AND 4, WHERE PRECINCT 1 WILL TAKE IN THE SOUTHSIDE OF THE ROAD AND PRECINCT 4 WILL TAKE IN THE NORTHSIDE OF THE ROAD.

University Blvd. widening from IH-35 to just east of Sunrise Rd. (Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC)– *Still a good idea to stay off University if you possibly can!!!* Work continues on the center median and inside lanes of north– and south-bound N. Mays., and well as the sidewalk from University Oaks to N. Mays St. Excavation has begun on the west side of the Cypress Blvd. intersection. A City of Round Rock project, it is slated to finish in early 2022. It cannot be done soon enough!



# 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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**COMMUNICATIONS/SCHEDULING:** Doris Sanchez  
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### **SEE US ONLINE!!!**

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

Wishing Everyone had  
A  
Safe and wonderous holiday season!



Here's to a better 2022!  
From Terry, Doris, and Garry