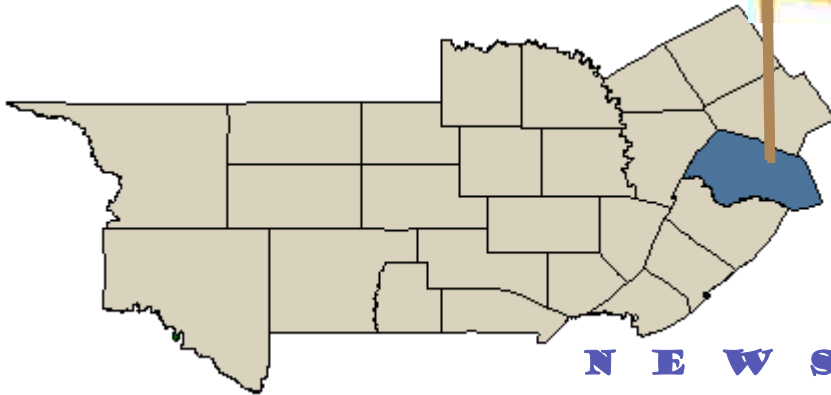


**WILLIAMSON COUNTY
COMMISSIONER
TERRY COOK**



N E W S L E T T E R

**APRIL 2022
VOLUME 6 ISSUE 4**

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UP FOR THE WILCOUNTY
LINE E-NEWSLETTER**

IN THE NEWS



The Message



Water, Water, not Everywhere and Need a Drop to Drink

It was only mid-April when Round Rock suggested watering only once per week. It hasn't been excessively hot, but it has been very dry and windy. Most of the month was spent under a declared burn ban in the county. The Highland Lakes are seeing record-breaking low inflows as the drought line continues its slow progression from west to east across Texas. It's currently sitting right on top of us. Those lakes have not been fully filled for years. Yet, the Lower Colorado River Authority continues to send water down unlined, uncovered canals to farmers in the valley indifferent to the ever-increasing population here in central Texas, and they've not alerted the farmers that there may not be water to send this year (although I believe they are required to send some for the health of the bay). This loss of water in transport through unlined/uncovered ditches is estimated to cause a water loss greater than the City of Austin saves through its water conservation program in a year – and farmers are not charged for that water loss. Don't expect the annual Memorial Day flooding to save our reservoirs.

The views on water use continue to be oblivious to reality. The City of Leander is still planning the city's lagoon development, and I asked their representative where their water for it would come from. Answer: groundwater using a well (of course, that which we can't see and don't measure can just be assumed to be sufficient) and water coming via pipeline from Milam County – sigh. I just believe it is the wrong message to give the public; in times of intense drought, amenity lakes should dry up, reminding the neighborhood that we are, indeed, in a serious drought.

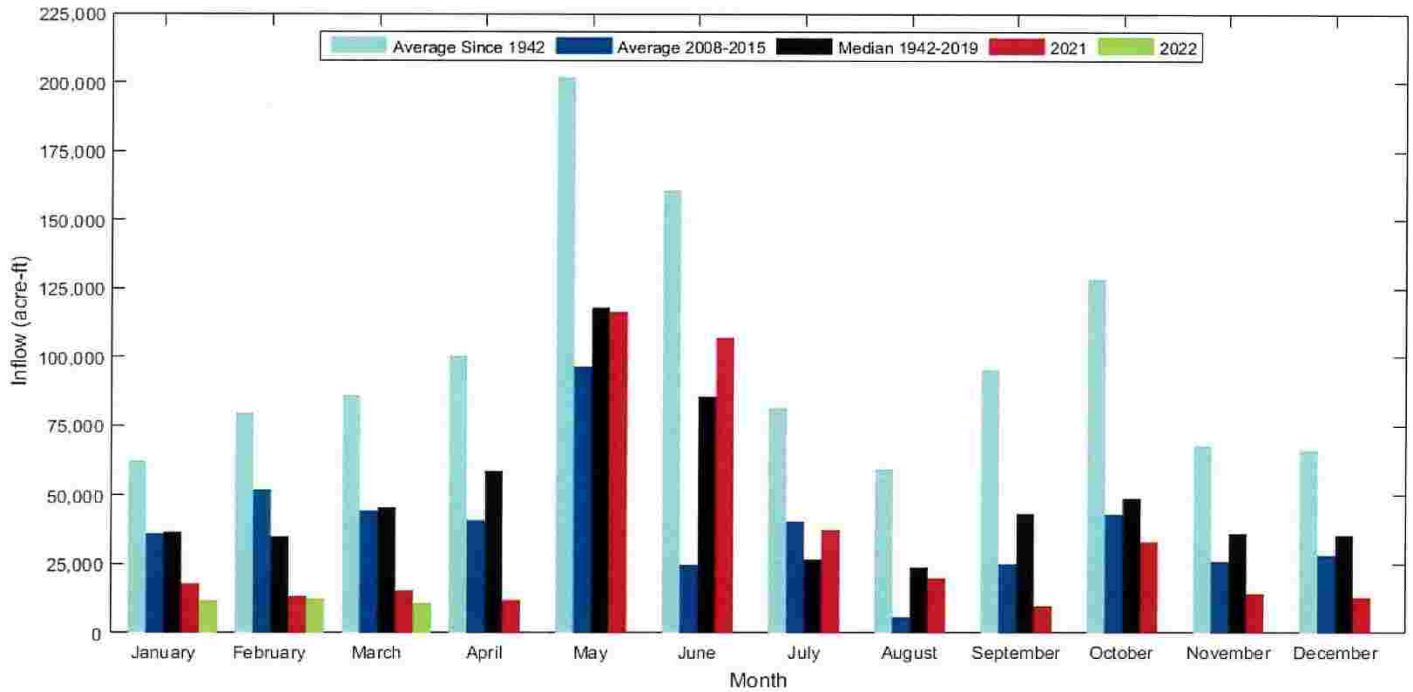
The Central Texas Water Coalition, a non-profit focused on the Upper Lakes' health and economic engine, presented a Water Round Table featuring Carlos Rubenstein, former Chair of the Texas Water Development Board on April 28th in Lakeway. He's everything about Texas water.

The Coalition is that gnat flitting around the head of LCRA which is not transparent and clearly not listening to the message of "that which we had in the past is not with us today." Legislative changes need to occur to reel in the free spending of precious water resources before Central Texas goes completely dry. They even sell the water to the farmers below market value, much less than the users of the highland lakes are billed. It is time for a major revision to the decades-old water policies but the lobbyists in the legislature will be tough to re-direct, and LCRA clearly doesn't want to change.

The roundtable in Lakeway included presentations on water laws and policy. Carlos Rubenstein gave a rapid-fire presentation on the history of water policy, laws and the Texas Water Board. I'm going to do some research and try to put together a Texas water history paper for you – so interesting. A couple of quick notes:

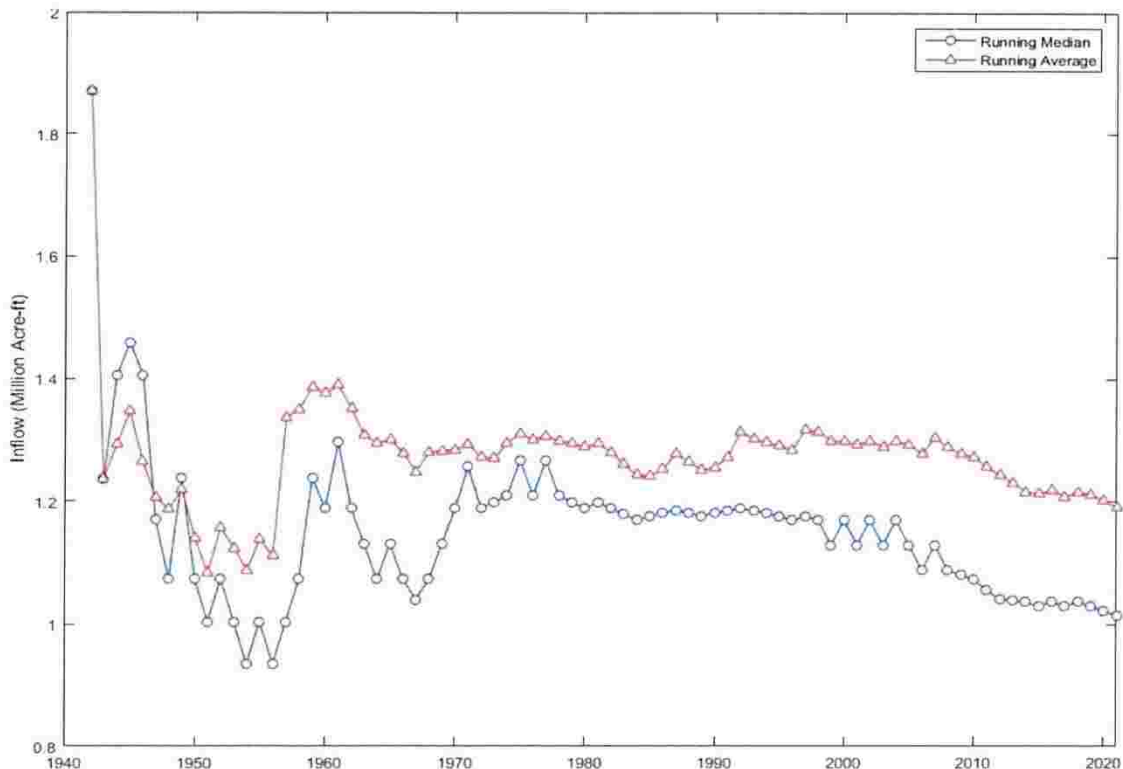
- Texas is a land of constant drought infrequently interrupted by periods of flood.
- We have a major drought in Texas every decade.
- Drought of record (greatest) is still that from 1950-1957.
- Highland Lakes beginning with Lake Buchanan, have ever-decreasing inflows since 2008.
- LCRA water policy assumes the upper lakes will fill (sigh). Decline is now the trend.

Inflows Continue to Decline



Water is Critical. It's not Political.

Extreme or worse drought is now impacting almost half the state of Texas.





Where is Commissioner Cook?

Rattan Creek Easter Egg Hunt



On the first Saturday evening of Ramadan, April 9, 2022, I joined the women of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community on Deep Wood Drive in Round Rock to break fasting with an incredibly delicious Ishtar Dinner. This was not my first event with this community, but Covid-19 had driven all interactions to virtual - hard to share a virtual meal. It was so good to join the Ahmadiyya

women in this celebration. Women came of diverse ethnicities, with or without head scarves, but all of us without shoes having immediately stored them in cubbies. All were warmly welcomed and gently guided in the rituals. The theme for the evening was Justice with Compassion. I was asked to share with a short presentation, I gladly agreed and shared three of the programs in Williamson Counties Judicial system which not only are compassionate, but have outcomes in individuals' lives showing positive changes - those rarely seen from serving time in jail. This was broadcast via Facebook Live to the men; Bill Fairbrother and John Bucy joined the men at the other end of the mosque. The Ahmadiyya are fully committed to serving others in their neighborhood and regional communities.

2021 Emergency Medical Services Awards and Pinning Service

On Friday evening, I attended my 6th annual EMS Awards night. I was invited in 2016 before being sworn into office, and I make it a priority every year since. In this ceremony, you hear from those brought back to life (usually a heart attack) by paramedics in their personal story as they remember it – some of it is usually a blur. You meet their family. This year, a toddler was present, found unresponsive face-down in a swimming pool. Shy but grinning, his story was told by his mom. Over 80 Phoenix Awards were given to those paramedics who successfully worked on all those unresponsive patients to allow them to live another day. Males comprise the majority of survivors; July is the most common month for these life-saving events.

Then there are Stork Awards – you know what they are. Recognitions of promotions, pinning of the new EMS Academy graduates and good-byes to those retiring; Covid-19 took its toll on the ranks – think Hotel California in 2020-2021; you can come in but you may never get to leave when you want as the pandemic ravaged the ranks and their skills were needed in covering the county 24/7 (exception is Georgetown because it has its own EMS) .

Special awards are also given out: Director's Award was given to Mike Knipstein's choice for the two individuals who implemented the successful virtual process for hiring paramedics during 2020-2021 and is still in place, The Medical Director's Award (Dr. Jarvis) to Davis Winget for his great attitude and sense of humor during these past trying times, The John Sneed Customer Service Award (after the first Emergency Services Director) went to John Branscum, and the Paramedic of the Year to Kate Greenstein.



Seth West and Wes Kukulski—Director's Awardees—with Mike Knipstein on the left



Davis Winget—Medical Director's Award—with Wilco EMS Medical Director Dr. Jarvis on the right



Kate Greenstein—Paramedic of the Year—with Mick Knipstein on the left and Aimee Fleming, who nominated Kate, on the right



John Branscum—John Sneed Customer Service Award—With EMS Director Mike Knipstein on the right

Jollyville/ESD 1 Family Picnic



The annual Family Picnic for those in the Jollyville area was held on April 10 in the Jollyville fire station. Brad Landi, the current Fire Chief, presented John Kiracofe, a commemorative plaque of appreciation for John's 40-years of service to the fire house, as previous fire chief, and for all his years of volunteer work with the fire station. As you see above, it was an animated reading of the list of contributions John had made to the community of firemen and the neighborhoods in the Jollyville area (western Anderson Mill area).

Williamson County



Veterans Treatment Court

Graduation ceremony for 7 veterans was held in the Justice Center on April 7th. I was able to attend and listen to their life stories - *sooo* touching. The program really turns their lives around and they are so appreciative. Also, the arrest which put them in the court, is removed from their record upon graduation. I got into a conversation with a veteran who was new to the program. I told him I'd be back to hear his story in about a year - he just blushed.



IN COMMISSIONERS COURT



Every year, April is designated nationally as Child Abuse and Prevention Month, and again, as in past years, the Williamson County Child Advocacy Center (CAC) asked Commissioner Cook to sponsor the proclamation. It's sad to think that child abuse has risen in Williamson County as more people move here. In 2021, the CAC reviewed 4,891 reports of alleged child abuse, and conducted 816 forensic interviews.



Every year, the County Auditor's Office puts out the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) and the Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR). The CAFR is by far the most, well, comprehensive of the two, coming in at 215 pages. However, the PAFR is a great summary of your county's financial health. You can see both of these reports and past reports [HERE](#).



April 24-30 is Crime Victims Rights Week, and again this year, Commissioner Cook was asked by the County Attorney's Office to present this proclamation to Commissioners Court.

Thank you Williamson County Volunteers!!!



Williamson County is a wonderful place to live, and we are blessed to have so many volunteers to help make that so! Between the work of master gardeners, park volunteers, chaplains in our jail, and everyone in between, the Williamson County Commissioners Court voted to acknowledge the very important work of these volunteers who contribute to the fabric of our lives. Thank you!

National Therapy Animal Day is April 30



Commissioners Court had a special visitor on Tuesday, April 26: Winter, a labradoodle therapy dog, came with his handler Macy Loera to give visual context to the Proclamation I introduced to recognize April 30 as National Therapy Animal Day in Williamson County. Winter even got to take over the judge's chair on the dais.

Good for the soul!



Our [video](#) that celebrates the opening of the Brushy Creek Regional Trail just west of Round Rock won an award at the Golden Post Awards at the annual Government Social Media Conference held in Dallas.

There were more entries this year than years' past, with over 400 for all categories. We were a finalist with governments entities in Ohio, Colorado, and North Texas in the Best Use of Long Form Video.

“The judges were impressed with Williamson County, Texas’ video because of the incredible story they told! The lyrics of the song, the incredible singing and the simple, but artistic filming made their video stand out. Just as important as voice is in times of fun and sharing daily successes, it’s crucial to develop that connection with your audience so that your message will be amplified when there is a crisis.”

A very grateful thanks go to Cathie Sheridan for singing the song and to Lauren Gammon, our county multimedia specialist, for putting the video together!

L-R front row above: Commissioner Cook, Cathie Sheridan, Lauren Gammon, Connie Odom (Public Affairs Manager), Russell Fishbeck (Parks Director)



IN THE NEWS

Williamson Co. Commissioner Cook: Newest court helps families make it together

[Williamson Co. Commissioner Cook: Newest court helps families make it together \(statesman.com\)](http://statesman.com)

We travel through life wishing certain moments were forever. For some, that wish seems to happen. For others, the wish dims but for a while, then the glow returns. Yet there are many whose wish disappears with little hope of it returning.

I have written about several programs in the Williamson County judicial system restoring lives and hope: our specialty courts for those suffering from substance use disorder(s) like illicit drugs and alcohol; our transformative justice program for youthful offenders (non-violent) and, just last month, our stellar juvenile justice program of trust-based relational intervention for the troubled youths sent to their care.

I recently joined the Round Rock Ahmadiyya Muslim Community for an Ishtar dinner the first weekend of Ramadan and was asked to speak about "Justice through Compassion." What a great opportunity to talk about the three programs listed above and how, through investing in those lives — seemingly on the wrong path — brings changes in positive ways. Jail is sometimes cheaper but rarely results in positive changes in the trajectory of a person's life.

I'm lauding our newest, compassionate program: Family Recovery Court. This program focuses on families torn apart by drugs, alcohol and perhaps mental health challenges in which children are removed from their homes destined, at least for a time, for life in the Child Protective Services arena. We've heard the disconcerting tales of the CPS world in Texas and feel blessed that we were never in that or that we survived. This court must address the needs of at least one parent, but hopefully both parents, and all their children. In this case, it does take a community.

This program is not for every parent struggling with substance use disorder(s) or mental illness, but if they do want to unite with their kids in a positive home environment, the hard work by the parents with this team of professionals can result in a healthy family. Ryan Larson, judge of District Court 395, Betsy Lambeth, judge of District Court 425, and Brandy Hallford, judge for the County Court at Law #1, are the judges primarily involved with CPS cases and have collectively worked to establish this specialty court for family restoration.

Each family has unique needs, is primarily medically uninsured and may have criminal records from the past. A family's team usually includes a case manager, a judge, a CPS case worker, legal support and counselors (may be from nonprofits that offer various types of addiction, mental health, counseling and other services to children and parents, such as Texas Baptist Children's Home, Starry, Fostering Hope, Three Strands).

Children have their assigned lawyers, judge, CPS case worker and appropriate counselors or social workers. Any special needs children or adults may require additional support members. Medical or psychiatric doctors are included virtually when necessary. As well, the weekly meetings may be virtual in support of one or both parents to reduce time from their jobs. This effort comes with a price tag. Grants have been received to cover current costs.

The families enrolled in this specialty court may have many simultaneous series of treatments depending on their circumstances. One adult may be enrolled in a detox environment initially. The other parent may be receiving counseling and mentoring. The child or children may be in CPS' care, under a foster parent's care, or if highly traumatized, in a local residential treatment program designed to help them regain their footing in a life that's knocked them down and helps restore a more normal childhood. All are initially in highly regulated environments, but the parent(s) participate more in determining next steps as they each demonstrate greater ability in making wiser decisions.

Partners in the teams for each parent may be from the faith-based community whether as a nonprofit or as individuals with hearts and skills to help the parents through mentoring and coaching. The reconciliation of a family is gradual under the team's guidance and evaluation of their individual progress. Foster parents take an active role in keeping the parents apprised of their child's or children's progress by numerous means. This court's process truly takes the phrase "it takes a community" into demonstrable practice.

Additionally, a family needs housing, transportation and jobs. These items are among the items toughest to supply but are not forgotten in the teams' arena. The goal is that the families who graduate have strengths, abilities and sustenance to sustain their progress.

Assessment of the effectivity of this approach is being conducted by professor Catherine LaBrenz, Ph.D., of the University of Texas at Arlington's School of Social Work. Her interest is to provide an evidence-based model for the Family Recovery Court.

Currently four families are enrolled in this specialty court. Judge Larson is hoping for the graduation of one family from this court in the near future. I hope to be at that graduation to hear them tell us their story of transformation.



HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE FREE CLEANUP | SAT. MAY 14, 2022 10 A.M.-2 P.M. GUPTON STADIUM PARKING LOT

200 Gupton Way Dr. — Use East Park Street entrance

DO BRING!

- paint (5 gallon limit)
- acids
- used motor oil filters, antifreeze and batteries
- transmission and brake fluid
- lighter fluid, solvents and varnish
- pool chemicals
- auto tires (car & light trucks up to 21" - rims removed) limit of 5 per car
- lawn and garden chemicals, herbicides and pesticides
- cleaning products, such as polish, oven cleaner, drain opener and stain remover
- household products labeled "caution", "warning" or "poison"
- CFL bulbs

DON'T BRING!

- agricultural chemicals
- dioxins
- containers larger than 5 gallons
- medical and pharmaceutical items
- tires with rims attached
- explosives, fireworks or ammunition
- asbestos-containing material
- industrial, commercial or business waste
- radioactive materials (smoke detectors)
- propane cylinders of any kind
- compressed gases
- brush
- electronics or TVs

PLEASE KEEP IN MIND...

- Bring products in original containers if possible
- Limit of 5 gallons of paint
- Separate and group items prior to drop-off and label them
- Go through the line only once
- Properly seal containers to prevent leaking
- Long wait times are possible
- No walkups
- Do not mix or consolidate products
- Please let volunteers help unload your items
- Trailers longer than 16 feet will not be allowed
- No contractor or business waste will be accepted
- Haul containers in the back of vehicle & away from passengers

QUESTIONS? Call 512-401-5300 or visit cedarparktexas.gov

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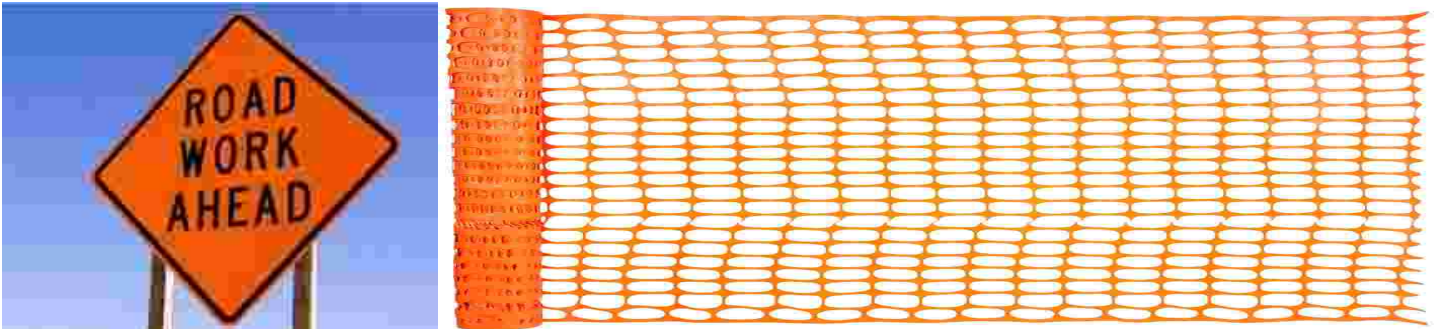


On a different matter...

Our office is hearing many stories about the rise in crime, but it is not being reported.

If it is not reported, there is no data to back up the claim of rising crime in your neighborhood.

Call 911 if it is an emergency, of course, but if there is no emergency and you want to report a crime, call the Sheriff's non-emergency number at 512-864-8282.



620 at Railroad/Chisholm Trail (TxDOT with primary contractor Bridges and Roads LLC)– Concrete beams for the bridge over the railroad tracks have been set, and safety cables on those beams have been installed. Work on curb and gutter on the eastbound frontage road has been placed from Deep Wood Dr. to the east. Foundations for lights and pedestrian poles on eastbound 620 near the high school are being put into place. Go [HERE](#) to learn more. This is a \$27.5M TxDOT project. Estimated completion date is summer 2023.

Pond Springs Road Area Drainage Improvements– If you remember in last months’ newsletter the term PS&E, it stands for Plans, Specs, and Estimates, and there are varying levels of completeness with PS&E. Comments on the 60% PS&E package were submitted this month and environmental due diligence documents have been submitted. The cost of the project was originally supposed to be \$4.17M, but now the estimate is \$3.2M! Construction start is anticipated Spring 2023.

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!!!* All of the traffic on University Blvd. was shifted into the future westbound lanes, so the new eastbound lanes can be constructed. New signals at Cypress Blvd. are being constructed. Parts of the old roadway are being excavated now. A City of Round Rock project with some County funding, it is slated to finish in Spring 2023.

Because the Great Oaks Bridge project is so important to many of you, we will bring back updates on it, even though it is no longer in Precinct 1—temporary and retaining walls have been put up. A sidewalk at the southeast corner of Great Oaks Dr. has been poured, and an 18-inch storm sewer pipe and drop inlets have been installed at a portion of the project. Construction finish is anticipated in Spring 2023, about one year away. PICTURES ON THE NEXT PAGE!



Groundbreaking for Creation of Left Turn Lane into Walgreen’s from Wyoming Springs

The long-awaited project to provide a safe lane on which to wait as southbound vehicles attempt to turn into Walgreens in the Smyers Lane area is at last under contract with MA Smith Contracting. This will be a project requiring, if weather supports, less than a month of work. The last island just west of Smyers Lane will

mostly be demolished to give the space to create a left turning lane. Now if we could just make left turns off Smyers Lane safer.

Great Oaks Bridge Construction Progress
(Yeah – I know, not in Precinct 1 anymore but so cool)



VOTE

There are two, yes 2, elections happening in May 2022!

May 7—> Some of you get to vote on city council, school board, and city propositions, and everyone has the opportunity to vote on 2 statewide propositions.

Go [HERE](#) to see the League of Women Voters non-partisan guide on the propositions.

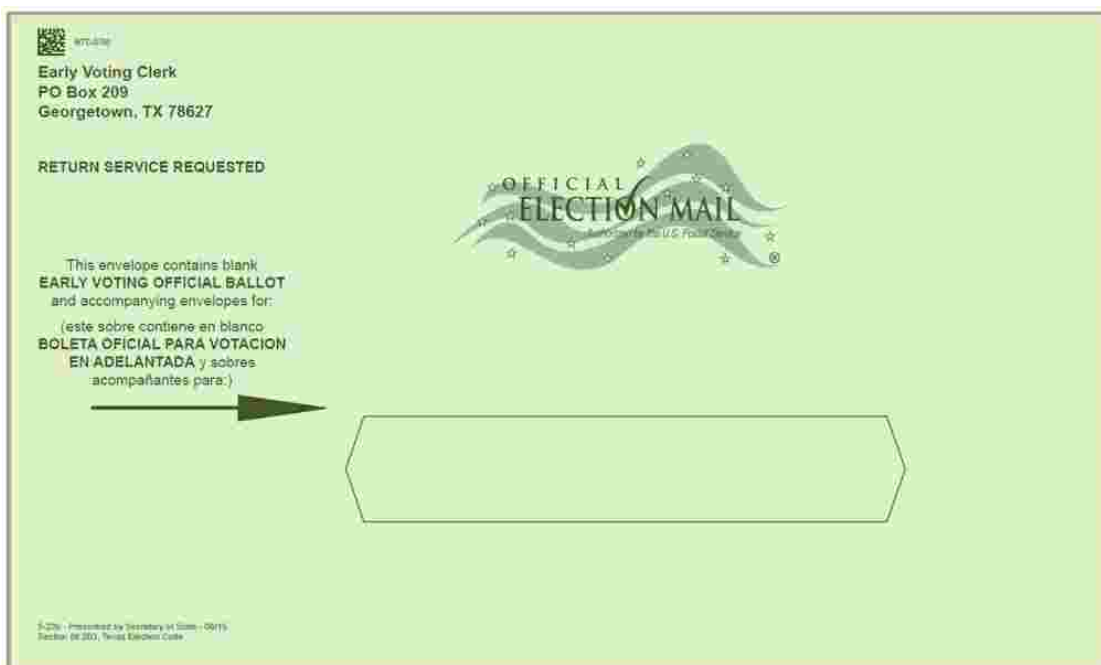
Early voting is going on now for the May 7 election. Go to the [Wilco Elections page](#) to see a list of polling locations and times.

May 24—> Primary Election Runoffs: In crowded primary elections in which no candidate won more than 50% of votes, the two candidates with the most votes will appear on the ballot for the runoff. If you voted in the March 1 primary, you can cast your vote only in runoff races for the same party. If you didn't vote in the March primaries this year, you can choose to vote in either the Democratic or Republican runoffs as long as you are registered to vote.

Note to all of you voting by mail:

You will each receive two ballots in the mail—***Do not throw the second one away!***

The second one will be either the Democratic or Republican Runoff ballot if you requested any party-specific election mail-in ballots in your application to vote-by-mail.



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



MISSION

Providing strong, thoughtful, and collaborative leadership on the Williamson County Commissioners Court through a time of great change and growth in our county

VISION

Upholding a local governmental entity that is centered around best-practices throughout the organization and focused on timely and respectful responses to our citizenry

VALUES

The guiding principles of the Williamson County Commissioner Precinct 1 Office continue to be respect, reliability, and dedication to Precinct 1 constituents, while being open to ideas for positioning Williamson County for the future

CONTACT US!

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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
512-943-1550

Cedar Park Fire Department (ESD 11)
512-401-5220

Jollyville Fire Department (ESD 1)
512-258-1038

Round Rock Fire Department (ESD 9)
512-218-5590

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 WIL-
COunty Line E-
newsletter! Click [here](#) to
sign up!

Commissioner Cook
keeps meeting with many
MUD Boards and HOAs.
To invite her to your meet-
ing, contact Doris at doris.sanchez@wilco.org or
512-244-8610