



Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook

June 2022 Volume 6 Issue 6

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WILCounty Line E-newsletter**



The Message



Drip, drip, drip of Disappearing Water

We made it thru Memorial Day weekend without flooding; however we also had no rain. Then, a good soaking in the middle of the night and now we return to day-after-day of tormenting high temperatures and no moisture in sight. Are we moving into a long-term drought, called megadrought?

This type of drought will stress everything. No city in Central Texas is ready to face this. Meanwhile, more people move in and childbirth remains 20% above normal. Our resilience is not sufficient.

Looking at the National Drought website for the analysis for Texas (click the logo):



BY LOCATION | COUNTY

Drought Conditions for Williamson County

Pretty dire conditions. And this doesn't mention the relentless winds we've experienced with temperatures surpassing the 100-degree level for days. Will our turf lawns be a thing of the past? Lake Travis was at 77% of capacity on Memorial Day Weekend and dropping. No Memorial Day flood drama in 2022.



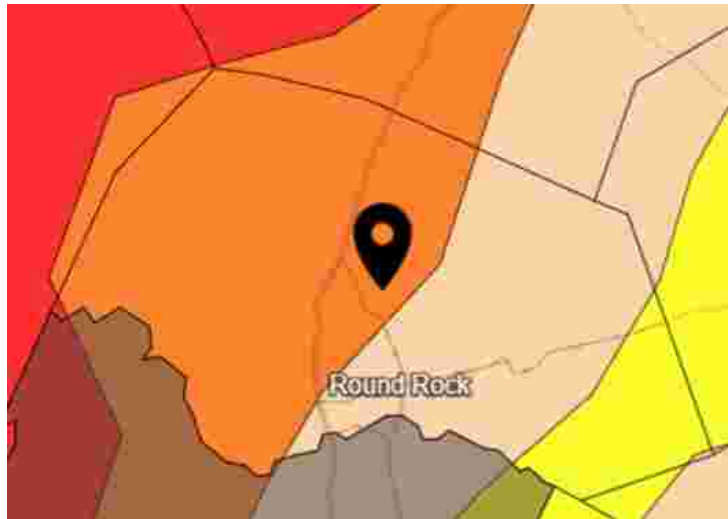
Boat purchases are not advised, unless there's the crushing disappointment of owning one but having to dry dock it is your goal. Population growth, high temps, wind are working all against rain. Climate changes drive regional planning to increase conservation efforts as they hunt for new water sources. Those pretty amenity unlined ponds of subdivisions need to be converted to water sources for the trees and shrubs, reminding the residents that life is changing and the efforts of all start with judicious use of this precious resource. The economy generated by lakes and all that come with that will degrade. Water flowing into the upper lakes (primarily Lake Buchanan) has been overestimated for years and the severe drought conditions of West Texas will not deliver needed moisture.

Fires are our serious danger right now. I raised the issue of declaring a burn ban in the unincorporated sections of the county Friday, June 10. Indeed, our Fire Marshal concurred as all data satisfied those high marks. I mistakenly thought that would take care of the sale of fireworks that explode in the air and land in our dry tender on the ground. The fireworks lobby is strong in Texas; there is a specific statute for fireworks that requires an order to prohibit or restrict the sale of use of "restricted fireworks" must be adopted by a county by June 14 for this year – aghhhh. Our agenda policy requires any item to be on the agenda to be submitted by noon on the Thursday before the next court date. However, with the assistance of the fireworks industry, fireworks that have sticks and fins will not be sold!

The moderate drought line marching across Texas has now passed over I-35 in Williamson County.

	<p>D3 - Extreme Drought</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil has large cracks; soil moisture is very low; dust and sand storms occur • Row and forage crops fail to germinate; decreased yields for irrigated crops and very large yield reduction for dryland crops are reported • Need for supplemental feed, nutrients, protein, and water for livestock increases; herds are sold 	<p>0.14% of Williamson County (D3-D4)</p>
	<p>D4 - Exceptional Drought</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceptional and widespread crop loss is reported; rangeland is dead; producers are not planting fields • Seafood, forestry, tourism, and agriculture sectors report significant financial loss • Extreme sensitivity to fire danger; firework restrictions are implemented 	<p>0.00% of Williamson County (D4)</p>

Source(s): [NDMC](#), [NOAA](#), [USDA](#)



	<p>D0 - Abnormally Dry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producers begin supplemental feeding for livestock • Planting is postponed; forage germination is stunted; hay cutting is reduced • Grass fires increase 	<p>100.00% of Williamson County (D0-D4)</p>
	<p>D1 - Moderate Drought</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dryland crops are stunted • Early cattle sales begin • Wildfire frequency increases 	<p>89.65% of Williamson County (D1-D4)</p>
	<p>D2 - Severe Drought</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasture conditions are very poor • Soil is hard, hindering planting; crop yields decrease • Wildfire danger is severe; burn bans are implemented 	<p>56.27% of Williamson County (D2-D4)</p>

Notice that Burnet and a portion of Bell Counties are in Severe Drought (coming our way). With the call for 21 named Atlantic storms this year, we sure could use a mini-Hermine tropical storm sitting over us for a day. Maybe a Pacific tropical storm coming in from the West to help the upper lakes recover some.

This month, Paul Leal, Constable for Precinct 4, received the 2022 State of Texas Law Enforcement Achievement Award for Public Service for his humanitarian work during Winter Storm Uri in 2021. Some of the above and beyond actions taken by Leal were he used his own truck to relocate 23 people into his own home, so they could have heat and electricity. Constable Leal worked 12-16 hour shifts and delivered 600 pounds of food to 16 homes and 46 apartment units. He also delivered firewood to those who needed it and helped seven vehicles get back on the road. He even hauled a port-o-let to Taylor's HEB so it could open to the public. Only 3 of these awards were given out this year.



Where is Commissioner Cook?



Lyons Gardens



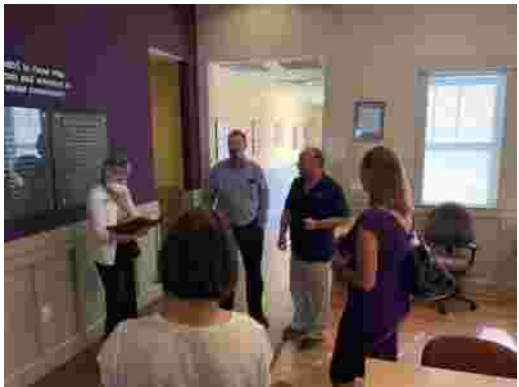
On the morning of June 6, 2022, Garry and I met with Family Eldercare personnel and Council Member Mackenzie Kelly to tour the Lyons Gardens facility off Pleasant Valley Road in Austin. This facility has fifty-four total one-bedroom apartments in a 3-story structure in a quiet neighborhood on Lyons Road. Twelve units are reserved for formerly homeless individuals. The structure is built around a large central area of large trees and, yes, raised-bed garden areas.

This housing entity is managed by Family Eldercare. In addition to apartments, it also has a large meeting room for the residents and on-site assistance to connect residents with services. The land was donated, as the funding services seldom offer funding for land purchases. A combination of HUD, foundations and other non-profits provided the funding for this facility. No resident pays more than 30% of their monthly income in rent.

Residents and the facility benefit by numerous organizations and community groups such as Austin Community College's occupational therapy students when needed, grounds-keeping, health navigators, etc. A Board of Directors, formed in 2005, further oversees operation of the facility with three of the original members still on the board. A wide porch extends across on each level provides sheltered outdoor areas for each of the units. We were graciously allowed into the apartment of one resident, a former homeless individual. He commented that when a new, former homeless person moves to Lyons Gardens, they may be uncomfortable sleeping indoors and may make a bed at their front door for a few days. Interior is simple, an easily maintained open floorplan, complete with small kitchen area with cooktop, refrigerator and sink and separate bedroom and bathroom.

Turnover is low, usually by death, and the current waitlist contains fifty names of individuals deemed most vulnerable by ECHO, Austin's Ending Community Homelessness Coalition non-profit.

A smaller facility than Lyons Gardens, Pecan Gardens, former Candlewood Suites on Pecan Park Blvd., is envisioned to follow this example, housing the most vulnerable, elderly homeless people with similar on-site assistance.



UNITED WAY FOR GREATER AUSTIN SUMMER DAY OF CARING

For the first time since 2020, the Commissioner's office staff once again joined United Way's volunteers to provide labor for one of their many worthy projects – this time at Williamson County's Southwest Regional Park to spread mulch created by the recycling center of the City of Round Rock.

Armed with bug spray, hats, gloves and long pants, we loaded mulch in wheelbarrows, and hauled it along one of the many trails in the park used by hikers and runners. I'm happy to report that we did not encounter a single snake. Chiggers, however, did attack some. I avoided it by spraying my high-topped shoes, ankles and jeans. We were somewhat cooled by sweat. Then this ½ day planned endeavor was curtailed slightly by an unexpected thunderstorm. Our volunteer group met for lunch and a UA rally at one of the pavilions over by the splash pad (where we really wanted to be at this point). I encourage your work group to join in for 2023's Day of Sharing.

If you and your family haven't experienced the splash pad – pack a picnic (lots of tables) and head over. Only \$2/person (no inflation there) to run, play, eat and get wet.





IN COMMISSIONERS COURT

June is Elder Abuse Awareness Month, and as has happened in years

past, Commissioner Cook wrote a Proclamation to bring knowledge to this troubling issue.

Elder abuse can be financial, physical, or mental in nature and happen to men and women of all income levels, across all ethnic and cultural groups, and in every neighborhood and locality.



The Texas Adult Protective Services In-Home Caseworkers, pictured at right, report that, in Wilco alone in 2021, they had 830 intakes, of which 345 cases of abuse were confirmed.

The Texas Abuse/Neglect Hotline is 800-252-5400. More information [HERE](#).

Whether you're seeking a job, changing your career, or are an employer seeking a work force, our Rural Capital Area branch of Workforce Solutions can help you entirely free of charge. Operating with a myriad of grants and funding, this organization can provide many services, often personalized for you. This is not your employment office of years gone by with bulletin boards and push pinned job openings posted. High tech and wide-ranging services are available on-line and in-person at their Round Rock office at 575 Round Rock West Blvd, Bldg H, Suite 240 (off either RR620 or McNeil Drive).



Take a look-see tour on-line at <https://workforcesolutionsrca.com/>. A robust database of job openings is available for your perusal. Help creating your resumé and even assistance in creating your cover letter are just two of the services available to you as a job seeker. What if you want to change directions in your career but just don't know what direction and tact you should take? They have tools to help you identify your passion – remember a day doing what you love is not a day of work!

Each Wednesday is a virtual job fair at <http://bit.ly/workforcewednesdaysexpo> where you should register in advance. They also hold special in-person job fairs.

When you go in-person to search for jobs, Workforce Solutions staff members are available to assist with the access and use of their primary job search tool, WorkInTexas.com. They can also direct you to a wealth of information in their Career Resource Library and provide information about other services and programs available.

For employers, Workforce solutions we assist businesses at every stage of their workforce needs:

- On-Site Recruiting*
- Interviewing and Hiring*
- Job Fairs*
- Internet-Based Job Postings*
- Assistance with Customized Skill Training*
- Wage and Labor Market Information*
- Employee Layoff Assistance*

Leave fireworks to the professionals!

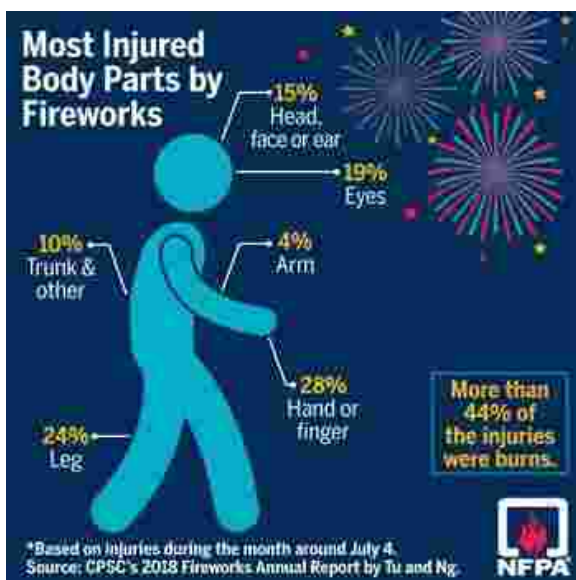
The Williamson County Fire Marshal's office encourages our residents to prevent a needless tragedy! Leave Fireworks to the professionals.

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.

Happy 4th of July!

- 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.



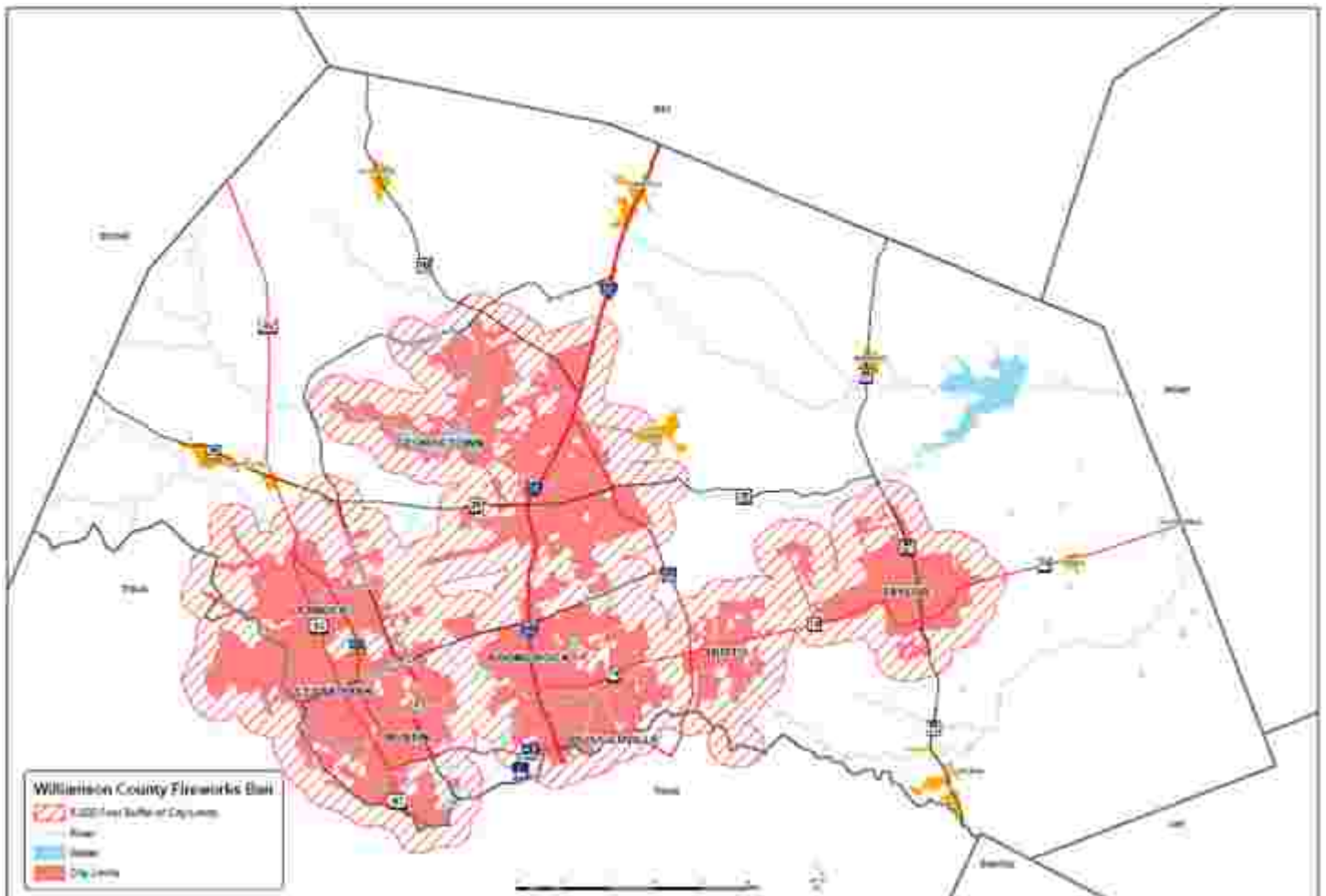
Chances are that setting off fireworks are illegal for you at any time of the year. If you are within 5,000 feet of city limits—it is illegal to set off fireworks.

We are strongly advising no aerial fireworks this year due to extreme drought conditions and the abundance of dry fuel on the ground.

If you are within a colored region below—it is never legal to set off any kind of firework. Secondly, those sonic booms negatively affect wildlife, dogs and anyone with PTSD.

Please consider others.

NOTE: As of June 23, no fireworks with stick rockets and missiles with fins or rudders will not be sold in Williamson County.



The entire pink area and crosshatch above are areas in which ANY kinds of fireworks are **illegal** without special permitting. It is just too dry—you will not be able to put out any resulting grass fires from your fireworks—just don't go there!

IN THE NEWS

Williamson County Commissioner Cook: Dealing with mental health crises

[Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook: Dealing with mental health crises \(statesman.com\)](https://www.statesman.com/story/news/local/2020/06/01/williamson-county-commissioner-terry-cook-dealing-with-mental-health-crisis/5211117002/)

With Williamson County's former Mobile Outreach Team transitioning to support the city of Round Rock residents only, many have asked what the county is doing to provide services. We are continuing and expanding our partnership with Bluebonnet Trails, our local mental health authority and community center for Region 5, serving eight counties including Williamson. Its focus is to provide services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, serious mental illness and substance use disorders.

While the media and politicians are blaming mental health crises for the recent shootings, many of those involved have no indication of a mental health crisis but are clearly not stable individuals. Williamson County seeks to connect our citizens in crisis with the most appropriate treatment when possible.

Bluebonnet Trails' Mobile Crisis Outreach Team

The MCOT teams have previously been working in tandem with the county's MOT group of social workers to provide on-site services and responses to mental health crises within the county, including at the schools. This group is now doing crisis assessments covering all but the city of Round Rock in this effort. Adults or children may be taken to respite centers or referred for case workers and programs with Bluebonnet staff.

Support for youths

With financial assistance from Williamson County, using \$8.1 million from the American Rescue Plan Act, Bluebonnet Trails is starting its brand-new youth therapeutic respite program that serves children and adolescents between the ages of 5 and 17. This 16-bed, 24-hour respite center serves youths for as short as a few hours or as long as 30 days in its Round Rock facility.

Participants receive wraparound care, including innovative therapies, care coordination, family partner services, case management, psychiatric evaluation, medication management and more.

The facility opened June 1.

Rock Springs of Georgetown

Williamson County provided \$3 million partial support using ARPA funding to Bluebonnet Trails for partnering with Rock Springs, a private facility for youths and adults with mental health and addiction challenges, to build a wing providing an additional 24 beds to the existing 72-bed facility for crisis care of youths. Despite supply-chain worries and delays, officials there are hoping to be open by the end of December. An additional \$1.3 million of ARPA funding is earmarked to support on-going operation of this expanded service.

Support for law enforcement

The sheriff's office has long provided a remote psychiatrist available for telemedicine or in-person calls in the jail. In January, the Commissioners Court voted to fund a full-time physician associate with psychiatric care experience to support the corrections team in the jail. This PA would be able to reduce time and costs to accomplish physical and mental evaluations and introduce medications, if needed, to stabilize the inmate, reducing stress for everyone and speeding up court for the individual.

Sheriff Mike Gleason reconstituted the Crisis Intervention Team that had been disbanded by the previous administration. These are law enforcement officers with special training for effectively dealing with people in a mental health crisis. This team reduces the number of people taken to an emergency room or into the jail through diversion services provided by Bluebonnet Community Services, Georgetown Behavioral or Rock Springs. This is the one team that can remove an individual's rights and force involuntary commitments outside of the court system – a move that is not taken lightly.

Support for adults in court system

Justice-based care coordination for inmates has been instituted for inmates and other court-involved people for medical, social and psychiatric care. The county added a jail-based care coordinator and one court-based care coordinator to reduce time between the individual being booked into the jail and their initial court hearing. Additionally, they both facilitate connecting the individual with community support for their condition, which reduces recidivism in the jail. Our 26th District Court under Judge Donna King conducts a special mental health docket.

Support for adults in crisis

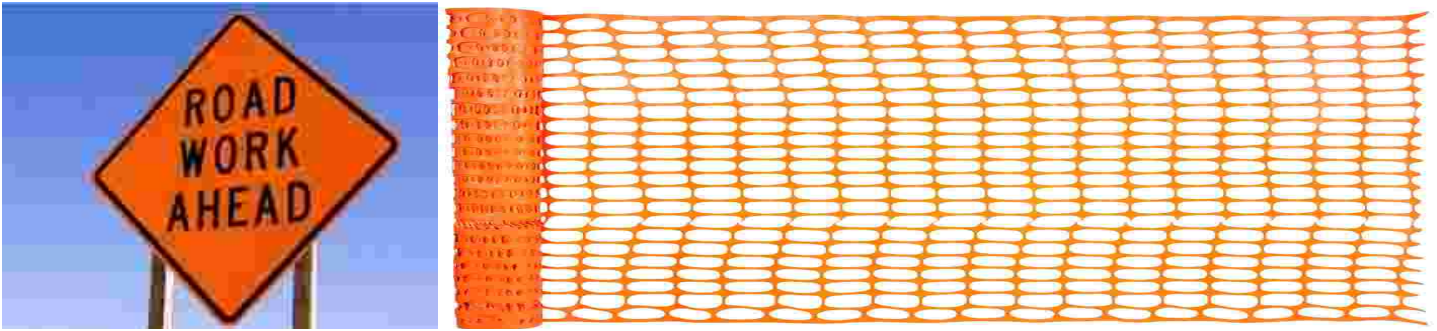
The Lott Building in the San Gabriel Park area has gone through major renovations to become a 23-hour drop-off center for adults in crisis. In partnership with the Williamson County sheriff's office and the CIT, adults in crisis may be brought into this drop-off center to be medically and psychologically evaluated. Sixteen beds are available, as well as a large, open room for board games, resting and TV viewing as the most appropriate level of care is determined by the team of 27 mental health and primary care professionals supporting this facility 24/7. Individuals are transitioned to the determined level of care in a deliberate and safe manner. The renovation was provided through CARES Act funding. Bluebonnet Trails personnel oversee this operation.

In Memoriam



Photo: Garry Brown

The last funeral was held on Thursday, June 16, for Layla Salazar, age 11.



620 at Railroad/Chisholm Trail (TxDOT with primary contractor Bridges and Roads LLC)– The roundabout under the eastbound bridge is starting to take shape, and the detention pond under the railroad bridge on the west side of Chisholm Trail Rd. continues to be built. Work continues on placing curb and gutter and a sidewalk on the eastbound frontage road from Deep Wood to the east. The construction of the retaining wall along Chisholm Trail on the southside of the project has begun. Go [HERE](#) to learn more. This is a \$27.5M TxDOT project. Estimated completion date is STILL summer 2023.

Pond Springs Road Area Drainage Improvements– The engineer is advancing the design with the 90% Plans Schematics & Estimates design submittal anticipated in August. The cost of the project 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!!!* Drainage subgrade of the eastbound lanes is being worked on. Traffic has been switched from the southwest side of Sunrise Rd. to the southeast side. Rebar for the concrete paving is being placed at the southwest corner of University and N. Mays intersection, so it's probably best to avoid the bottleneck. No delays as of yet, so still slated to finish in Spring 2023.

I-35 at US 79- There are weekly updates from TxDOT that you can sign up for [HERE](#).

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— Levelling pads for the retaining walls are being poured and installed. The drilling and pouring of the drill shafts at the Hairy Man abutment has been completed, and bridge deck panels are being installed. Atmos Gas reconnected their gas line along the east right of way. Now get this: Construction may be a little ahead of schedule, but finish is still anticipated in Spring 2023. Cross your fingers.

On June 12, in the wake of the shooting in Uvalde, Commissioner Cook attended a townhall on gun violence and prevention. State Representatives John Bucy and James Talarico hosted this event, and in attendance on the panel was State Representative Carl Sherman, Sr., Dr. Bruce Gearing, Leander ISD Superintendent, and Dr. Amy Grosso, Director of Behavioral Health Services for Round Rock ISD. It was held in the Brushy Creek Community Center.

KEYE has a good story on this event [HERE](#).



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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SEE US ONLINE!!!

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

Our office's web site— [Terry Cook, Commissioner Pct 1](http://www.wilco.org)

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

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about what's happening
in Williamson County?

Sign up for the WIL-
CO 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