



**Williamson County  
Commissioner  
Terry Cook**

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## **N E W S L E T T E R**

**September 2020 Volume 4 Issue 9**

### **BREAKING!**

**A FEDERAL JUDGE HAS ORDERED THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU TO CONTINUE COUNTING THROUGH OCTOBER 31, 2020, EXTENDING THE COUNT PAST SEPT. 30. THE DECISION IS BEING APPEALED BY THE ADMINISTRATION, SO THIS STILL COULD CHANGE.**

**IF YOU HAVEN'T YET, PLEASE TAKE THE CENSUS NOW, RIGHT [HERE!](#)**

# CORONAVIRUS

## Back to School Edition

At this time, all school districts have resumed classes with a mix of virtual and in-person classes depending upon where you are located. The Williamson County & Cities Health District (WCCHD) has been and continues to work very closely with all of our school districts with guidance on starting school safely.

There have been some cases of COVID-19 reported at a few schools, but thankfully, transmissions have been kept to a minimum so far. All children from age zero up to age 17 account for 8.11% of all cases in Williamson County. Cases in school age children are dramatically lower in September than what they were in August, and there have not been any coronavirus deaths of anyone in Williamson County under the age of 18 yet. Wearing of masks, washing hands frequently, and 6-foot social distancing continues to be the direction we all follow, even kids who are attending in-person.

Everything you wanted to know about WCCHD guidance for schools can be found [HERE](#).

Also, the WCCHD has developed a comprehensive guide of risk-based guidelines with recommended behaviors for the reopening of Williamson County. You can see that [HERE](#).

If you go to the link, it will tell you at which risk stage we are. As of Sunday, September 27, 2020 we are at YELLOW.

You can still receive free COVID-19 testing. Learn more [HERE](#).

Click on the logos to get more information.



**Williamson County &  
Cities Health District**



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human Services



For their statewide dashboard click [HERE](#). Information includes, but is not limited to, cases and facilities by county and region, and numbers of hospital beds and ventilators.

**DID YOU KNOW** that Commissioner Cook has a Facebook page? Other information regarding responses during this pandemic can be found [here](#) once the data is whole again.



# The Message



## Domestic & Teen Violence Awareness Month

In September, the Commissioners Court designated October to be “Domestic and Teen Dating Violence Month”.

Why? We are all aware of instances of domestic violence. The incidences of teen dating violence are less known and probably under-reported. All occurrences are higher than we probably thought.

Fresh from the Hope Alliance website are these facts:

- 1 in 3 women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime
- 1 in 5 high school girls report being physically assaulted and/or sexually abused by a dating partner
- 1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime

But wait, there's more:

- In the United States a woman is beaten every 9 seconds.
- Each year, intimate partner violence results in an estimated 1,200 deaths and 2 million injuries among women and nearly 600,000 injuries among men.
- Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women ages 15-44 in the United States-more than car accidents, muggings, and rapes combined.
- Almost one-third of female homicide victims that are reported in police records are killed by an intimate partner.
- In Central Texas, 80% of homeless women with children are escaping domestic violence.
- 1/3 of teens are in a violent dating relationship. *Did you get that? 1/3!*

Additionally, responding to family violence calls are highly dangerous for law enforcement officers.

These abusive behaviors, verbal and physical, also have major negative impacts on children who observe it growing up.

- Boys who witness domestic violence are twice as likely to abuse their own partners and children as adults.
- 50% of girls who grow up in an abusive home will go on to be victims of abuse themselves.
- Domestic violence is the leading predictor of child abuse – 30% to 60% of perpetrators of intimate partner violence also abuse children in the household.
- Witnessing violence between one's parents or caretakers is the strongest risk factor of transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next.

In Williamson County, Hope Alliance is the non-profit focused on helping those experiencing any form of domestic, sexual, or teen violence, and/or emotional, financial, or psychological abuse. Hope Alliance, operating with donations and grants, provides a wide-range of services to victims including a 24-hour hotline and chat, an emergency shelter, counseling, support for victims thru forensic exams, crisis intervention and assistance through the process to self-sufficiency for victims. Their shelter has been insufficient to satisfy needs in Williamson County from the beginning. Now under COVID-19 conditions, capacity has been reduced to only 15% of total size yet the demand has only grown.

Hope Alliance has an immediate opportunity to purchase a facility which would allow them to consolidate services and increase the size of their emergency shelter to become a multi-agency center. This would provide increased safety and efficiency yielding enormous benefits to those who seek help. They are just starting a capital campaign to raise \$15M. If you can financially help, please donate [HERE](#).



- The coolness of fall has come to Williamson County this week and that means *it's time for*
- **Hope Alliance's 5K race**. Because the pandemic is still among us, this year's race will be
- unique (as has been much of our lives). Instead of a group event, your participation will be
- done in the location of your choice at the time of your choice. You first register, then run, walk,
- or skip between October 3<sup>rd</sup> (this Saturday) and October 10, and submit your results on-line.
- There's still cool swag and exclusive T-shirts for each registrant.
- Run your pace and benefit survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault with your regis-
- tration fee.
- Signup ASAP before Saturday right [HERE](#).

You can still show up on Saturday for a socially-distanced, mask-wearing walk AND Commissioner Terry Cook will be giving a rah-rah speech to kick it off at 8:30AM!



## Expanding the Role of Service in Public Service

On September 25, Commissioner Cook and her staff, Doris Sanchez and Garry Brown, participated in the 2020 United Way of Williamson County Day of Caring. This year, our office decided to spend the morning at the Round Rock Serving Center working in their fabulous garden. It was a beautiful day, as you can see below.

Our office has participated in this Day of Service program for the last three years. These events are a great way to give back to your community, and they are so much fun.

We hope to see you at one of these volunteer events in the future!



Thank you United Way  
of Williamson County  
and the Round Rock  
Serving Center!



## 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](mailto:Garry.Brown@wilco.org), and an application will be sent back to you.

**DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS IS FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30 AT 5:00**



Wilco Forward was established when Williamson County received federal funds through the CARES Act to assist businesses, governmental entities, and families financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Williamson County initially received \$93M from this program and another \$2,242,984 in Community Block Development Grant monies.

The Commissioners Court developed three phases of the program:

**Phase I**– provided grants to local small businesses (those with less than 101 employees)

**Phase II**– provided reimbursements to emergency services districts (ESDs), YMCA, Bluebonnet Trails Community Services, Williamson County & Cities Health Department, and cities too small to be eligible for direct CARES Act funding from the federal government.

**Phase III**– provides community assistance for residents who need help paying rent and utilities during the pandemic.

The results of Wilco Forward have been astounding. More than 3500 for-profit and non-profit businesses headquartered and located in our county has received financial assistance. ESDs 1-7 and 10 have been helped. The cities of Florence, Georgetown, Leander, Round Rock, and Taylor have received these funds, and applications from Cedar Park and Thrall are being reviewed. Over \$440,000 has been used to help nearly 600 families stay in their homes and keep their lights on.

Residents' businesses, livelihoods, and homes have been assisted, and the budget holes for some of our local governmental entities are not as large as they could be.

There is still more monies to be allocated. Be on the lookout for more information on that front. Currently, this money must be spent by December 30, 2020 on Covid-19 expenses and financial losses due to the pandemic.

Wilco Forward has been a great success! Thanks go to County Treasurer Scott Heselmeyer, County Commissioner Valerie Covey, County Auditor Jerri Jones, and others for building the program, and a great amount of thanks goes to the fantastic Auditor and Treasurer staff for making it all work so well. They all deserve a huge round of applause!





# ELECTION 2020 CENTRAL

## GET READY TO VOTE

You can still register to vote so  
you can make your voice heard in  
this election!

Drive-thru voter registration took place at the Jester Annex parking lot  
at 1801 E. Old Settlers Blvd. in Round Rock!

**OVER 200 PEOPLE REGISTERED TO VOTE! GRAT WORK EVERYBODY!**

Election Day is November 3. As of now, Early Voting is scheduled for October 13—30, including 2 Sunday afternoons. ALSO, there may be some non-partisan races on your ballot, such as for city council. Be sure to find those races, too! [See Early Voting Locations HERE](#)

**STRAIGHT TICKET VOTING:** You may have heard that a federal judge in Texas last week had required straight ticket voting for this November 3rd election. Unfortunately, the state appealed, and the court stayed that order. In short, there will not be any straight ticket voting this year.

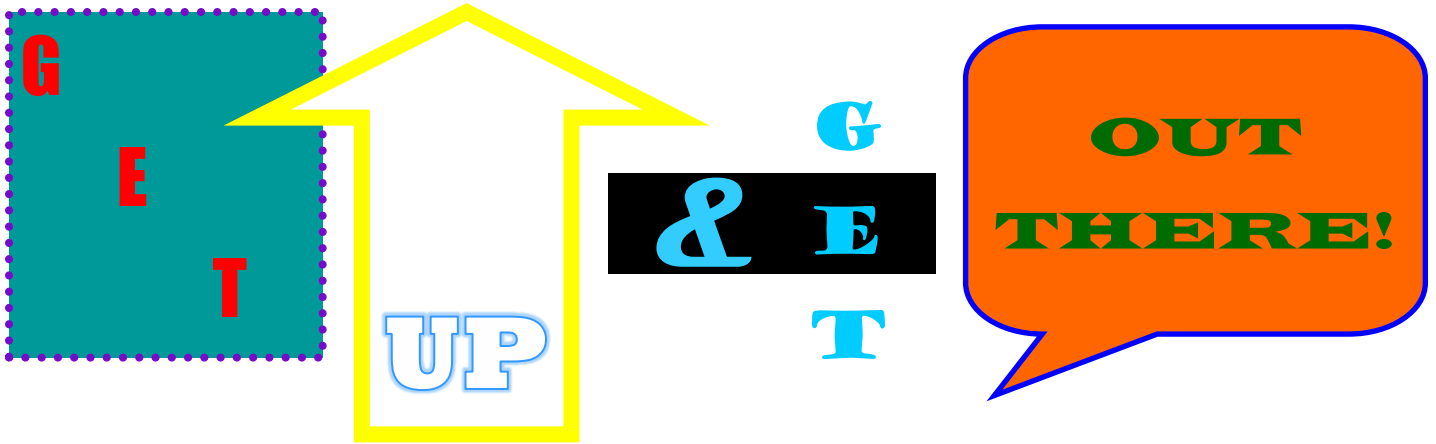
**VOTING BY MAIL:** The 1st batch of ballots will hit mailboxes in early October. Per proclamation from Gov. Abbott, voters may hand-deliver their own marked mail ballot to the Elections Department during business hours. Photo ID laws are applicable to all voters that hand-deliver their ballots. TO BE 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. Ballots may be hand-delivered as soon as it has been received and completed, even if it is before early voting has begun. 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. As soon as you receive your ballot, complete it, and send it in ASAP. With the USPS issues, DO NOT DELAY! And now you can track your mail-in ballot [HERE](#).

### OTHER IMPORTANT DATES AND INFORMATION

Sample ballots available [HERE](#)

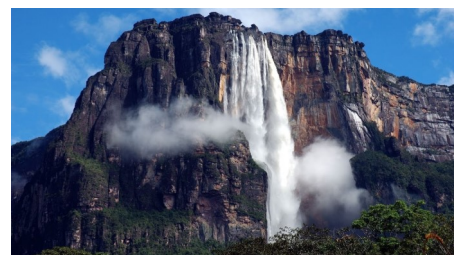
Oct. 23– Ballot-by-Mail application deadline

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



Commissioner Cook was tasked with keeping up the spirits of the Williamson County staff from April till Labor Day Weekend. A weekly flier was produced by her office that included a number of links to humor, music, art, virtual tours, kid activities, workouts, and moments of zen.

These links represent the last weekly flier sent to county employees just before Labor Day Weekend. We hope you have enjoyed this!





## **Cook: Alternatives to incarceration transform lives, save taxpayer dollars**

<https://www.statesman.com/opinion/20200915/commissioner-cook-alternatives-to-incarceration-transform-lives-save-taxpayer-dollars>

Ideally it is best to assist persons with mental illness before they encounter law enforcement or the justice system.

A network of mental health and substance use providers support the health and well-being of Williamson County families through a coordinated effort. Alongside medical providers, law enforcement officers and court administrators, these partners work diligently to develop a comprehensive and collaborative system of care. Unfortunately, there are times when someone's illness or substance use disorder creates a crisis, and it is necessary to call 911 to keep everyone safe. In Williamson County, we can respond to these types of 911 calls from residents, schools and even our four precinct constable offices in a safe and responsible manner.

Since 2004, Williamson County's Mobile Outreach Team — headed by Director Annie Burwell — has provided treatment options to people in crises and diverted patients away from jail, hospital emergency departments and state hospitals.

The team works closely with law enforcement and EMS agencies at the scene of a crisis by assessing the needs of the patient and the safety of all involved. The team has safely conducted over 35,000 calls over the past 15 years.

Sometimes it's best for the patient and taxpayers when people are diverted from jail even though they've committed a misdemeanor, such as loitering, public intoxication or trespassing. Sending an emergency unit or having a patient end up in jail or the emergency room all cost tax dollars when a client is uninsured or underinsured. A likely candidate for jail diversion is someone suspected of committing a misdemeanor offense while experiencing symptoms of mental illness.

Jail diversion should not be misinterpreted as being "soft on crime." The goal is to reduce recidivism or even first-time offenses by offering individuals mental health services and substance use disorder (addiction) treatment. This method of managing these types of 911 calls is gaining traction nationwide and ensures the most responsible use of each 911 asset — law enforcement, EMS, fire service and crisis response. About 80 percent of the time the team can arrange counseling, psychiatric care or social services support instead of in-patient hospitalization for an individual. Facilitating care in the least restrictive environment is best for patients, families and taxpayers. Also, incarceration is unlikely to rehabilitate people with mental illness and can worsen their mental state.

When law enforcement is at the scene along with a team member, together they can determine if the person should receive mental health treatment or go to jail. The determination is classified as a diversion only if an officer is on scene.

If a person needs treatment but there is a waiting list for services, team members will keep meeting with the person face-to-face or by phone until the situation is stabilized or a bed becomes available.

The team is also able to assist certain vulnerable individuals with groceries, housing and even tents for the homeless, but this can be challenging with a limited budget and a great need, especially during the pandemic. Most of the team's calls are for people who are suicidal, homicidal or experiencing psychosis. Since the pandemic, calls have doubled from related stress causing an even greater overload of 911 calls on an already small team working throughout the county and every city within.

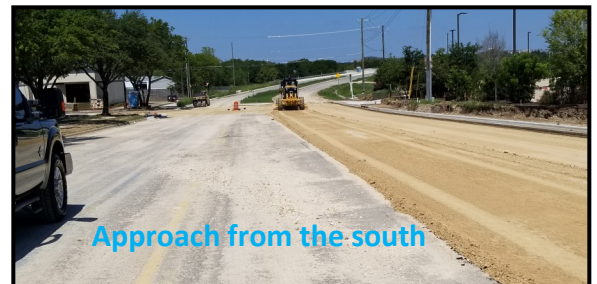
In 2019, the team responded to 2,415 calls and 95 of those resulted in jail diversions, saving the county \$147,440. Besides Burwell, the team consists of nine crisis response members.

In partnership with Bluebonnet Trails Community Services, 24/7 coverage is available in Williamson County for those in a mental health crisis. Bluebonnet Trails Community Services also provides jail diversion and responds to crisis calls through their 24-hour crisis hotline (800-841-1255). In addition to crisis services in the community, they offer an intake desk at the Georgetown Behavioral Health Institute, crisis respite beds, extended observation beds, access to psychiatric hospital beds and outpatient care in Round Rock, Cedar Park and Taylor. Bluebonnet also offers court-based, jail-based and probation/parole services in collaboration with valued Williamson County partners.

Without our Mobile Outreach Team & Bluebonnet Trails, we would rely only on our law enforcement and EMS paramedics to manage and transport patients suffering from mental health issues.

Thankfully, we have this great team of highly trained clinicians, allowing EMS and law enforcement to respond to more appropriate calls for their services.

# Can anyone guess where this is?



This construction will give you an option of not using I-35 going north from Round Rock.

If you guessed the N.Mays St. Extension, you would be correct!

Soon there will be relief for N-S traffic when I-35 is clogged between Round Rock and Westinghouse Rd.

There's a good chance that this will open for traffic in November. Stay







**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 right now, you can see all past events [here](#).

## Where is Commissioner Cook?

### ANNOUNCEMENT: THE COMMISSIONER PRECINCT ONE OFFICE HAS REOPENED!

After weeks of guarding our office, Mr. Skeleton has relinquished his post, and Doris Sanchez is now back at her desk to take care of anyone who walks in the door. Please know that strict protocols, such as mask wearing and 6-foot social distancing, will be enforced to keep everyone safe.

The front area of our office is small and cannot hold more than 2 people at a time when distanced appropriately. If you show up at the office, please work with Doris in a friendly manner to honor our office etiquette.

Garry Brown, who lives in a multigenerational home with a 12-year-old and an 85+ year old, will continue working remotely and answering your calls and emails timely, as always.

Virtual meetings will remain for now. Thank goodness for Zoom, GoTo Meetings, WebEx, Teams, Google Meet, and all of the other virtual meeting platforms!

Please continue keeping yourself, your family, and our Williamson County neighbors safe by going out only when you need to wearing a face mask and frequently washing your hands.

## 2018 International Fire Code

The international fire code (IFC) is designed to meet the need for addressing conditions hazardous to life and property from fire, explosion, use of flammable materials, and the use of and occupancy of buildings. A comprehensive fire code establishes minimum regulations for fire prevention and fire protections that safeguard public health and safety. Because of new technologies being developed all the time, the international fire code is constantly being updated every 3-4 years. It is a common practice to adopt a fire code a couple of years old to make sure any unintended restrictions or requirements are not present in the code.

Williamson County and most city jurisdictions are operating under the code of 2015 or earlier, and they are deciding whether to update to the 2018 version. Because the code impacts how buildings are constructed, builders and developers are interested in how the fire code impacts them, too.

The great news is that Wilco Fire Marshal Hank Jones and Emergency Services Senior Director Chris Connealy, himself the former state fire marshal and Cedar Park Fire Chief, are already meeting with fire departments, emergency services districts, and the development community across Wilco to discuss how the 2018 code is different (not significant changes) and whether the 2018 code should be adopted across Wilco. The larger cities in Williamson County adopt their own fire code at the discretion of local elected officials. You can see the proposed IFC 2018 amendments and a highlight of some of significant changes [HERE](#).





# ROAD UPDATES

620 at Railroad/Chisholm Trail– Excavation continues on the northside of 620 for preparation to widen the road. A water line is being placed along the southside of 620 in various locations, and boring is taking place for a storm sewer pipe under 620 near Chisholm Trail. This is a City of Round Rock, Wilco & TxDOT project. Estimated completion date is Summer 2022.

Great Oaks Bridge at Brushy Creek Rd.– As far for the course, utility work completion is being pushed back yet again. Originally, AT&T, Charter, Grande, and Oncor were supposed to be done in September, then it was October, then November. Now, they are all saying December. Don't hold your breath though! Atmos Gas continues installing a new gas line near the BCMUD maintenance yard on the north 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](#).

Great Oaks Water Line Relocations– Fern Bluff water line: The mystery of where the location of the precise valve to turn off the water continues, but Brushy Creek MUD is helping, so the new water line can be tied in. This project should be finished soon, hopefully.

Hairy Man Rd./Brushy Creek Rd. Safety Improvements– Learn more about this project at this [website](#). Design work to modify road alignment and to maintain as much of the canopy over the road as possible, is nearly complete & they are awaiting comments from engineers. Waterline designs are complete and have been signed by the City of Round Rock. Utility work is on-going, however utilities tend to be the reason for delays. Construction start is will begin December 2020. This is a 100% county job.

N. Mays St. Extension from Paloma Dr. to Oakmont Dr.– Bridge work is nearly completed. The south end of the project, from Jeffrey Way to Paloma Drive is nearly ready for paving. Work continues at the new intersection of N. Mays and Oakmont Drive. Electrical conduit is being installed for the illumination at the south end of the project, and at the north end, the retaining wall for the water quality pond has been constructed. Concrete curb and gutter tie-ins were completed on both ends of the project. This is a Round Rock—County project. We are looking at November 2020 for substantial completion. Plans for a ribbon cutting event have started.

University Blvd. widening from IH-35 to Sunrise Rd.– Design and right of way acquisition are complete, and utility relocation efforts are still ongoing and taking longer than anticipated. After a small delay by the City of Round Rock, the project has been awarded to a contractor. This is the city's project for which the county has contributed \$5M. Project construction is still slated to begin Fall 2020, according to the City of Round Rock, and is slated to finish in early 2022.

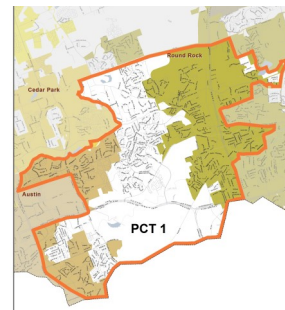
Pond Springs Road Area Drainage Improvements– Awaiting signatures of an agreement between TxDOT, the County, and the City of Austin. Draft drainage design of the preferred option is under review. Looks like there are a number of utility conflicts, so a plan is being drafted to minimize those conflicts. Construction start is still anticipated Spring 2021.

Forest North Drainage Improvements Phase III– City of Austin water lines have been installed on Broadmeade, Chester Forest, and Stillforest in the Norchester Zone. Storm sewer installation was completed along Broadmeade in the Braes Valley Zone. Land at various locations is being readied in advance of other storm sewer installations. Substantial completion is anticipated in early 2022.

O'Connor Drive Traffic Signals– In seeking space for new conduits at each corner for the stoplights, it was discovered that they are loaded with utilities already, so its been a puzzle to solve. Design changes are taking place in response, which include open trenching so as not to disturb the existing utilities. Sorry for the blockage on some corners—not much room to work so walk around it safely. Substantial completion is still anticipated Fall 2020.

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 hopefully 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.

# 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](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](mailto:doris.sanchez@wilco.org)

**In case of  
Emergency  
DIAL 911**