

Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook NEWSLETTER

January 2023 Volume 7 Issue 1



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**Wilco and City of Georgetown 175th
Anniversary Mural
(you'll get to help paint!)**

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



The Message



The Iceman Cometh

Why us? How can a cold front be SOOO big? Good news for the county is that our preparations following the Snomageddon of 2021 are working—only water leak so far is at the Jester Annex and I have no details. We've been having a lot of roof work done at Jester...water was left dripping and our facilities teams are checking all the buildings. Our generators have kicked on at two of the communication towers for our emergency radio support across the county where electricity has been lost (auto-switchover). Power's out in Granger so the Central Texas Treatment Center (so devastated by Winter Storm Uri) is running on generator installed this past fall and waiting for electricity to be restored. Road crews, sheriff's deputies, EMS (oh the falls of people that needed to stay inside and vehicle accidents), constables and their deputies, and our facilities teams are crawling slowly along our streets and roadways. The mail can wait, but I know your dog can't...be careful out there—sleet or frozen rain is falling at my house. I made homemade cinnamon buns and just delivered them to neighbors. It's a good day to bake! Glad I gave my husband a battery-powered chain-saw (it got good reviews) for Christmas—charging batteries now.

PS—know that those residents with medical needs who signed up on the Texas STEAR database, State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry, are being contacted by members of the Williamson County and Cities Health District and city personnel. If no answer to phone calls, personnel will be dispatched.

Talking about Growth

Last week the Census bureau came out with population estimates. Wilco came in with just over 700,000—an estimated 103 people move here each day—wow, where are they going?

Strategic Plan

Worked with consultants for 11 hours over two days last week. We're finally moving into the good stuff having identified Goals and Strategic Priorities. Probably another 60 days before it's available for general distribution to our departments for review and critique.

Approval for Wilco to use “.gov”

So why is it www.wilco.org? Well because there were rules that stated users would need to type “Williamsoncountytx.gov” to adopt “.gov”. Well that's a lot of typing (and typos). The Federal Domain Name Registrar has finally blessed the county's domain name of WilcoTX.gov. What makes “.gov” so important? The .gov extension is highly protected so as to represent a trusted site of official information. There is a Williamson County, Tennessee and people have landed there—unaware it was not their intended destination. Brevity in using WilcoTX is important. At some time in the future, this new domain will be adopted into use affecting our website and all emails. This change requires a lot of background work to adopt, so we wait.

County & City of Georgetown Mural to celebrate Wilco's 175th birthday

After many reviews and revisions, there is to be a mural painted on the side of the Wilco Tax Office building in Georgetown and many of the painters will be volunteer citizen painters like you and me! That'll take place on March 10th and 11th.

Notice in this mockup—you see the roof overhang and a door—that's the side of the building destined to be "enhanced". Here's a look at the current design. The winner from 17 submitted designs chosen by the Georgetown Board of Arts & Culture and seeking approval of the Commissioners Court was designed by Yasaman Mehrsa to honor the 175 year history of the county



Wilco's come a long way in 175 years!

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

Great news – the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program will have 11 VITA sites in Williamson County this tax season!

Here is information about the VITA Program:

Tax season starts on January 23!

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program offers free tax preparation by IRS-certified volunteers to Wilco residents who generally make \$60,000 or less, persons with disabilities, and limited English-speaking taxpayers who need assistance preparing their own tax returns. These services are free and 100% of the tax refund goes to the customer.

This tax season there are **11 VITA sites in Wilco** and we need your help spreading the word. The Baca Center doesn't income limit but is really focused on helping seniors; appointments are encouraged.

Did you know?

VITA Site Managers help raise awareness about critical tools like the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC).

The EITC is considered the largest federal anti-poverty program in the country, yet one in five eligible families with low income in our community are not receiving it!

The EITC increases families' overall income, and the CTC offers up to \$2,000 per child—which can be life-changing.

Here is a link to the VITA Program site locations in Williamson County (English and Spanish): https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/156K1L2qJkVvqR0tP78DqUyi5GP8KSd_z?usp=share_link

Here is a link to the VITA Program site locations in Williamson County (English and Spanish): https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/156K1L2qJkVwqR0tP78DqUyi5GP8KSd_z?usp=share_link

FREE TAX PREP

WILLIAMSON COUNTY



WHAT TO BRING

- Photo ID required for you and your spouse
- Social Security Card or ITIN letter - for you, your spouse, and all dependents (required)
- Checking or savings account statement with bank routing numbers (optional, but required for direct deposit)

If applicable:

- W-2 forms
- Copy of last year's Federal Tax Return
- 1099-R (pension or annuity)
- 1099-SSA (social security)
- 1099-INT or 1099-DIV (interest and dividends)
- 1099-G (unemployment)
- 1099-NEC, 1099-MISC, 1099-K (self-employment)
- Self-employment records of income and expenses
- 1099-B and all other investment type of income
- IRA contributions
- 1098-E (student loan interest paid)
- 1098-T (tuition statement) and other education out-of-pocket expenses like books not included on statement
- 1095-A (health insurance data from the marketplace)

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program offers free tax help to Wilco residents who generally make \$60,000 or less, persons with disabilities, and limited English-speaking taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals.

LOCATIONS

UNITED WAY VITA TAX SITES — WALK-INS ONLY

We suggest you arrive as close to the site's opening time as possible for the best chance of getting served quickly. Those who arrive later may have to wait for an available tax preparer or may not be able to see a volunteer on that day. Learn more at wilcofreetaxprep.org. **Have questions? Call 2-1-1.**

Hutto

Hutto Library
500 W. Live Oak Street
Hutto, TX, 78634

January 26 - April 13
Thursdays, 11 am – 4 pm

Liberty Hill

Operation Liberty Hill
1401 US-183 Hwy
Leander, TX 78641

January 26 - April 15
Thursdays & Saturdays, 10 am – 2:30 pm

Round Rock

St. John Vianney Catholic Church, Bosco House
3201 Sunrise Road
Round Rock, TX 78665

January 24 - March 30 & April 11-18 (Closed April 4-9)
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12:30 pm – 5:30 pm
Saturdays, 9:30 am – 2:30 pm

Taylor

Taylor Public Library
801 Vance Street
Taylor, TX 76574

January 28 - April 15
Saturdays, 11:30 am – 3:30 pm

AARP TAX-AIDE SITES — BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

AARP Tax sites will be open February 1 – April 18. No walk-ins accepted. Schedule an appointment online at taxaide.aarpfoundation.org. **Have questions? Call 2-1-1.**

Cedar Park

Recreation Center
1435 Main Street
Cedar Park, TX 78613

Tuesdays, 11 am – 4 pm

Georgetown

Georgetown Public Library
402 W. 8th Street
Georgetown, TX 78626

Wednesdays & Saturdays, 9:30 am – 3:45 pm

Sun City Cowan Creek Community Center
1433 Cool Spring Way
Georgetown, TX 78663

Fridays, 8:30 am – 2:15 pm

Leander

Leander Public Library
1011 S. Bagdad Road
Leander, TX 78641

Mondays and Saturdays, 11 am – 4 pm

Round Rock

Allen Baca Senior Center
301 W. Bagdad Ave
Round Rock, TX 78664

Mondays and Wednesdays, 10 am – 2 pm

Pflugerville

Travis County Community Center at Pflugerville
15822 Foothill Farms Loop
Pflugerville, TX 78660

Tuesdays, 11:30 am – 3:45 pm

FOUNDATION COMMUNITIES PROSPER CENTER — BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

No walk-ins accepted. Schedule an appointment online at prospertaxhelp.org. **Have questions? Call 2-1-1.**

Austin

Wells Branch Recreation Center
3000 Shoreline Dr. Austin, TX 78728

January 30 - April 18

Round Rock

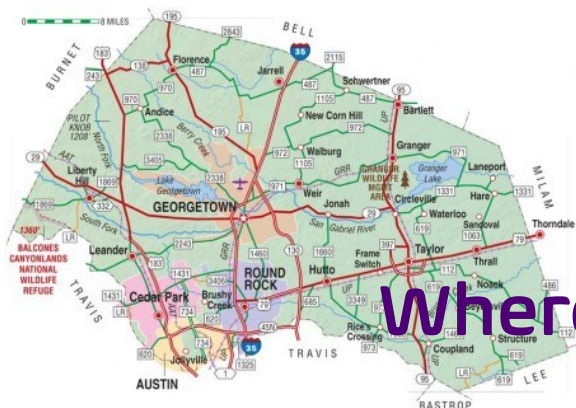
Round Rock Area Serving Center
1099 E Main St., Round Rock, TX 78664

January 23 - April 18

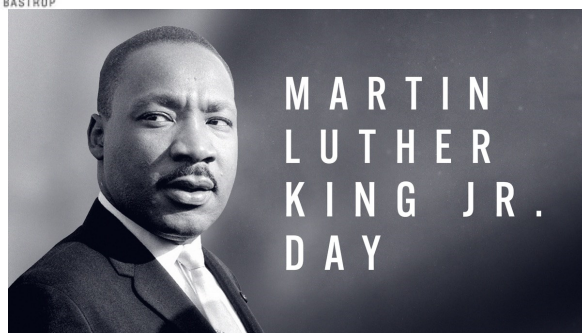


**Interested in
registering to vote?**

To register or update your voter
registration information, visit
VOTETEXAS.ORG.



Where is Commissioner Cook?



Round Rock

Taylor

Led by the enthusiastic drum beat of the Austin Drum Line, we marched north up Mays Street from the Buck Egger Park to the Baca Center.

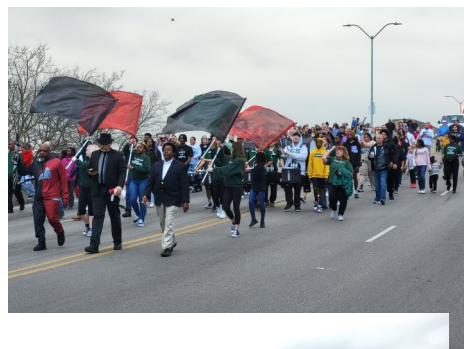


From the Dickey-Givens Community Center in Fannie Robinson Park, we marched, led by the Taylor Duck's Drum Corps, to Heritage Square Park—a longer route than Round Rock's.

Standing-only room for the magnificent programs delivered by CD Fulkes Middle School Choir, Sweet Home Baptist Church's Pinnacle of Praise, Round Rock Black Student Book Club, Ballet Folklorico and community leaders. Diverse, emotional and uplifting — this celebration had something for everyone present. We all left smiling.



The program was in open air with chairs (yay). We were treated by the partial sermon delivered by Dr King, Jr known as the "Drum Major Instinct" and many short comments from a variety of community leaders. As always, it ended with Sam Cooke's "A Change Gonna Come" - sadly, the wait is not up for many. On this warm day, I was so grateful for the use of a Taylor ISD air conditioned bus to return to the Dickey-Givens Community Center.



Taylor Gala

Taylor's Chamber of Commerce held their annual awards banquet on January 17. This year's attendees completely filled the Expo space and for once—we were not freezing at the Expo! This is a very active chamber let by Tia Rae Stone. Food was catered by the Thrall Diner and was very good—down to the bread puddings. Taylor is facing enormous challenges both in the growth and anticipated changes but also to remain in character as it always has been— a classic Texas small town. We're already seeing changes downtown with some businesses closing and others opening up. The great news is that Taylor is not a tear-down, build-new community; but seeks to revitalize and renew interiors while maintaining its classic architecture. 2023-2024 is certainly going to be quite the ride for this community.



BUILDING ON A STRONG FOUNDATION Greater Taylor Chamber of Commerce **2023 AWARDS BANQUET**

Welcome

Cheryl Webster, 2022 Board Chair
& Tia Rae Stone, President & CEO

Invocation

The Rev. Anthony L. Watson, The First Baptist Church

Recognition of Guests

DINNER

Platinum & Gold Sponsors

Recognition of Board Members

2022 Highlights & Insights

2022 Chair Cheryl Webster, Noren Thermal Solutions

Building on a Strong Foundation

Tim Crow, Taylor ISD

All aboard for the future

In-coming Chair Ebby Green, Taylor Housing Authority
& Tia Rae Stone

AWARDS PRESENTATIONS

Chairman's Award & Ambassador of the Year

Cheryl Webster & Tia Rae Stone

Outstanding Woman of the Year

Charlotte Albert, Taylor Area Businesswomen

Outstanding Citizen of the Year

Ryan Stiba, Taylor Rotary

Board Member of the Year

Customer Service of the Year

Business of the Year

Cheryl Webster & Tia Rae Stone

Emergency Services District 1 swearing in

ESD Commissioners have staggered 2-year terms. While they can be sworn in by a myriad of officials, I make myself available to them for this before they hold their first business meeting each year. It also gives me an excuse to meet with them, and we cover any issues with the ESD. This year I was swearing in Mac Sherrod (orange shirt) who serves as the Jollyville ESD secretary, Alan McNeil (Treasurer, in the back corner), and Adam Bryant (far left in picture), who serves as the President of the board into their renewed terms.



Round Rock Library Opening

At long last, the construction came to an end, the former library site sat emptied, and the new library opened to the public on Saturday, January 28. Despite overcast conditions and dropping temperatures, citizens came out in full force to check out the new space. The line, that rapidly wrapped the city block holding the library and its associated multi-level parking garage was barely moving. Looking through the library windows, the interior space was already full of people – perhaps to the chagrin of the Round Rock Fire Marshal – there was no space available for additional people. This was our New York City moment of an endless line of souls awaiting something new. We, in this office, will visit on a weekday after this freezing rain has ceased.



In The News

Williamson Commissioner Cook: It's 2023 and our resolutions are ...

[Williamson Commissioner Cook: It's 2023 and our resolutions are ... \(statesman.com\)](https://www.statesman.com/story/news/local/2023/01/03/williamson-commissioner-cook-its-2023-and-our-resolutions-are-.../11744444002/)

We've rung in the new year – 2022 left us tired, ragged, but hopeful that the worst is behind us. This is the time of year when many become introspective – who are we? Who do we want to be? Stronger, leaner, more resilient, more learned individuals perhaps? How long does that last? What are our values?

Mahatma Gandhi once stated that “we should watch our thoughts for they become our words, manage and watch our words for they become our actions. Consider and judge our actions for they become our habits. Acknowledge and watch our habits for they shall become our values. Understand and embrace our values, for they become our destiny.”

Williamson County is doing just that in developing a strategic plan, with the guidance of SBrand Solutions consultants, not to establish goals for just one year, but to establish and implement strategies to accomplish them over one, five, 10 years or longer. In Gandhi's observations, values drive destinies. We will be developing the framework to hone our vision, mission and values supported by strategies to reach measurable results for short-, medium- and long-term goals.

While the county has been successful defining long-range transportation plans of providing north-south and east-west connectivity for residents and commerce, and the implementation of many new roads in the past 10 years, can we, the taxpayers, afford to continue our road program? The cost of land alone has grown to be nearly prohibitive. But with our growth, and anticipation of continued growth, this past planning and construction must surely continue as a goal.

Our future requires that we identify new challenges and adapt approaches to meet them. We have experienced the fragility of our grid, and we've experienced the weaknesses in power production, especially with natural gas. You may respond that we, the county, can't do anything about that. Well, we can lobby the state Legislature to pass meaningful and impactful bills to incentivize and require industry to step up.

If, indeed, by 2035 we have a significant percentage of our vehicles using electricity instead of petroleum products, we must have more power and a very stable grid to support charging. Well, I've heard “power guys” make the statement that people need to charge their vehicles during off-peak times. Tell that to the apartment dwellers who are usually sitting in their cars while they charge at a public charging station.

Here's a challenge that the electric power companies are not recognizing. If the building industry revises building codes to require level 2 charging stations in all new garages and install fire suppression systems in that space, that will have major ramifications across the state. I've breached the topic of having charging stations established at some county buildings; of course, that means that the power grid has to have 240-volt lines with excess capacity in the vicinity to reduce the cost of implementing a charging infrastructure.

Then there's the issue of available, clean water for consumption. In the past, the county has largely stood aside and let the municipalities and municipal utility districts do the heavy lifting. We are partners, however, with the Lone Star Water Authority, which connected Lake Granger with Jarrell. The Water Code and Local Government Code have much to say about the county's responsibilities — should they choose to be involved — in water acquisition and management.

It was stated in December's Williamson County's Growth Summit that availability of water is not the issue, it's the infrastructure that needs upgrades. However, in October, at Taylor's Chamber Summit, a Brazos River Authority spokesperson stated that 99.9% of its surface water is spoken for (they are the primary providers of water for most of Williamson County). The reliance on wells in the fragile Trinity Aquifer is faltering under harsh drought conditions. We know that every wastewater treatment plant seems to be under expansion to accommodate all the building in the county. Needs are up. Supply is limited. Growth continues. Now there's a challenge for strategic planning!

What about the impact of continued global warming on our natural resources and ability to maintain our facilities? The county has been implementing LED lighting in our buildings to reduce costs (electricity consumption). Much of our recent construction has been remodeling/updating within existing structures. But we're now facing needs for expansion of the Juvenile Justice Center and a new administration building.

Will we be pursuing greener construction, design and construction techniques, with lower cost-of-ownership goals as priorities? Will we implement any solar roofing to offset electricity needs or install overhangs to reduce solar heat coming through the windows in our architectural design? Will we build parking under buildings for shade/hail protection and reduced interior heat in vehicles? Can we reduce daily mileage on county vehicles by planning/coordinating trips? Can we increase our use of electrical vehicles to reduce maintenance costs and petroleum fuel use?

We are a county where technology companies want to move. Most of our residents are tech savvy. Could we achieve a goal of providing an affordable service through a broadband infrastructure implemented with private/public partnerships using federal and state grants to lead the state in high-speed internet coverage within our county?

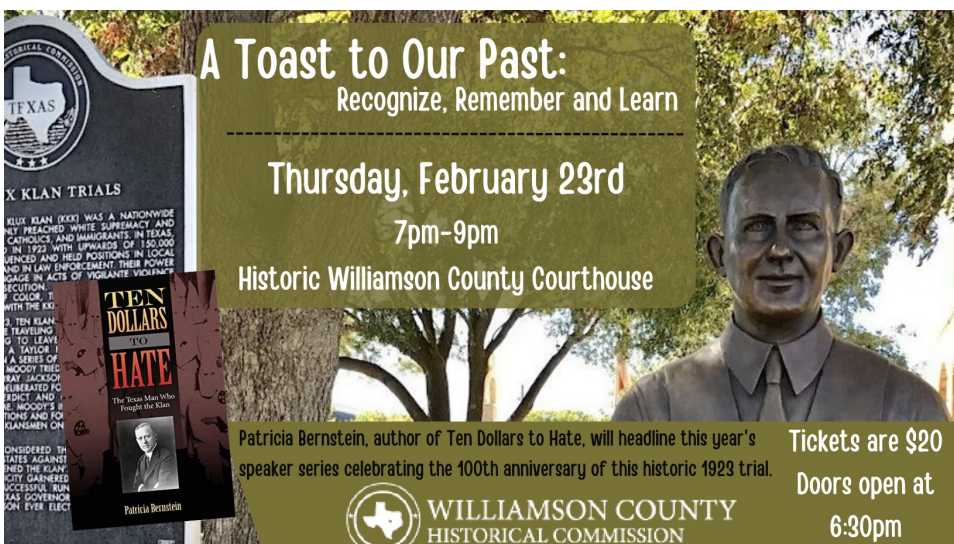
Another challenge we face is that vast subdivision development is occurring in the county where we have no authority for land planning and use designations. That often results in angst by homeowners in the county's unincorporated areas where they want ordinances for noise, loose dogs or to stop commercial developments being built next door and other problems. Giving counties ordinance authority definitely requires legislative action, which will probably never occur — land rights are revered by those in the state House and Senate.

What will the future hold for us in Williamson County? Can we become leaner, stronger, more self-sufficient in providing those mandated services a county must provide? Will we be ready and able to meet our challenges? Will we be rooftop-to-rooftop homes with a scattering of industrial and commercial facilities and a grid of high-capacity roads? Whatever, it's going to be quite the ride!



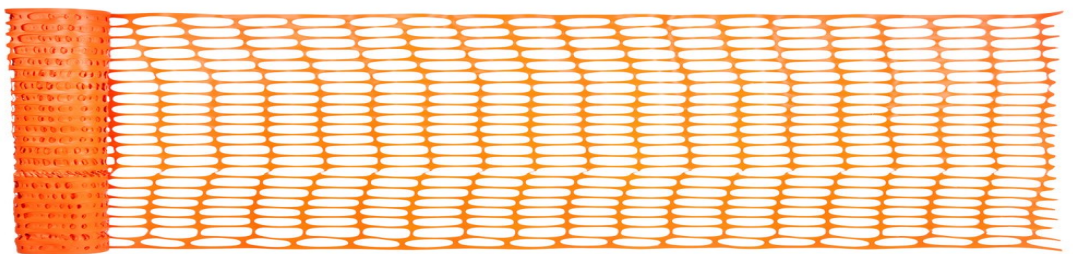
Edition

Click logos and pictures



Williamson County Offices will be
closed on Monday, February 20,
for Presidents Day.





Great Oaks Bridge at Brushy Creek Rd.–



Pond Springs Road Area Drainage Improvements– Unfortunately, no movement on this project yet. The cost of the project is \$3.2M, although that price may come down again. Construction start is anticipated Spring 2023.

University Blvd. widening from IH-35 to just east of Sunrise Rd.- (Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC)– The intersection of University Blvd. and Sunrise Rd. has been reopened, and paving asphalt is being placed between Sunrise and Cypress Blvd. Work continues around N. Mays St. Completion still anticipated in spring 2023, maybe April, but don't count your chickens yet.

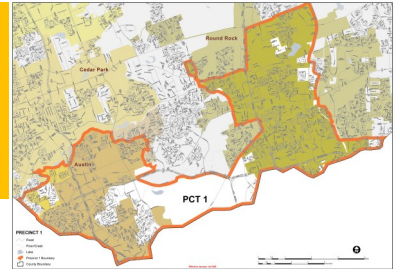
I-35 at US 79- There are weekly updates from TxDOT that you can sign up for [HERE](#).

620 at Railroad/Chisholm Trail (TxDOT with primary contractor Bridges and Roads LLC)– *Lots of switched traffic around this project, so please be aware of the surroundings.* Curb and gutter work continues on Deepwood Dr., and brick pavers continue to be placed in the islands under the bridge and on Deepwood. Go [HERE](#) to learn more. This is a \$27.5M TxDOT project. According to TxDOT, substantial completion is going to be Summer 2023.

183 North Project (a CTRMA project) - Work crews have begun surface grinding work on the US 183 main lanes as a part of Phase 1 in a multi-phased approach to resurface the existing roadway along the 183 North Mobility Project corridor. As a result, rolling closures have begun on southbound US 183 main lanes as work travels southbound along US 183 in two-mile segments. The closures are anticipated nightly between the hours of 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. Monday–Thursday and 9 p.m. to 8 a.m. Friday–Saturday. Crews have begun utility relocations, sidewalk reconstruction and related business driveway reconstructions along the corridor. All existing sidewalks along the frontage roads will be updated to be ADA compliant and crews will be adding sidewalks where none exist between SH 45/RM 620 and Loop 360. Currently, there is a long-term closure along the right lane of the southbound MoPac frontage road between US 183 and Steck Ave. that will last approximately nine months and is needed to perform utility relocations, sidewalk and driveway construction. The U.S. 183 U-turn just south of RM 620 has been closed. Drivers traveling northbound and needing to turnaround and travel southbound on U.S. 183 or the frontage road, will be able to turn left at the traffic light at the RM 620 intersection, instead of using the U-turn. The closure of the U-turn will be continuous, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and will last approximately one year.

Learn more: [183 North Mobility Project](#) Sign up for updates [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!

LOCATION: Williamson County Jester Annex
1801 E. Old Settlers Blvd., Suite 110

MAIN PHONE: 512-244-8610

EMAIL COMMISSIONER COOK:
commissioner1@wilco.org

COMMUNICATIONS/SCHEDULING: Doris Sanchez
512-244-8610, doris.sanchez@wilco.org

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT: Garry Brown
512-244-8615, garry.brown@wilco.org

SEE US ONLINE!!!

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

Our office's web site— Terry Cook, Commissioner Pct 1

Non-Emergency Phone Numbers

Austin Fire Department
512-974-0130

County Judge
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-
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