

NEWSLETTER

January 2022 Volume 6 Issue 1

Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook



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Primary
Is
March 1!



The Message



With the new year comes many changes for Williamson County residents for mental health aid. Our long-time and much heralded Mobile Outreach Team, our mental health crisis and drug overdose respondents are transitioning to the City of Round Rock's Community Risk Reduction Program with the encouragement of former Fire Chief Robert Isbell. As this could leave a huge void in services currently available across the county, Bluebonnet Trails Community Services (BTCS), Rock Springs Hospital, Williamson County and our sheriff's department are moving forward to provide not only coverage gaps from MOT's departure, but MUCH more.

First, BTCS, the Sheriff's Department and our Emergency Services have worked together for the majority of 2021 to define and structure 911 dispatch to mental health professionals should the call be for a MH crisis service to 911. The first call dispatched to a mental health professional call taker occurred on November 15. *Do you need Police, Fire, Ambulance or Mental Health Services?* With 3 MH professionals, those routed calls can be appropriately routed to for extended hours daily. Remember 911 is for crisis calls not for routine counseling. Working with Sheriff Gleason, documented procedures are followed including those for potential suicide events. Few counties offer this service. If deemed necessary and safe, BTCS's Mobile Crisis Outreach Team, MCOT, is dispatched in response to the call.

Secondly, the County's MOT responded to calls from our ISD's schools if a student was in crisis. MCOT is both aligned with some schools and now responding to all calls. Additionally BTCS provides consultation, follow-up and Care Coordination should it be needed. The staffing of 17 MCOT professionals prepared to respond are funded by BTCS and the Texas Health & Human Services Commission.

Both mental health and medical services are being expanded for our jail – a city itself. The Commissioners Court has approved funding for a Physician Assistant, with mental health experience, to serve in a full-time capacity under Dr. Barta, our contract physician for the jail and under Dr. Khan, our contract psychiatrist for the jail. Funding for equipment for adequate evaluation has been provided to reduce the expensive and time-consuming trips to a hospital needed in assessing and caring for inmates. Additionally, BTCS is expanding services for screening and assessments of inmates in the jail by positioning a jail-based care coordinator and a court-based care coordinator. Combined, these services are expected to provide significant savings to taxpayers with diversion from the jail where possible while enhancing care for inmates in-house (so-to-speak) and facilitating their navigation through our justice systems. Treatment plans will be created in partnership with civil and felony court judges by offering care options closest to person's home or place of work for court-ordered treatment. All the services will be implemented by early February. Funding will be provided through Williamson County for the Physician Assistant with BTCS expanding services through a Community Mental Health grant.

What about our youth requiring mental health services? The county and BTCS are partnering with Rock Springs Hospital, located in Georgetown, to provide 24 additional in-house psychiatric hospital beds to the existing 72-bed hospital in a new wing; construction is partially funded using American Rescue Plan Act funding. We hope the center will be available around Christmas time. In addition, another 16 beds will be established for through a Therapeutic Respite Program located in Round Rock. The program will serve youth, ages 5-17, in crisis and their families. These youth will receive wraparound care including innovative therapies, includes those specific for autism if needed, care coordination, case and medication management; this will be the only program of its kind in a 90-mile radius. The goal of this unique program is to support successful reunification of the family.

Finally, Williamson County's Facility Division has been working to convert an existing building in Georgetown into a 23-hour observation center for adults. This would be a law enforcement drop-off center allowing officers to return to duty quickly. The center will provide psychiatric care and provide for safe transition to the additional, appropriate level of care. Staffed by 27 mental health, primary care professionals and Crisis Intervention Team members (moving from Round Rock to this building), this program provides a safe facility for those determined to be in crisis and a possible harm to themselves or others. Williamson County is using CARES Act funds to reconfigure and upgrade this building for this new public service. The personnel supporting the triage and 23-hour observation is funded through BTCS Community Mental Health Centers Grant from SAMSHA, and personnel from the Williamson County Sheriff's department or Georgetown PD if needed. The remainder of the staff are funded through BTCS reserve funds with a plan for partial funding through Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

We all are feeling the stresses and strains of this pandemic; Wilco is stepping up to services for those who break.



Where is Commissioner Cook?



Community Meeting at Jollyville Elementary School

Recently, there was a frightening traffic accident where a mother was hit by a car after pushing her daughter to safety. The Jollyville Elementary community called for a meeting to address this issue. Complicating matters is where the school is located. It is in an area that straddles all 3 local government entities– Williamson and Travis Counties and the City of Austin with Council Member McKenzie Kelly in attendance. All three entities were represented in the meeting, as well as



Round Rock ISD. In addition, Texas Representative Celia Israel was there. Expanding school zones, traffic signs, and more law enforcement in the area were all discussed, and plans to include all three are being developed.



Commissioner Cook had the honor of swearing in 2 reappointments to the Emergency Services District (ESD) #1 Board of the Jollyville Fire Department– Steve Rundell and Laurie Golding. Thank you for your continued service to the residents of ESD 1!





IN COMMISSIONERS COURT

The County Clerk's Office was awarded the Five Star Vital Registration Award from the Texas Department of State Health Services, Vital Statistics Unit. Cynthia Tidwell and Marlen Rossetti (L-R on front row) were mentioned specifically for their contributions.



The 5 Star award acknowledges Vital Statistics Partners who understand the importance of vital statistics and its impact on the citizens of Texas. This award honors Partners who go above and beyond the duties of birth and death registration by attending trainings & keeping up with the latest legislation and trends.

There are stringent criteria for achieving "exemplary" status in the areas of timeliness of filing registrations with the state database (registering 100% within one business day), attending regional and statewide conferences, use of the state's Remote Birth Access System with a 98% or higher completion rate, and completing a self-assessment survey. All done during the tough year of 2021!

Thank you Cynthia and Marlen for making this possible!

New Real Estate Term

Spite Strip, also known as revenge strip or grudge strip, is a real estate term typically referring to land being used as a means to prevent legal access over it – think land between a road, running parallel to the road, preventing the creation of a road or drive to access the land on its other (non-road) side. Well in this case, the county had acquired land from the Pearson-England family for Avery Ranch Blvd and Pearson Ranch Road just south of the Pearson Ranch Rd intersection and the paperwork left the county owning a strip of land impacting access to land remaining with the Pearson/England family (our former County Engineer), so we fixed it in Court by approving a strip swap of real estate – no money involved. Our former County Engineer even paid for the surveying work.

IN THE NEWS

Commissioner Cook: Are we ready for another natural disaster?

[Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook: Are we ready for another natural disaster? \(statesman.com\)](https://www.statesman.com/story/news/local/2021/01/11/willamson-county-commissioner-terry-cook-are-we-ready-for-another-natural-disaster/5511111002700000)

This stint of cold weather has brought with it lots of media stories and projections concerning a possible repeat of last year's deadly winter freeze in Texas and the possibility and warnings to get ready. Well, are you?

Not only a bout with seriously low temps again, but what about flooding or sweeping grass fires? I watched on Dec. 30 the live coverage of Boulder (Colorado) County's fire as it swept through the area of my former home, which still is standing while homes in front of it and behind it were reduced to ash. This fire was burning a football field-size area and all its contents in seconds with the hurricane-force wind gusts of 115 mph. All but one person was able to evacuate, but everything they possessed is gone for thousands of families, including many pets.

Central Texas leads the nation in the variety and the frequency of natural disasters: tornadoes, flooding (remember 2015 in Taylor?), hailstorms, fires (usually caused by humans), and droughts (we're just in serious drought – thank goodness for some, but not enough, rain on Jan. 11). That 2021 winter storm was a new experience and caught many of us off guard and unprepared.

Williamson County's emergency management team has been assessing and preparing since the 2021 storm. We have names and direct phone numbers to those in the electricity supply business that should have our backs for immediate notifications and other information. We have processes to sustain automatic backup switchover to diesel-powered generators for all emergency radio towers for the county's first responders. Emergency Medical Services has traction socks for the ambulances should we receive significant snow or ice this year. Our cities and municipal utility district's have worked to implement strategies and equipment to secure continuous water and wastewater flow for their clients. All have worked to identify sites for shelters within their respective jurisdictions.

But what about you? Are you thinking someone else will be responsible for you? How many of you who own homes or condos have actually located your water valve in the yard? Do you own a water valve key needed to shut off the water supply to your home? Do you remember where you put it? Did you wrap any exposed pipes in your attic? What's in your pantry? Do you have food that doesn't require cooking and water to drink for seven days for your family? How about a non-electric can opener? If your waterline freezes or must be turned off because a pipe broke, how will you flush toilets?

What if that alert comes across your phone telling you to evacuate immediately? Do you have a list of all your on-line accounts and passwords? Do you have your prescriptions and your emergency contacts all on your cell phone? If you, or someone you know, is medically fragile, are you registered on the Texas Emergency Assistance Registry (stear.tdem.texas.gov) if your life cannot be sustained in the absence of electricity (dialysis, oxygen, etc.). If you and your family members get separated in an evacuation, do you have a plan?

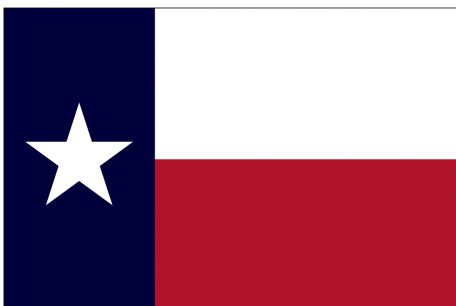
The Wilco Emergency Management office has lists of items for an emergency supply kit for at-home or evacuations. Visit wilco.org/Departments/Emergency-Management for all your shopping, planning and preparation needs.

This year, let's all be ready. Get ready while life is calm and make sure all your family members prepare and know what to do. Keep your gas tank nearly full, sitting in a line at a gas station is not an evacuation.

We're all in this together!



Help ensure Democracy.



Become a pollworker!

Requirement is that you are a registered voter of Williamson County.

Election Day for the Democratic and Republican Primaries is March 1! If you are interested in serving as a poll worker, field technician or other election worker positions, please learn more [HERE](#).

ALSO,

Legislation passed on September 1, 2009 allows students 16 years or older to serve as election clerks. Eligible students must be:

- **A U.S. Citizen and resident of Williamson County**
- **16 years or older on Election Day**
- **Enrolled in school (public, private or qualified home school) with a GPA of 3.0 or higher**
- **Have the written consent of a parent or guardian to participate**

The Texas Education Code includes service as an election clerk as an acceptable "excused absence."

Learn more at the link above.

**Important
Election
Dates**

Last day to register to vote: Monday, January 31, 2022

Early Voting period: Monday, February 14 to Friday, February 25, 2022

Last Day to Apply for Ballot by Mail (*Received, not postmarked*): Friday, February 18, 2022

ROAD UPDATES



620 at Railroad/Chisholm Trail (TxDOT with primary contractor Bridges and Roads LLC)– Focus continues to be on the structures on the east end of the project. The preliminary work of grading and compacting under the bridge for the new road has begun. Sidewalks and curb and gutter are being placed in various locations along the south side of the roadway. Go [HERE](#) to learn more. This is a \$27.5M TxDOT project. Estimated completion date is STILL summer 2022.

Pond Springs Road Area Drainage Improvements– Interim plans (aka 60%) will be sent to the City of Austin the first week of February to get their input. The design will largely remain the same, however outflow will be diverted downstream of Woods Pond. The cost of the project is anticipated to be significantly less expensive, going from \$4.17M to approximately \$3.25M, although that amount is not set in stone yet. Hopefully, the cost will go even lower. Construction start is anticipated early 2023.

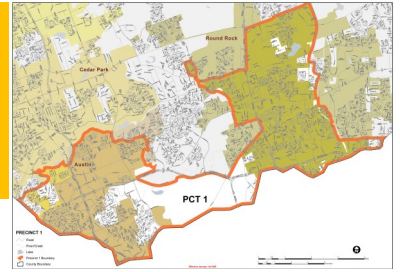
Forest North Drainage Improvements Phase III (Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC) – The concrete pipe system on Shady Oaks Dr. has been completed, as has all grading ditches and spreading topsoil. Pavement repairs are done in the Shasta Zone and sidewalk and curb and gutter in the Shady Oaks Zone has been formed and poured. This is a county job to create drainage in this very flat area with an estimated cost of \$4.9M. Substantial completion is STILL anticipated in early 2022. Austin will be on-site reviewing all water lines the first week of February—then just punchlist items to complete.

University Blvd. widening from IH-35 to just east of Sunrise Rd. (Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC)– *Still a good idea to stay off University if you possibly can!!!* Work on the concrete walls for the box culvert extension to the east of the hospital driveway has begun. Asphalt has begun to be laid on the westbound lanes at Sunrise Rd. to the east about 400 feet. A City of Round Rock project, it is slated to finish in early 2022. Getting close to completion!

Aerial view of the Great Oaks Bridge Project



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

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