



# Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook NEWSLETTER

July 2022 Volume 6 Issue 7

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<sup>DORIS</sup>  
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# The Message



## Homelessness Among Us

On Thursday, July 21, I travelled with Constable Mickey Chance and Chief Deputy Constable Patrick Youngren to visit homeless encampments in Precinct 1. WOW – anywhere you see a forested corner with serious underbrush, encampments have been established. Whether along RR620, 183, Parmer, Lake Creek, or the Forest North subdivision, those without housing have established a residency. Several larger ones have been deserted yet an incredible amount of trash, shopping carts, clothing – you name it – has been left behind. So now who is responsible for cleanup? The property owners who may be a city, the county, a business group or individual owner – public nuisance is the normal offense – although if left in creeks or dry creek beds – the local water authority may be involved in pursuing cleanup.

The debate over the homeless swirls around us. A recent opinion piece in [Governing.com](http://Governing.com) by Jabari Simama really nailed the issues about perceptions of, generally negative opinions for the homeless, and general lack of resolve by government entities to effectively address it. Most homeless persons are homeless for six weeks or less; 40% have jobs. For them it is a temporary condition. There is a smaller slice of homeless suffering from drug addiction or mental illness and tend to be the “chronically” unhoused. Of course, the solutions are not simple nor inexpensive, but the problem is growing. Nationally, the Department of Housing and Urban Development reports that 21% of their homeless clients reside in the suburbs – not just a city problem anymore. Yet it is generally the city governments, with their budgets aided by sales tax revenue, that make major investments to provide permanent, supportive housing and services.

Locally, of course, it is Austin working in a myriad of ways to provide housing and services for those without housing. Williamson County used to deliver those who were homeless down to the ARCH in Austin. The City of Austin uses resources and coalitions with non-profits to address housing the homeless population in Travis County. A substantial number of homeless persons reside in Austin within Williamson County – perhaps our largest population in this sector, but every city has homeless residents. And now with the moratorium on evictions over, those living paycheck-to-paycheck are just one paycheck away from homelessness, unless there’s family or friends that can take them in. Rents have mushroomed such that those previously housed can no longer find affordable housing. Austin City Council just voted to place a \$350M bond proposal on the ballot for funding affordable housing programs. In Williamson County, free-market reigns.

Houston has been praised for its emphasis on providing housing and services for a substantial homeless population. That 4<sup>th</sup> largest city in America housed 25,000 people directly into apartments

or houses rather than just dismantling encampments and shuffling them around the city or into temporary shelters. The streamlined process currently has a 32-day wait for housing. They removed restrictions, such as individuals had to be sober, drug free, or employed. Focus is to house now, then provide services. Mayor Sylvester Turner has worked with Harris County leaders to unveil a \$100 million plan using a mix of federal, state, county, and city funds to further reduce the residual homeless count to half by 2025.

Atlanta adopted the Houston approach and cut its homeless numbers by 40 percent and gained corporate support augmenting the funding to continue the program.

One in every 14 Americans experience homelessness at some point. Those who are homeless are disproportionately black. The largest percentage of homeless youth are those aging out of the CPS/Foster care programs. Nationally, affordable housing has rapidly disappeared while growth in median incomes increasingly trails costs for housing.

States are also involved in funding assistance to cities and counties for housing options. In Colorado, the state government has established funding for cities or counties to kickstart housing or rental assistance and services for those homeless or near-homeless using 2021 flexible Home-ARP funds from HUD with use then determined by the cities and counties.

Make no mistake. Homelessness exists in Williamson County. In the end, no one is talking about solving poverty, but about increasing affordable housing. It is a team effort – for Wilco, it would mean the County + Cities working together to augment any funding with federal funds, setting aside land for affordable housing, partnering with non-profits, and removing any roadblocks in the zoning and fee processes to facilitate affordability. This requires willpower from our local governing parties. It is our moral imperative.

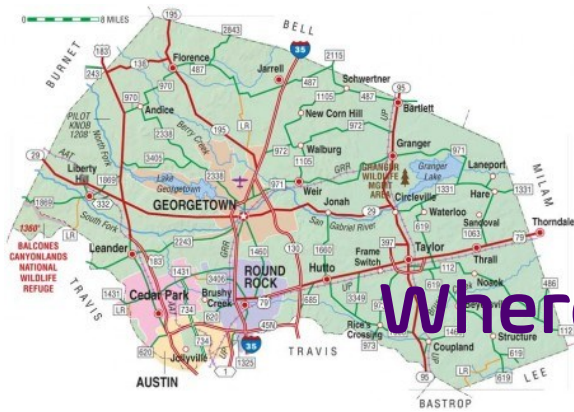


For anyone who observes these encampments in the City of Austin, feel free to contact Council Member Mackenzie Kelly's office, so they can forward to the appropriate departments for cleanup or site visits:



512-978-2106 [District6@austintexas.gov](mailto:District6@austintexas.gov)





**Doris!**

**Where is Commissioner Cook?**



Doris with the Constable 1 leadership L-R: Lt. Jeff Parker, Constable Mickey Chance, Chief Patrick Youngren

Commissioner Cook was invited to be a part of Rattan Creek Neighborhood's July 4th Celebrations, but she had to be out of town that weekend. So, Doris from our office filled in admirably.



Jollyville Fire Department with Chief Brad Landi (3rd from left) and crew



Parade participant

Commissioner Cook was in training in Galveston and then on her annual trip to the North Carolina beach



***Congratulations!***

Williamson County is the recipient of the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA). This is the 12th consecutive year Williamson County has received this award which reflects the commitment of the County and staff to meeting the highest principles of governmental budgeting.

We couldn't do this with our phenomenal Budget Office staff.

L-R: Asst. Budget Officer Sarah Crain, Budget Officer Ashlie Holladay, Budget Analyst Saira Hernandez

Donate school supplies to receive an extra ticket to win a door prize!

# COME BEAT THE HEAT AT FAMILY FEST

**BROUGHT TO YOU BY:**



**FOOD, FUN, INDOOR & OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES**



**AUGUST 6**  
**10AM - 2PM**

GEORGETOWN BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB  
1100 THOUSAND OAKS BLVD,  
GEORGETOWN, TX

**RSVP  
TODAY!**







# IN COMMISSIONERS COURT

**PPPS Week**  
**Pretrial, Probation, and Parole**  
**Supervision**



The Williamson County Commissioners Court recognized July 17 - 23, 2022, as Pretrial, Probation, and Parole Supervision (PPPS) Week recognizing the essential responsibilities performed by pretrial, probation, parole, and community supervision professionals.

The county is committed to reducing recidivism through our Williamson County Community Supervision and Corrections Department (CSCD) program, which promotes positive change in our community by providing supervision services, in addition to supportive inpatient and outpatient treatment services for criminal offenders.

Currently, Williamson County CSCD has 80 staff members who supervise approximately 3,200 criminal justice-involved adults in Williamson County. Not an easy feat and one where every single staffer is committed 100% to assisting defendants forge a new start in life. For more information about the Williamson County Adult Probation program, visit: <https://www.adultprobation.net/>.

The Williamson County Pretrial Services Department consists of 17 full-time and two part-time employees, and they have a tall order. Staff provide post-release supervision for defendants released on bond and manage alcohol monitoring reporting for all criminal courts. Furthermore, they provide administrative support to the Magistrate's Office, manage indigent defense appointments, and provide oversight of the cite and release and emergency protective order modification processes. Pretrial Services staff also conducts risk and financial screenings in order to assist the judiciary in making bail-related decisions. For information on pretrial services, go to <https://www.wilco.org/Departments/Pretrial-Services>.



### Williamson County Public Affairs Recognized with Statewide Awards

The Williamson County Public Affairs office took home **two** statewide awards for communication from the Texas Association of Municipal Information Officers (TAMIO) annual conference in Houston this month.

The office received the Award of Excellence in the category of Video – Special or One-Time Program Over 100,000. The video featured a virtual ribbon cutting for the Brushy Creek Regional Trail Phase V highlighting different sections of the trail to the tune of an original parody of “Be Our Guest.” The video format was needed as Williamson County was celebrating the grand opening for a newly constructed section of the regional trail during the COVID-19 pandemic when in-person events were not being held. The video received higher engagement than other posts on all social media platforms. Judges said it was cleverly executed with high marks on goals and objectives.

Back in April, Government Social Media awarded this video, “Be Our Guest,” the Golden Post Award, making this TAMIO award the 2nd one for the same video!

Take a look at that video [HERE](#).

Our County Public Affairs Office also received the Award of Honor for Communications Planning for their five-year strategic communication plan. This plan was created to carry the department through several significant milestones coming over the next five years including the County’s 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a new website and brand refresh. Judges commented that the plan did a “great job outlining the thorough process to determine the target audiences, as well as the tactics and strategies to reach them.”

## IN THE NEWS

### **Williamson Commissioner Cook: What happens when the unexpected does?**

[Williamson Commissioner Cook: What happens when the unexpected does? \(statesman.com\)](https://www.statesman.com/story/news/2022/02/22/williamson-commissioner-cook-what-happens-when-the-unexpected-does/7000000000)

In an episode of “I Love Lucy”, how did Lucy respond in the chocolate factory when the chocolates came faster than she could box them? She gained 20 pounds.

Seldom does life follow our plans, hence contingency planning.

How we react shows our character and perhaps its flaws. Those who weather those changes tend to show creativity and resilience, not resignation and despair.

In my second year as commissioner in 2018, I participated in a “table-top disaster exercise.” This is a scripted disaster with all the normal players participating as though in their official roles. In this case, the scenario was a major 5K race planned in Twin Peaks Park across a major highway from the Upper Brushy Creek Water Improvement District’s Dam 6. The scenario included lots of rain, and the water in the reservoir was rising. I, as a commissioner, allegedly began receiving calls from citizens in the apartments by the reservoir stating that the water was about to breach the dam. What would be my response (action) be?

Of course, I was to call emergency management and relay the information from the constituents. I was not responsible for evacuating people nor calling off the 5K. So at the appointed time, I called the emergency management director’s landline, but there was no response. I waited 10 minutes, there was still no response. Hmm? Were they actually testing me? What was my contingency plan for this? I called our county engineer on his cell phone – using the number I actually had in my phone. Lo, and behold, he answered. Coincidentally, at that precise moment, he and the director of Wilco’s Emergency Management were on-site at the cave-in that occurred overnight in Cat Hollow (an area in the Brushy Creek MUD). A real emergency! I’ve since added every director’s cell phone into my phone’s directory.

Life certainly has its twists and turns. Of course, my staff and I took off to see this spectacle, which was then in my precinct. It was a huge opening in Cambria Drive just south of Ephraim Road. The cave-in’s cause was speculative, but it showed that the cave ceiling was just below the base of the road. Construction had just missed discovery back in the 1970s. On one side of the opening was a waterline, broken open by the debris as it fell 20 feet to the bottom of the large cave opening. On the other side of the opening was a natural gas line – unharmed. The Brushy Creek MUD staff had quickly turned off the water. Now the county was facing an unexpected impact on our fiscal year 2017 budget and rapid response for safe repairs to reopen Cambria. Investigations showed cave chambers extending under three of the homes and under Ephraim road.

Caves are nothing new to areas west of Interstate 35 but are usually discovered during construction of roads, homes, schools and businesses. This one revealed itself after many years.

For those of us in local governments, these diversions are frequent and diverse. Curve balls coming at us from all directions.

Disease: My time as commissioner included the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic we all endured. Life as we knew it had to change in our collective efforts to contain it and stay free of it.

Weather events: always something in Central Texas. My tenure has included Hurricane Harvey in 2017 and dispatching many first responders to help with recovery, and the 2022 tornadoes causing extensive damage. We faced challenges during the historic winter freeze in 2021 like acquiring and distributing diesel fuel and water, providing heated shelters for people and establishing points of power for charging phones and oxygen concentrators, to transporting people in snow and ice to dialysis clinics with power, forcing local governments to operate overtime. Now we face extreme drought and heat. Where will it take us?

Human-induced issues: There was that bomber who chose to spend a night in Round Rock’s Red Roof Inn, also in my precinct, and then drove down the I-35 frontage road followed by law enforcement who forced him onto the shoulder where he exploded a bomb and self-destructed. Fortunately, no law enforcement officer was injured, and the public was safe. Of course, the unexpected is constant in the lives of first responders; they train for this. Then we faced the city of Austin water treatment plant disaster in February, impacting hundreds of our county residents on Austin water that compelled us to distribute water from Kelly-Reeves Athletic Field’s parking lot. I worked over eight hours lifting water cases and figuring out how to open tailgates (so many ways).





**If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide or experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis, 988 provides 24/7 connection to confidential support. There is Hope. Just call or text 988 or chat [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)**



## **Texas Housing Assistance Line**

**1-855-802-0014**

**The Texas Health and Human Services Commission has launched this new resource available 24/7 to help people facing housing instability or homelessness, with a focus on those dealing with mental health or substance abuse issues.**

**Trained consultants will refer callers to local housing resources, crisis services, local mental and behavioral health authorities, outreach-screening-assessment-referral programs, and 211, as appropriate.**





**Saturday, October 8, 2022  
9:00AM CDT-12:00PM CDT  
Georgetown's San Gabriel Park**

**\$35**

176 spots left. Price increases after October 7, 2022 at 11:59pm CDT

**Registration Fees:**

15 & Over - \$35.00  
14 & Under - \$17.50

**Race Day (Oct 8):**

15 & Over - \$40.00  
14 & Under - \$20.00

There are no refunds of registration fees.

**Course Map & Description:**

The course is the Randy Morrow Trail in Georgetown's San Gabriel Park beginning near the Cypress Pavilion and continuing to the 1.5 mile marker near the Rivery Blvd. Bridge where we will turn-around and finish back at the trail entrance.

The race is preceded by an upbeat program and celebration – even has a group warmup stretch. You can choose to walk or run. I encourage you to get a group registered and come out and support the those who survive domestic violence and those who assist those victims to thrive.

**Awards:** Awards will be given to the first, second, and third place male and female finishers in the following age groups: 14 and under, 15-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70 & over.

***This race is low-key and very fun for persons of any ability – come out on Saturday, October 8<sup>th</sup> and get your workout for a great cause!***

Early Packet Pick-Up: TBA

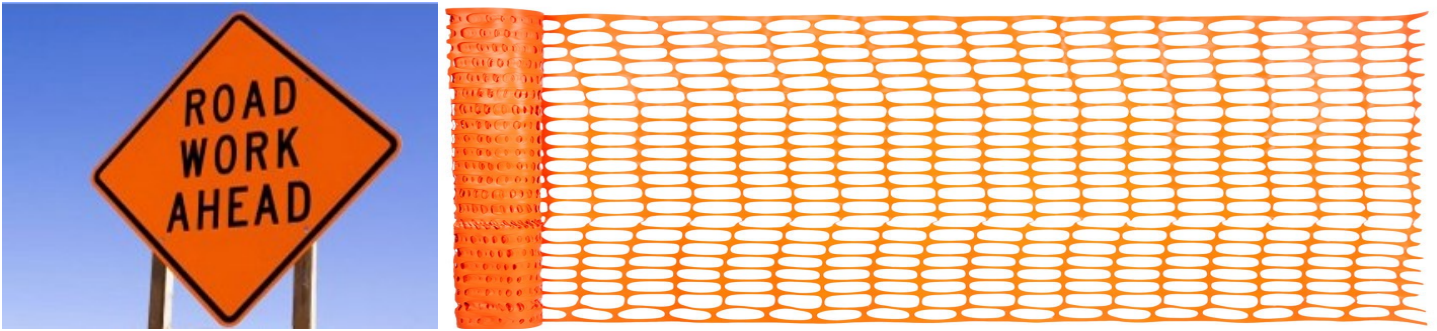
**[RACE CONTACT INFO](#)**

If you have questions about the race, go to:

<https://runsignup.com/Race/TX/Georgetown/HopeAllianceSurvivetoThrive5K> and scroll down to “Questions”.







620 at Railroad/Chisholm Trail (TxDOT with primary contractor Bridges and Roads LLC)– Retaining walls are continuing to be constructed, one at the east of the project along Chisholm Trail, and the other along the eastbound frontage road between Chisholm Trail and Brentwood St. Excavation continues for the detention pond under the railroad bridge. Topsoil is being placed along the eastbound frontage road from Deep Wood to the bridge and concrete has been placed for the east approach slab to the bridge. The eastbound and westbound lanes of RM 620 have shifted as crews construct the westbound frontage road from Deepwood Drive to Brentwood Drive. Westbound RM 620 traffic has shifted to the existing eastbound lanes, and eastbound traffic shifted to the newly constructed eastbound frontage road. **SLOW DOWN—SIGNAGE IS LARGELY ABSENT AND MANY NEAR ACCIDENTS REPORTED BY DRIVERS.** The new traffic pattern is expected to be in place through December 2022, weather permitting. Road signs and message boards have been placed onsite to alert drivers to the change. Go [HERE](#) to learn more. This is a \$27.5M TxDOT project. Estimated completion date is summer 2023.

Pond Springs Road Area Drainage Improvements– Utility coordinators are currently placing test holes to verify the location of City of Austin water and wastewater lines. One would think they know where they are. A meeting with Austin Water Utility is being scheduled for August to discuss the results of the test holes. The cost of the project is \$3.2M. Construction start is anticipated Spring 2023.

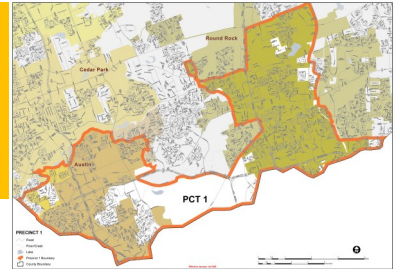
University Blvd. widening from IH-35 to just east of Sunrise Rd. (Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC)– *Still a good idea to stay off University if you possibly can!!!* Work continues on the eastbound lanes between Sunrise Rd. and University Oaks Blvd. Concrete has been poured for the southwest corner of the University Blvd. and Sunrise Rd. intersection. Driveways on N. Mays are starting to be formed so they will be ready to receive concrete. 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—** Portions of the bridge deck have been poured. Traffic signal conduit to get power to the traffic signals is being installed. Completion is anticipated in Spring 2023.



# 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](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  
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](mailto:doris.sanchez@wilco.org) or  
512-244-8610