

Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook

NEWSLETTER

February 2022 Volume 6 Issue 2



**Primary
Is
March 1!**

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The Message



I pen (ok, type) this message on the eve of our 2022 Primary Election. I am dismayed by the low, early voting numbers, 9.68%, after Williamson County set a voter turnout all-time high 76.22% for participation in the 2020 election. On Tuesday, March 1, we could restore high voting numbers.

Following 2020 Census numbers and redistricting, we have more election centers and volunteers than in the past. In fact, Christopher Davis, our Elections Administrator for Williamson County, reports that we have 65 Republican and 65 Democratic judges for this primary election. We have more inexperienced, but all sufficiently trained, judges than in past elections. This may result in Election Day results coming in slower as more judges are involved in the return of elections materials requiring the processing of a higher number of elections judge vehicles on Tuesday night.

As normal, early voting results should be posted on the wilco.org/elections website just after 7PM, then the grind to the preliminary elections totals will proceed thru the night. Note to the impatient: generally, the early election results hold thru the election day voting, however, we have had some squeakers.

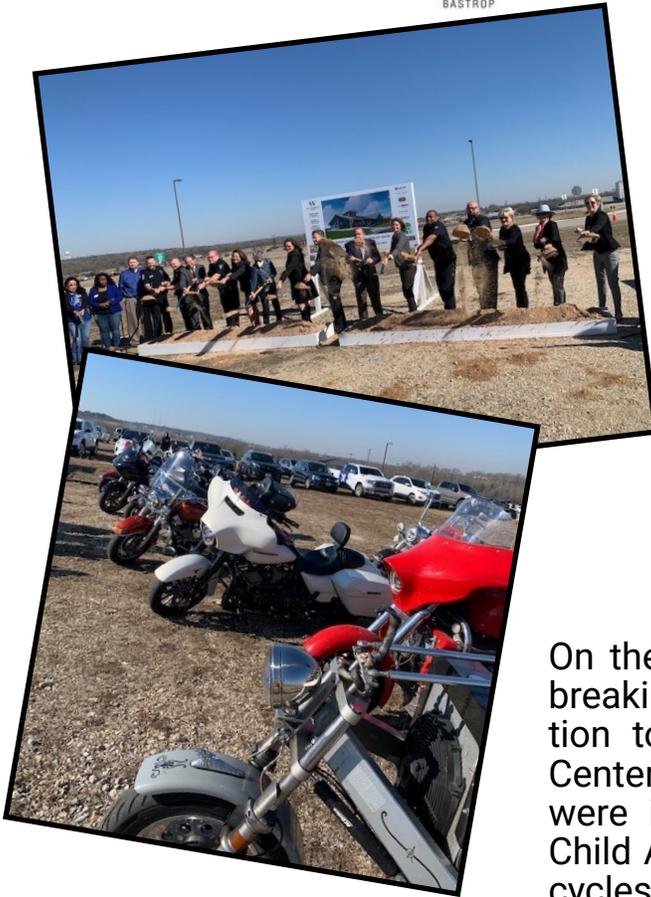
Last week I spent Wednesday thru Friday in Bryan Texas at the V.G. Young Institute for County Judges and Commissioners in acquisition of continuing education hours as required by Local Government Code, Section 81.0025. Keynote speaker, Tom Luce, Founder and Chairman of Texas 2036 (Texas' bicentennial) gave insight to the future.

- Although Texas grew by over 4M in 2020 Census, 143 counties lost population.
- Primary growth area (87%) was in the San Antonio-Houston-Dallas triangle.
- Nearly half of the state's workers are not native Texans.
- Newcomers hold higher levels of education than native Texans (only ~32% of Texans obtain post-secondary credentials within 6-years of HS graduation.
- By 2036, 71% of all jobs will require a post-secondary credential.
- Based on current influx of new residents, by 2036, Texas must add 8 million more jobs – that's as many jobs as in the DFW and Houston Metro area today – *can we, will we, be able to do that?*
- Since 2011, Texas has added mostly low and mid-wage jobs.
- Future is bleak for our kids: 70% of 4th graders cannot read at grade level. 60% of our 4th graders cannot perform math at grade level. This was happening before Covid changed and challenged our lives.
- 2020 data revealed that only 53% of our students are college ready. Only 19% were career ready.
- To worsen these Texas realities, nearly 5 million Texans are uninsured medically (1/6 of our population).

Williamson County is starting a process to define our strategic plan for the county. Challenges are many, opportunities abound. I hope you will join me in this effort.



Where is Commissioner Cook?



On the beautiful morning of February 11, the ground-breaking for the long-awaited 15,000 square foot addition to The Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center (WCCAC) took place. More than 100 guests were in attendance, including BACA, Bikers Against Child Abuse, who showed up in masse on their motorcycles! The extension will include crisis services, forensic interviews, family advocacy and a multi-disciplinary hub, as well as an outdoor play area.

The current building is also undergoing renovations, which includes new furniture, flooring and a therapy garden. The funding goal for the renovations and addition is \$15.35 million. That includes a \$9.8 million contribution from Williamson County. As you can see, a special thanks goes to Toyota of Cedar Park for their very generous donation!

To learn more about the expansion and ways to give, go to <https://wilcocac.org/expansion/>.



Wilco Responds to Water Needs for our City of Austin and Austin ETJ Residents

February, and once again, water was in short supply for county residents. This time not due to the weather, but to human error in Austin Water processing. A great deal of residents in Southwest Wilco are either in the city of Austin or are supplied water by Austin Water. Suddenly, we had about 80,000 residents in need of clean water.

Our Emergency Management Team, lead by Michael Shoe and Chris Connealy, organized a response. Employees of Williamson County and associated groups, such as ARES, the Amateur Radio Emergency Service, (our HAM radio operators in emergencies – yes still used when towers go down and your cell phone becomes useless) and TEXSAR, search and rescue, joined together at Kelly Reeves Athletic Complex and set up a water distribution brigade with pallets of both bottled and canned water (stack up the best). Our distribution was able to service 10 vehicles at a time and over 3 days, distributed 21 pallets of water to 4,200 vehicles. Also 21 pallets to ISDs to support in-person schooling. Distributions were from noon until 8, although on the first day, we did run out of water ahead of the 8PM termination time.

I worked 8 hours on the second day of distribution. Boy, I never knew there were so many different ways to open tailgates and back doors on vehicles. Many drivers were unaware that their vehicles had to be in park to use electric opening mechanisms on their cars. Additionally, getting water seemed to be a spur of the moment event for many as we had to rearrange the contents of trunks, back seats and rear compartments, all while balancing a case of water on our hip, in order to safely load it in the vehicle. I will tell you, however, I loved the electric opening and closing of those tailgates and doors as the day went on. I give the ingenuity award to Volkswagen for one model of their SUVs for “hidden in plain sight” latch for a tailgate.



The day began sunny and mild with pretty good and cool breeze. The temps dropped throughout the distribution and we all added layers to our clothing, ending with gloves by 8PM. The water supplies kept coming and so did the vehicles. Heads did roll at Austin water which is too bad – those are the guys who have



Lone Star Circle of Care Unveils its New Taylor Facility

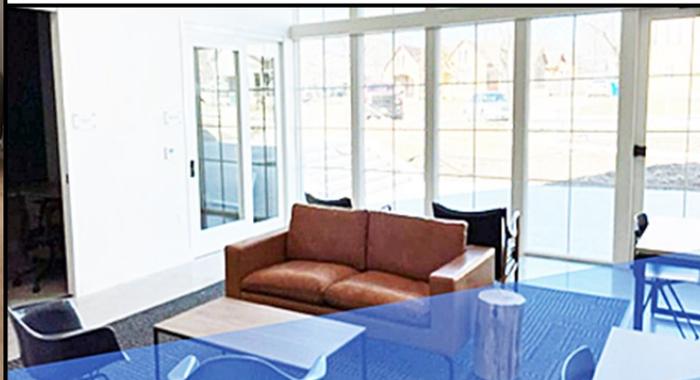


The West End School building on West 4th Street in Taylor has been revitalized into Lone Star's newest location in Taylor. A large tent was erected for a large, frigid but cheering crowd on Friday, February 25, for the official ribbon cutting for the new Taylor facility. I love that Taylor does not typically tear-down and raze their wonderful older buildings but repurpose those existing structures enhancing their charm in this

wonderful city in the east. The building re-do, in this case, was a labor of love and collaboration of private-public concerns to raise the vision and money to make this happen to an area of Williamson County in much need for healthcare, especially for those of lowest income. Lone Star provides medical services for those with insurance, including Medicare and Medicaid & Wilco Cares, and for those without insurance on a sliding scale based on income.



Soaring windows allowed the sun to fill the interior space with bright light as we toured exam rooms, workspaces and the community dining room for senior meals-on-wheels programs. Flanked to the south is a long series of buildings



providing Head Start programs and support. And surprise of all surprises in a neighborhood setting – parking for all!



IN COMMISSIONERS COURT

Williamson County Juvenile Services (WCJS) is being recognized as a Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®) Ambassador Organization from the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development, which is a program through the Department of Psychology at Texas Christian University (TCU). This program has only recognized four other organizations nationally and gives this title exclusively to those it identifies as key partners who have long-term relationships with the Purvis Institute and are furthering its mission at a systemic level using TBRI®. Specifically, WCJS is being recognized for their work in comprehensively implementing TBRI® throughout all department services and programs as well as extending TBRI® training opportunities across youth-serving and juvenile justice systems across the state.



TBRI® is an attachment-based, trauma-informed intervention program that is designed to meet the complex needs of vulnerable children. TBRI® emphasizes the use of connection and trust to address needs of children who have experienced adversity, early harm, toxic stress and/or trauma. This type of intervention is used in the Williamson County Juvenile Services program to help nurture and empower the youth who are part of the juvenile justice system.

WCJS operates a comprehensive juvenile services system created to serve youth arrested for delinquent conduct, youth at-risk of entering the juvenile justice system, as well as students referred through school expulsion. WCJS started in 1979, and through support from the Williamson County Commissioners Court, the Williamson County Juvenile Board and the Texas Juvenile Justice Department, WCJS has grown into a premier organization that provides progressive, innovative programming while collaborating with other organizations that share similar service philosophies. The WCJS vision is to make a difference in the community by creating opportunities for positive change through hope, empowerment, prevention and accountability.

WCJS had been using a bootcamp method, and since switching over to TBRI®, they are finding that recidivism is greatly reduced.

The Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development is a program of the Department of Psychology in the TCU College of Science & Engineering in Fort Worth, Texas. Their mission is to perform research, education, training and outreach efforts to improve the lives of children who have experienced abuse, neglect and/or trauma. Their research and interventions are empowering parents, professionals and students with trauma-informed strategies that improve outcomes for children and youth.



After 17 years in service to those in Williamson County who needed help the most, Annie Burwell, our Mobile Outreach Team (MOT) Director, has accepted a similar position with the City of Round Rock. In fact, most, if not all, MOT employees are following her over there, since Round Rock has started their own MOT-like program.

Annie mentioned that one of her first duties with the county was to purchase "all the blankets" for hurricane evacuees and one of her last duties has been to help vulnerable persons find a warm place to

stay during the last winter storm. In true Annie fashion, she gave credit to all of the first responders and leaders and her incredible staff for the work answering over 50,000 calls for service that's been done during her tenure.

Thank you, Annie, for being a great friend to this office and especially for the work you have done for the most vulnerable in Williamson County!



The Williamson County Auditor's Office has continued their excellent service and was recognized for two awards for its financial reporting.

First, the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to Williamson County for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year that ended September 30, 2020. This counts as the highest form of recognition and represents a significant accomplishment in government accounting and financial reporting. This is the 30th year, yes, that's 3-0, that the Williamson County Auditor's Office has received this award.

Additionally, the Auditor's Office has received GFOA's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting. To be eligible for the award, a government entity must submit its comprehensive annual financial report to GFOA's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Program and receive the certificate for the current fiscal year. Each eligible report is reviewed by judges based on the following categories: reader appeal, understandability, distribution methods, creativity and other elements.



Thank you Williamson County Auditor's Office for your excellent work as always!

Copies of these reports are available to the public on the Auditor's Office [website](#).

IN THE NEWS

Williamson Commissioner Cook: Why vote? Here are 6 reasons.

[Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook: Why vote? Here are 6 reasons. \(statesman.com\)](http://statesman.com)

Why vote?

In preparation for this topic, I perused the history of elections and voting on History.com. Apparently colonial candidates boozed up voters to, through and after the polls. George Washington is reported to have plied his potential voters with 47 gallons of beer, 35 gallons of wine, 2 gallons of cider, 3.5 pints of brandy and a whopping 70 gallons of rum punch. He won the election by 310 votes.

So who were these voters? Primarily wealthy, white, landholding, Protestant men. However, voting did not start out with the coveted privacy of the ballot deposited in a box, but was an in-person, audible vote. The wealthy voters might have received individual visits from the candidates prior to the election. On election day, supporters in many cities rented out taverns for a boozy pre-vote party. Then everyone would participate in an impromptu parade to the polls. For the less rich, all action was on election day when the candidates were expected to greet all at the polls. Following the vote, additional tavern-parties, complete with alcohol and food no matter how you voted, would occur. Ah, the good ol' days.

So how did we come to have nationwide Election Day on a November Tuesday, that fickle month for weather? We go back to 1845 when Congress passed a federal designation for the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November as Election Day across the country. Congress sought to eliminate early voting in some parts of the nation from influencing the later votes in other areas. Why Tuesday and why November? Back in the day, America was primarily an agrarian economy. Crops were planted during spring or late summer, were harvested primarily in or at the end of the summer and all that work afterward continued into late fall.

You had to travel to your county's seat to cast your vote – think about how big some of Texas' counties are and your transportation mode was a horse. It could easily take over a day to reach your poll site. Sundays were church days and were not to be encroached upon. Wednesdays were market days – your horse was needed to pull the wagon into town. We are still primarily following the farm culture for the vote although mail-in voting and early voting has increased our bandwidth for casting votes.

Now “why should we vote?” In Travis County on Jan. 15, 2015, I attended a voter registration rally. The keynote speaker was Regina Lawrence, then executive director of the Annette Straus Institute of Civic Life at the University of Texas. The state, at that time, was in the doghouse for failure of its citizens to vote. In the 2014 November election, only 28.5% of voting-age Texans participated. That put us at the next to the bottom of the nation for voting; Indiana nabbed last place.

Williamson County bested the statewide number with a turnout of 38.2% of registered voters casting a vote. It didn't help that in 2014 Texas was 44th in political competitiveness. We were a one-party state, and yep, we were pretty much a one-party county.

Much has changed since 2014. In 2016's November election, 67.57% of Williamson County's registered voters voted. We even challenged Travis County that we'd beat them in percentage of registered voter turnout from the Commissioners Court dais for the 2018 and 2020 elections. Travis County had long had an aggressive voter registration machine, but with the support of our election's administrator, Chris Davis, and his team, both Wilco parties have developed strong voter registration outreach programs. Wilco won both times for bragging rights with 63.49% to Travis' 62.84% and in 2020, 76.22% (all-time high for Wilco) to 70.55% for Travis of the registered voters participating — minus the pre-parties of centuries ago, yet we have sustained the after-party food and booze traditions.

So why vote?

1. The math says my vote doesn't matter. Your single vote won't determine who's president because of the electoral college; however, down-ballot it could. Wilco has recently seen squeak-through races. A candidate for a Cedar Park City Council seat won by two votes in 2019. The Precinct 4 candidate for Wilco commissioner won by 64 votes in 2018.

2. In a gubernatorial or presidential race, my vote won't determine the winner. However, in local elections, only votes determine the winner. Don't view your vote in a narrow light. Many may share your concerns but still vote; join them.

3. The common belief is that the political system is unresponsive and impervious to change. This is right if you don't vote. Change requires a groundswell demanding it. There's no recipe for change without votes.

4. If you don't vote, others still will. Voters vote because they are inspired — make your vote an expressive act.

5. Voting does matter. It's a practical act of civic duty. Voters aren't delusional. Most feel obligated to cast a thoughtful vote. We need to pass this conviction down to younger generations. We don't vote for immediate changes but for the long-term.

6. If all else fails, use shame to compel someone to vote. Not voting fails everyone. We can't afford to not vote.

So get fired up for this 2022 primary. Vote411.org is the League of Women Voters' website for your study of the candidates and issues. Get ready and be there by election day, March 1, to cast your vote.



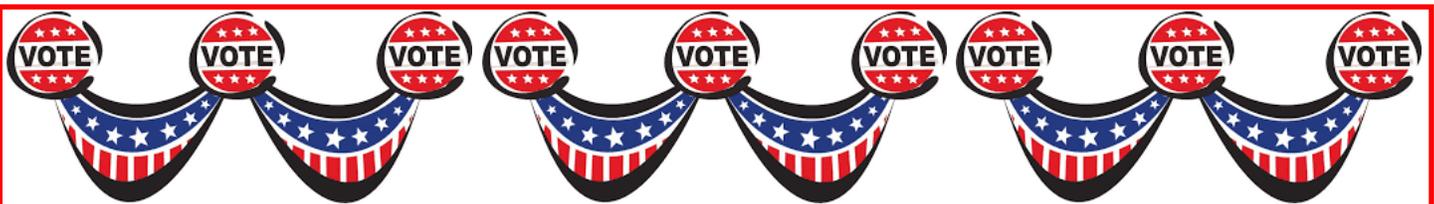


620 at Railroad/Chisholm Trail (TxDOT with primary contractor Bridges and Roads LLC)– TxDOT is really coming along on this project. Much work is being done on the supports for the bridge that'll go across the railroad tracks. Excavation for the retaining wall along the northern right of way east of N. Lake Creek Dr. has begun, as has the water line tie-in at Deep Wood. Curb and gutter and a sidewalk continues to be placed in various locations throughout the project. Go [HERE](#) to learn more. This is a \$27.5M TxDOT project. Estimated completion date is STILL summer 2022. This is one date that I believe will be achieved if the weather doesn't get too crazy over the next few months.

Pond Springs Road Area Drainage Improvements– Interim plans for the updated design have been sent to the City of Austin for their review. 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. This initial review will give us some indication of how much lower the cost will be. Fingers crossed! Construction start is anticipated early 2023.

Forest North Drainage Improvements Phase III (Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC) – All seeded areas along Eddystone St. and Shady Oaks Dr. have been watered, and hopefully it'll take. Substantial completion has been achieved and work on punch list items has started. Looks to be all done except for the final true up of the final bills. Yay! Long time in coming.

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!!!* Curb and gutter for the westbound lanes from the west side of the culvert extension to the east tie-in have been constructed. DeNucci completed forming, tying reinforcing steel, and placing concrete for the hospital driveway., and the sidewalk on the northwest corner of the North Mays intersection has been completed, as well as the striping on the north side of that intersection. Northbound traffic on N. Mays has been diverted to a single lane on the outside and southbound has been diverted to a through lane with a dedicated right turn lane. A City of Round Rock project, it is slated to finish in early 2023.



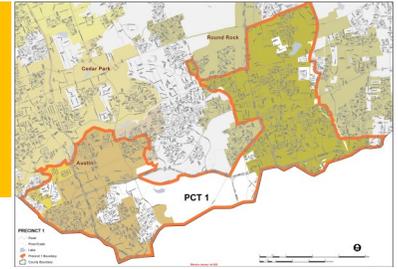
Tuesday, March 1 is the Texas Primary

Click [HERE](#) to see times and polling locations!

Don't let others choose your candidates for you!

**Your vote gives you a say into who will be the
candidates in the November election!**

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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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-
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