

Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook

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The Message



Why Vote – Why We Must Vote!

It's that year again – mid-terms. The viral spread of candidate signs are across all available spaces at voting sites in the county. Hopefully you've studied Vote411.org, the League of Women Voters' election guide for the 2022 general election. Hats off to all of you who've early voted!

Let's talk about the urgency of voting. I'm going to pull from two sources: 1) A presentation by Regina Lawrence, former Executive Director of the Annette Straus Institute of Civic Life at UT Austin, made at the Travis County Deputy Voter Registrars' recognition and training program on January 15, 2015, and from 2) Eric Levitz, senior writer for the New Yorker Magazine, pulling from his article calling for millennials to vote.

Let's start with Regina's arguments for "why vote?" She gave us 6 reasons to vote.

1. Voters struggle with seeing their contribution to the decision-making process in top-level elections, especially presidential, where the electoral college seems to be the decider, and who really knows what a governor does? However, she encouraged us to consider all those down-ballot candidates where most issues that affect your life are determined – especially *WAY DOWN* the ballot. In 2017, an Austin city council race was lost by 95 votes and a Round Rock city council race was won by 13 votes. In 2019, a Georgetown city council race was won by 15 votes and a Cedar Park city council race was lost by 2 votes. In the same year, the incumbent Wilco Justice of the Peace in Precinct 4 lost by 89 votes and the Commissioner for that precinct won by 166 votes. Down-ballot votes yield increasing power.
2. While you may be disillusioned with top-level candidates and the importance of your vote, only votes elect a candidate, so hopefully the collective voting of like-minded people share your concerns.
3. The political system is unresponsive and impervious to change. That is true if you don't vote. Activism does make a difference, and voting is your ultimate act for change or retention.
4. If you don't vote, the other "jerks" will. Most vote because they feel obligated to democracy. They vote because they are inspired for or against something or someone. Find your passion and vote.

5. Voting does matter. We are civically inspired although that inspiration seems stronger in the older generation. Our early voting numbers reflect that as the Georgetown retirement areas have produced the highest numbers of votes in this early voting period. So the interests of those with homes and wealth are overly reflected in that vote. No wonder millennials are uninspired. But generally, we don't vote for immediate results; we're not delusional but desire to cast a thoughtful vote.
6. Lastly, if all else fails in convincing others to vote, use SHAME. Our form of government at all levels is dependent on the participation of many people for the people. Municipal elections are often determined by very few voters.

Now what about those millennials? Life has smacked them down between high college costs (we really did push them in that direction). *Who the heck can actually work their way through college these days?* And then they face fewer high-paying positions in the workforce and amazingly high housing costs.

They are very skeptical about the promises of democracy as pointed out by Eric Levitz in his midterm article of Oct 30, 2018. The system of voting let the Supreme Court choose a president, sent young people into war to die or be permanently damaged in the Middle East, saddled them with debts—money that would have purchased a house in earlier times, and forcing many to live with their parents post-college. He closes that paragraph of condemnation with the statement questioning standing in line for hours “to choose between a feckless donkey (ok, I had to look that one up – *incompetent*) and a psychopathic elephant.”

Eric then lays out some points of wisdom for the disillusioned young masses starting with “playing hard to get will probably get you nothing.” Our system of government will continue to exist whether they vote or not. It certainly will probably ignore their wishes without their votes to count. He then goes on to say that the size of a voting block does matter. As stated above, the baby boomer voting block is voting in full force. If you want your issues to matter, gather like-minded people and go vote. Stay home and you will be ignored.

He humorously then adds that voting for the lesser of two evils gets you less evil. Now, Eric does point out that millennials are probably better informed than most about issues surrounding this election such as the negative impact of global warming and unsuitability of Donald Trump for decision-making. They absolutely know the high cost of groceries and rents, necessity of medical care hampered by the high cost of medical insurance and pharmaceuticals (and now government restrictions). If they voted in full force, their block of issues would move into the forefront.



ELECTION DAY IS TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2022
7:00am—7:00pm



Early Voting Period: Monday, October 24 to Friday, November 4

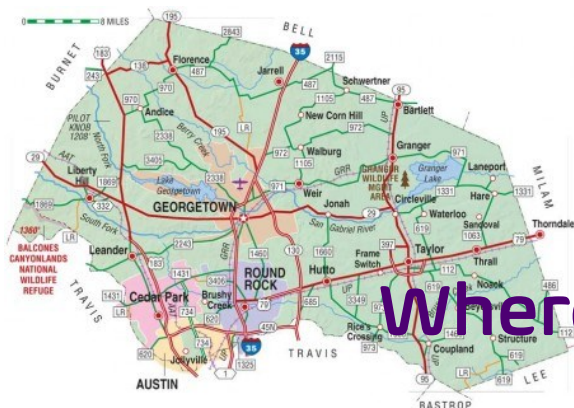
Dates and Times for Full-Time Locations and Limited Ballot Voting

Monday, October 24 through Saturday, October 29: 7:00 am to 7:00 pm

Sunday, October 30: 12:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Monday, October 31 through Friday, November 4: 7:00 am to 7:00 pm

SEE A LIST OF VOTING LOCATIONS —> [HERE](#)



Where is Commissioner Cook?



I believe it was the second year for this highly attended festival in Centennial Park behind the Baca Center. Parking was already a premium at 3:30PM and the crowds at all the booths were thick. Food, oh what a smorgasbord of Indian dishes on display for purchase, clothing, jewelry, henna tattoos and women and men dressed in a myriad of colorful clothing. There were at least 120 different groups of dancers (of all kinds: Bollywood to classic Indian dances and ages), and singers; with entertainment that just didn't stop. At one point, a young girl just couldn't hold back and jumped the stage to join in with a younger group of dancers – the mom in a sari just rolled onto the stage, swooped her up and exited stage right without the dancers losing a beat! You could almost get lost and feel like you'd been transported to an entirely different world. The ultimate size of this festival is only limited by the space available – it could take over Dell diamond and probably will in the future. By 6:10, seating on the grass was at a premium and I took my stiff body home – cars were still circling looking for a landing spot. – OK Bollywood songs and dance moves are so happy – I'm sure I had a smile on my face going to sleep that night.



To volunteer for the United Way Day of Caring on Friday, Oct. 7, Terry and staff trekked over to Bartlett. Garry, his nephew Matt, a high schooler fulfilling volunteer hours, and Doris helped organize the Clothes Closet under the direction of local resident Joyce White. Terry worked her magic on a deserted plant bed by the wrap-around porch pulling weeds and mulching.

Joyce started the Clothes Closet almost 13 years ago in a parsonage that her Dad built 84 years ago when she was five. The Clothes Closet sprung from her earlier Food Pantry program started for people she and a friend identified as most needy in the area that began with seven families/individuals and grew to feed 204 people.

While there was work to do, the Clothes Closet is highly organized, with clothes hung and marked by sizes and separated by rooms—men's, women's, children's—and includes shoes, purses, scarves and even shelves with dry goods. It opens a few times each month to residents in Bartlett and surrounding communities where no questions are asked, no paperwork is filled, and money is never exchanged. To "shop" at the Clothes Closet all that is required is a first name. There are always clothes hung on the porch for those who come when it's not opened, along with a washer and dryer for homeless vets to use. Books and chairs are provided for them as they wait for their laundry. The house is next to and belongs to the First Methodist Church of Bartlett, of which Joyce is a long-time member.



100th Annual County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas Conference

Annual mandated training was held in Bastrop's Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort – yeah life is tough. I truly don't know why we do training at resorts – you have no time to participate in the resort's amenities unless you skip training sessions. However, we did have two nights of great entertainment and of course, good BBQ. Hard to believe these training sessions have been going on for 100 years – it's certainly a far piece to go for some county officials. Imagine the travel 100 years ago in your model T – that'd be a Tesla today – yes, they have charging stations.



Starry Annual Celebration & Fundraiser Luncheon

Those of you in the Round Rock area are probably familiar with the Starry facility on Mays Street that may have small flags across the property, or pinwheels, or, or, or to catch your attention. But you may not be familiar with their mission – nurturing children, strengthening families and restoring hope through counseling, fatherhood, and family preservation services. It was Starry that introduced our own Juvenile Justice senior team to the merits of using trauma-based approaches in working with the county's troubled youth under their care. Starry mentors foster families, works to move dads to Fatherhood and helps families thru their traumas to become healthy thriving organisms.

A little over one year ago, Starry stepped out from under the Children at Heart Ministries (Texas Baptist Children's Home is one of those entities) to stand alone. Unfortunately, they've not been able to develop funding sources as rapidly as thought and they are now limping. A very full room of supporters came together on the 20th at the Austin Marriott North hotel to celebrate the enormous work accomplished in the past year, donate funds, and acknowledge the expansion of needed services as we continue to grow in population within their service region.

Starry provides counseling services to children, youth, parents and foster parents at no cost to the participants in 31 counties and has a physical presence in Georgetown, Killeen, McKinney, Stephenville, Temple, Waco, Wichita Falls and, of course, Round Rock. For those of you who donate to non-profits, please consider adding this group.

For more information, head over to www.starry.org, or facebook.com/starryonline, tiktok.com/@starryinc or linkedin.com/company/starry – this is a non-profit making a huge positive difference in Central Texas.





Wilco's own Glenn Towery, a Veteran, who started the Austin Veteran Art Festival—AVAFest—in 2018, to recognize the healing effect the arts have on Veterans, as well as others. While the Austin event was cancelled in 2020 and returned in 2021 (largely virtual) due to the Covid epidemic, it returned full-force this year from Oct. 12-Nov. 12. AVAFest also made its debut this year at the



Jester Annex on Sunday, October 16. Janet Fulk, curator with Round Rock Arts, organized and presented the Round Rock Ballet Folklorico performers and Veteran-led Native American dancers. A mini-pow wow was held, complete with leaders of both groups offering historical backgrounds on the dances and costumes. Veteran-produced visual arts were on display throughout the Jester hallways, also courtesy of Round Rock Arts working closely with Glenn Towery and other veterans.

Hope Alliance's Survive – Thrive – Prevent 5K Race Fundraiser

I was honored to speak at the 4th annual 5K and run (& walk) for the second year in San Gabriel Park on October 8. Weather could not have been more ideal. I won in my category (age) once again and proved to be *the only entrant* in that category – kind of sad, show up and win. Next year you, too, could join me! It's a great, supportive crowd.



Investiture of new District Court Judge Scott Field

*Congratulations Scott Field
on becoming
the 1st Judge of the 480th
District Court*





On October 4, Rattan Creek Neighborhood Association held its Texas Night Out, Texas Style!

This large-turnout event was kid-centric with bounce houses, some yard games and two children's entertainment acts! The RCNA invited and celebrated our local first responders which is always a favorite for kids. The Jollyville Fire Department, Wilco Sheriff's officers, Precinct 1 Constables, Wilco EMS, and even TDS all brought their vehicles out for the youngest to explore. Doris Sanchez represented Commissioner Cook's office as Commissioner Cook was attending an out-of-town conference. She registered several voters that night, along with assisting people in determining if they were registered or not. Several others signed up for this informative newsletter!

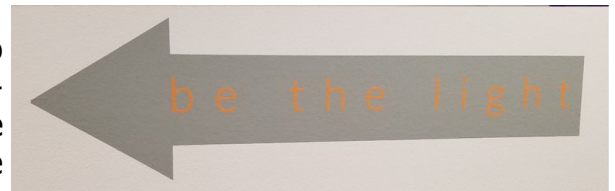


Texas Housing Foundation's Community Resource Centers

This past month, I was able to visit two of Central Texas' Community Resource Centers (CRCs) surrounded by workforce housing constructed by the Texas Housing Foundation (THF). The purpose of the centers is to house—free of charge—agencies that serve lower-income families and individuals. In turn, their service is free of charge, although some counseling organizations may charge because they must pay rent.



The first center was in Marble Falls, and I was able to take Jennifer Harris of Taylor (and the driving force behind the Dr. James Dickey House re-building) and Laurie Born who is helping Jennifer apply for grants. This is the largest CRC, complete with a large food pantry which includes two intake bays, a walk-in freezer and walk-in refrigerator with much storage. Those being served open unit doors to make their selections as in a grocery store. Affirming phrases were painted on the walls of the hallways and rooms. Those agencies using office space are responsible for bringing in furniture and supplies they need; heating and cooling is part of the package deal. Also, a large community room and commercial kitchen is available for use, with reservations, at no charge as well as a sizeable conference room. Many organizations like Catholic Charities, Marble Falls Housing Authority, WIC, Counseling and prayer services, and Workforce Solutions, Rural Capital Area are residents.



Many organizations like Catholic Charities, Marble Falls Housing Authority, WIC, Counseling and prayer services, and Workforce Solutions, Rural Capital Area are residents.

The second CRC held an open house in Liberty Hill and I was able to travel to it. It is the San Gabriel CRC surrounded by the San Gabriel workforce housing apartments built by THF. This is a smaller, but similar CRC. With no room for a food pantry, they refer families to Operation Liberty Hill. Again, organizations serving low-income people are offered office space and the building is full!



In The News

All hands on deck in fighting opioid crisis

[Williamson Commissioner Cook: All hands on deck in fighting opioid crisis \(statesman.com\)](https://www.statesman.com/story/news/health/2020/08/27/williamson-commissioner-cook-all-hands-on-deck-in-fighting-opioid-crisis/3361117002/)

Much press has been devoted to covering the opioid epidemic across the country. We here in Williamson County are not immune to opioid use and overdoses. The county has been teaching first responders how to use Narcan, the manufacturer's name for Naloxone, a compound that when administered displaces opiates from the brain's receptors, thus reversing their effect.

Taken in high doses, opioids can suppress an individual's breathing, causing a heart attack and death. The Narcan nasal spray form is safe for dispense by an opioid user's friends and family members, but it only works if the heart attack has not yet occurred.

The preponderance of opioid street drugs has grown, and most are now spiked with fentanyl, a very strong opioid, once a commonly prescribed pain medication but now a carefully monitored prescription medication. Opioids are addictive and result in strong withdrawal symptoms when their use is suspended. Medical providers now are seeing marijuana users suffering from withdrawal; this means that even "weed" is being spiked with fentanyl. Synthetic opioids, tainted with fentanyl, are being colored and pressed to resemble commonly available prescription drugs such as Xanax, Percocet or Adderall and even stamped with the legal manufacturer's branding. The only "safe" pill is one prescribed by medical professionals and dispensed by licensed pharmacists and taken as prescribed.

Russell Dreyer, community liaison for the Jollyville Fire Department (Anderson Mill Road) reported that it is not uncommon for the staff to be awakened at night by people knocking on their door seeking Narcan for a friend.

Bluebonnet Trails, Wilco's Mental Health Authority, is now the principal supplier of Narcan to the county's first responders, school districts and parents of at-risk children. The pandemic disrupted the supply channel for Narcan manufacturing, and prices made it out-of-reach for most of two years; up to \$135 for a single dose, now down to about \$47.50 for two-dose units. Using a COVID relief fund grant, Bluebonnet has distributed more than 1,000 Narcan two-dose units throughout the county to school personnel, first responders and friends and family members of those with substance use disorders. Records do not reflect all Narcan use and reports of overdoses, but occurrences have been reported in small communities like Coupland, Thrall, Florence and Weir, and in every larger city and community. Fentanyl overdoses are now the leading cause of teenage deaths, surpassing suicide, the long-time leader in this age group. A September American-Statesman story on the Hays County teenage deaths from overdoses reported that fentanyl rainbow-colored pills are circulating in the community.

The Statesman also reported in August that there are two Narcan vending machines in Austin where anyone, at no cost to them, can obtain single-use bottles of Narcan nasal spray. Em Gray, organizer of the NICE Project, which stands for Narcan in Case of Emergency, believed she had initially obtained sufficient inventory of Narcan to last a few months but found the supply exhausted in the first week. Austin and Travis County have declared opioid overdoses as a public health crisis. Overdose deaths are now the leading cause of accidental deaths ahead of car crashes or falls for youths. Across the state, the More Narcan Please state-funded program exhausted its finances in just a few months. The state's new fiscal year adds \$5.6 million additional funding to this program.

For seven years, Williamson County has held an Overdose Awareness Day at the Lakeside Pavilion in Old Settlers Park. It brings together family members and those in recovery on an August morning to support each other in their grief and/or recovery. Brad Stutzman wrote a moving piece in the Aug. 31 Williamson County Sun on this year's program of shared stories, stressing the message that "one pill can kill." It is always open to the public and closes with each attendant tossing flowers into the nearby lake in honor of those lost. Many bring pictures of their lost loved ones to share. This year, one especially striking picture was of two young girls standing by a casket of their dad. They had lost both parents — only a few years apart — to overdoses.

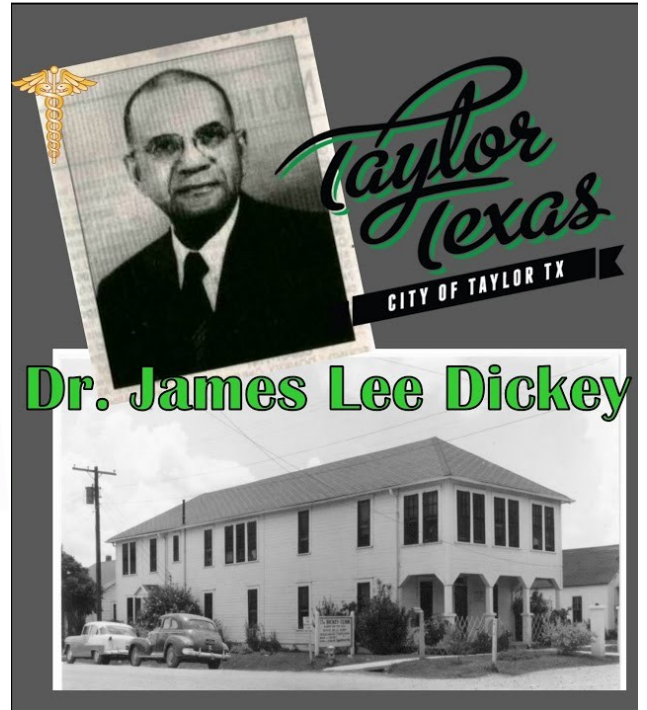
With accidental overdoses killing many young people, what are the school districts doing to raise the alarm among their students and their families? The Taylor Press recently reported steps the Hutto schools and staff have taken to combat possible onsite overdoses. Staff and teachers have been trained in the use of Narcan and their nurses' "go bags" are stocked with it. Their message to raise families' awareness is: be informed, be aware and talk with your kids.

Likewise, first responders across the county have Narcan and are skilled in its use. Amy Jarosek, a member of the Williamson County Community Health Paramedics Program, spends the majority of her working life in the community addressing harm reduction among vulnerable populations. "Narcan is a lifesaving medication," she said. "Our team has seen the positive impact of the medication provided by public safety entities across the county. It also affords our team the time to then collaborate with our partners to reach out and offer more long-term services to those who are struggling (with addiction) and the families who struggle alongside them."

Of course, as stated earlier, Narcan must be applied prior to a heart attack, which may occur when the breathing becomes severely suppressed.

Addiction does not care about your education, age, income, status or where you live; it can kill. And now in this epidemic of fentanyl-tainted street drugs, that single pill may be the first or last you've ever purchased and taken.

Although illegal in half of the states, fentanyl test strips can save lives. We must overcome the false narrative that we are condoning drug use by allowing distribution of these strips and instead think of human lives with potential for recovery. Write or call your Texas legislators and members of Congress and urge them to legalize these life-saving test strips.



Dr. James Lee Dickey



The **AUSTIN POWWOW**
& AMERICAN INDIAN
HERITAGE FESTIVAL

November 12th 2022

Travis County Exposition Center
7311 Decker Ln.
Austin, TX 78724



www.austinpowwow.net

This project is supported in part by the Cultural Arts Division
of the City of Austin Economic Development Department

James Dickey Day

**Saturday, November 12 at
11:00am**

**Robinson Park and Dickey-
Givens Community Center**

260 S. Dolan St., Taylor



Sun City Veterans Day Memorial

Friday, November 11, 2022 at 11:00am

2 Texas Dr. , Georgetown

Up to 1600 3'x 5' US flags fly the week of Veterans Day

San Gabriel Park ★ Georgetown, TX

FREE Tour of the Tunnel to Towers 9/11 "NEVER FORGET" exhibit all week.

SIXTH ANNUAL

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**Nov. 5-12
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Georgetown, TX
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Each 3'x 5' flag is available for purchase and dedication to a Veteran or First Responder. Your flag(s) can be picked up at the end of the week and reposted next year or flown at home. Shipping to the 48 contiguous states is available.



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All net revenues from flag sales are awarded to 501c3 organizations that benefit veterans and first responders.

Saturday 11/5

8:00 AM SERTOMA Nathan Chapman Honor Walk

9:30 AM Escorted arrival of the Tunnel to Towers 9/11 Exhibit

12:00 PM Marine Corps League Birthday Cake Cutting Ceremony

Sunday 11/6

10:00-4:00 Static Displays, K9 demos & more!

1:30 PM Opening Ceremonies, flyovers, Parade of Colors, speakers, & more!

Tuesday 11/8

11:30 AM Georgetown Chamber of Commerce Business Network Luncheon

Friday 11/11

11:00 AM Veterans Day Ceremony

5:30 PM – Patriots Celebration BBQ

Saturday 11/12

10:00 AM Honor Flight Austin 2021-2022 Reunion Brunch

Sunday 11/13

5:30 PM Central Texas Philharmonic Patriotic Concert

Saturday 11/12 & 13

FLAG PICK-UP!

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MORE INFO

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SAT, Nov. 5 – SAT., Nov. 12, 2022

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9/11 NEVER FORGET
MOBILE EXHIBIT



Tunnel to Towers Foundation
T2T.ORG



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Nov. 5**
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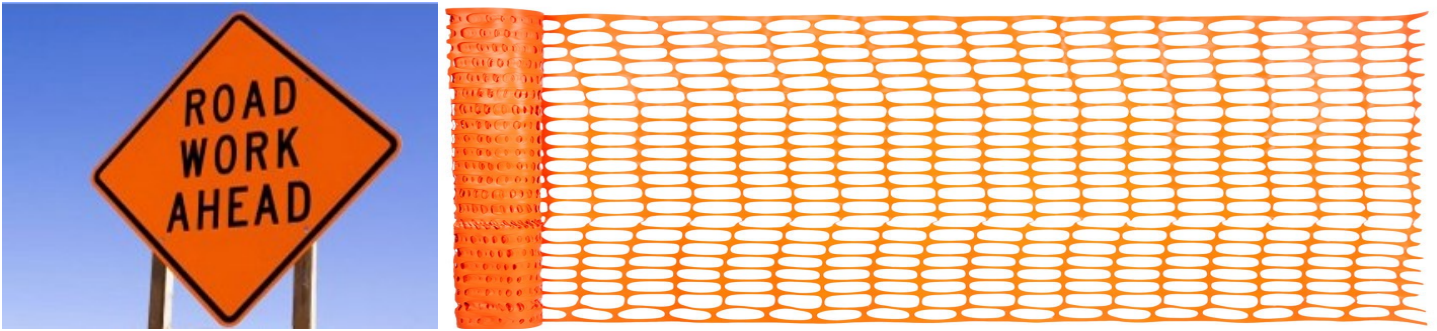
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**FREE
TOURS
ALL WEEK!**

Tours are given by
FDNY firefighters who
were eyewitnesses
to history and able to
provide firsthand
accounts of what
happened on
September 11, 2001.

**Welcome the
Escorted Arrival
at the park
9:30 AM
Saturday • Nov. 5**





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 and a sidewalk is being placed on the new westbound widening in the middle section of the project and driveways on the north side of the road are being poured. Curb and sidewalk is being placed at the very east end of the project. Go [HERE](#) to learn more. This is a \$27.5M TxDOT project. According to TxDOT, substantial completion is now going to be Fall 2023.

Pond Springs Road Area Drainage Improvements– This project is to provide relief to a long-time problem of flooding in the area. Many years ago, the county tried to fix it by digging a deep ditch and by restructuring the road. However, the area still floods and so many of the businesses located here have put up their own dams and other items to try to divert the water away. Utility coordinators have completed the placement of test holes to verify the location of City of Austin water and wastewater lines and the design of the project is being updated. A meeting with Austin Water Utility is being scheduled for August->September->October->November to discuss the results of the test holes. 90% of the design is anticipated in October-> November. The cost of the project is \$3.2M., although that price may come down again. Construction start is anticipated Spring 2023.

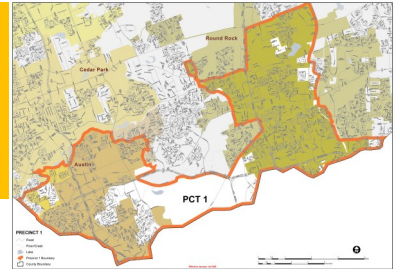
University Blvd. widening from IH-35 to just east of Sunrise Rd.- (Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC)– The curb and driveway entrance for Walgreens on N. Mays has been poured. The intersection of Cypress Blvd. and University Blvd. has reopened! Eastbound lanes between University Oaks and N. Mays is still being constructed. Work continues on the driveway near Chick-Fil-A. The front driveway at the strip center containing Mad Greens and Starbucks next to Sunrise Blvd. should open in the next day or two. Completion anticipated in spring 2023, but don't count on that yet.

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

Great Oaks Bridge at Brushy Creek Rd.– Major detours will begin soon!!! Hairy Man Rd. reopens in November!! Curb and gutter and a sidewalk have been constructed on the east side of Great Oaks, south of the bridge. Brick pavers have been placed in the sidewalk ramps on the east side of the intersection. Completion is still anticipated in Spring 2023.

The 183 North Project has begun! According to the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority, aka CTRMA, it “aims to improve mobility, reduce congestion and provide more reliable travel times for transit and emergency responders along the nine-mile stretch of US 183 between SH 45 North and MoPac. The project includes the construction of two express lanes in each direction and the addition of a general-purpose lane to bring the number of non-tolled lanes to four in each direction. Express lane direct connectors will be constructed with MoPac to the south. The project also includes operational improvements to southbound MoPac, new shared use path connections, new sidewalks and cross-street connections for bicycles/pedestrians.” 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

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about what's happening
in Williamson County?

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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