

ANNUAL STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS
Williamson Chamber of Commerce
July 26, 2017

WELCOME TO EACH OF YOU AND THANK YOU FOR COMING TO MY 15TH “ANNUAL STATE OF THE COUNTY” ADDRESS TODAY.

I WANT TO WELCOME OUR CITY, COUNTY AND STATE ELECTED OFFICIALS WHO HAVE TAKEN TIME TO BE HERE WITH US TODAY. (STAND AND BE RECOGNIZED)

AS YOU HAVE MOST LIKELY SEEN OR HEARD IN THE NEWS, THE WILLIAMSON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM PRESENTED A CAPITAL NEEDS REQUEST OF APPROXIMATELY ONE-HALF A BILLION DOLLARS EARLY IN OUR BUDGET PROCESS. AS A RESULT OF THESE FUNDING REQUESTS, NUMEROUS MEETINGS HAVE BEEN HELD AND MUCH DISCUSSION HAS BEEN CENTERED AROUND HOW TO FUND A SCHOOL BUILDING PROGRAM OF THIS MAGNITUDE.

THESE MEETINGS HAVE PROVEN TO BE AN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WHO ARE NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE COUNTY’S OPTIONS FOR GENERATING REVENUES TO FUND OUR ANNUAL BUDGET.

SO A QUICK “BUDGET 101” REVIEW MAY BE IN ORDER FOR TODAY.

THE COUNTY'S PRIMARY SOURCES OF REVENUES INCLUDE: PROPERTY TAX, SALES TAX AND WHEEL TAX. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF SMALLER FEES AND OTHER TAXES, BUT THESE THREE PROVIDE THE MAJORITY OF OUR REVENUE COLLECTIONS.

WHEN SALES TAX IS COLLECTED ON ITEMS YOU PURCHASE, THESE MONIES ARE SUBMITTED TO THE STATE OF TENNESSEE FOR DISTRIBUTION.....BACK TO THE COLLECTING ENTITY, WHICH THEN RETURNS ONE-HALF OF THEIR HALF TO THE . WILLIAMSON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM AND IS USED FOR FUNDING OPERATING COSTS.

ONE OF THE HARDEST BUTTONS FOR AN ELECTED OFFICIAL TO PUSH IS THE ONE THAT SAYS "YES" TO A PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX INCREASE. DOING SO DIRECTLY AFFECTS EACH PROPERTY OWNER IN OUR COUNTY.

THE COUNTY COMMISSION IS CONSTANTLY REVIEWING OTHER SOURCES OF REVENUES WHICH MAY BE AVAILABLE. MANY OF YOU MAY NOT BE AWARE THAT WILLIAMSON COUNTY HAS A NUMBER OF PRIVATE ACTS ON OUR BOOKS, MANY OF WHICH AUTHORIZE THE COLLECTION OF A PRIVILEGE TAX ON NEW CONSTRUCTION. THESE PRIVILEGE TAXES ARE COLLECTED AT THE TIME BUILDING PERMITS ARE ISSUED AND PROVIDE ADDITIONAL REVENUE FOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURES RELATED TO SCHOOLS, FIRE PROTECTION, COUNTY ROADS AND PARKS AND RECREATION.

LAST YEAR, THE COUNTY COMMISSION AUTHORIZED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW EDUCATIONAL IMPACT FEE. ONE-HALF OF THIS NEW FEE WENT INTO EFFECT MARCH 1ST AND THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION WILL TAKE PLACE ON SEPTEMBER 1ST. I SAY ALL THIS SO THAT YOU ARE AWARE THAT WE ARE ALWAYS RESEARCHING OPTIONS AND LOOKING AT EVERY AVAILABLE SOURCE OF REVENUE TO ALLEVIATE THE NEED FOR A PROPERTY TAX INCREASE.

WILLIAMSON COUNTY IS THE ONLY COUNTY IN THE STATE TO HAVE THIS NEW EDUCATIONAL IMPACT FEE, WHICH IS ASSESSED ONLY TO NEW HOME CONSTRUCTION AND DOES NOT AFFECT EXISTING RESIDENCES. THOUGH IT IS PROJECTED TO GENERATE APPROXIMATELY AN ADDITIONAL \$25 MILLION ANNUALLY FOR NEW SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION, IT HAS BEEN MET WITH SOME RESISTANCE.

OF THE \$2.5 MILLION COLLECTED SINCE MARCH, APPROXIMATELY \$350,000 HAS BEEN "PAID UNDER PROTEST" BY SOME OF OUR HOME BUILDERS.

ALONG THOSE SAME LINES, THE COMMISSION ASKED ME TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF INCREASING THE CURRENT LOCAL SALES TAX COLLECTION RATE IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY TO THE MAXIMUM OF 2-3/4%. THE FINAL PASSAGE OF SUCH A PROPOSAL WOULD BE LEFT TO THE REGISTERED VOTERS OF WILLIAMSON COUNTY THROUGH A REFERENDUM VOTE AND, IF APPROVED,

THE WILLIAMSON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM COULD SEE AN ADDITIONAL \$60 MILLION DURING THAT THREE YEAR TIME FRAME.

THE PROPOSAL FOR THIS INCREASE IS TO EARMARK THE FUNDING RECEIVED FOR THE FIRST THREE YEARS DIRECTLY TO SCHOOL CAPITAL EXPENDITURES FOR A THREE YEAR PERIOD.

WE HAVE REQUESTED THE COOPERATION OF ALL OF OUR CITIES TO ENTER INTO AN INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT TO RETURN THEIR PORTION OF THE SALES TAX INCREASE BACK TO THE COUNTY TO BE USED FOR DEBT PAYMENTS FOR A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS. WE HAVE ALSO REQUESTED THAT THE SCHOOL SYSTEM ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT TO PASS THESE ADDITIONAL SALES TAX COLLECTIONS TO OUR DEBT SERVICE INSTEAD OF BEING USED FOR OPERATIONS.

OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, BUDGET DIRECTOR, NENA GRAHAM AND I HAVE VISITED WITH FOUR OF OUR COUNTY'S MUNICIPALITIES; WE WILL BE MEETING WITH BRENTWOOD AND THOMPSON'S STATION IN AUGUST. THUS FAR IN INITIAL DISCUSSIONS, WE HAVE RECEIVED POSITIVE FEEDBACK TO THIS PROPOSAL. SUCH AN AGREEMENT WOULD BE RATIFIED BY AN INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT WITH EACH OF THEM, AS WELL AS AN AGREEMENT WITH THE W. C. SCHOOL SYSTEM TO RETURN THEIR FUNDS TO THE DEBT SERVICE FUND FOR THE FIRST THREE (3) YEARS.

AFTER THAT TIME, EACH OF THE CITIES AND THE SCHOOL SYSTEM WOULD THEN RETAIN THE INCREASED SALES TAX REVENUES.

AS STATED EARLIER, SALES TAX COLLECTIONS ARE PAID ON PURCHASES MADE BY VISITORS AND TOURISTS, NOT JUST COUNTY RESIDENTS. ACCORDING TO COUNTY'S CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU PRESIDENT, ELLIE WESTMAN-CHIN, WILLIAMSON COUNTY CURRENTLY RANKS 6TH IN THE STATE, WITH \$8.46 MILLION DOLLARS IN LOCAL TOURISM TAX REVENUES ANNUALLY. THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THESE TOURISM DOLLARS EQUATES TO \$487.82 LESS PER HOUSEHOLD.

SINCE THE 2007-08 SCHOOL YEAR, OUR STUDENT POPULATION HAS INCREASED 32 PERCENT DURING THAT 10 YEAR TIME FRAME. THE CURRENT 44 SCHOOL SITES, SEVERAL OF WHICH HAVE PORTABLES, DO NOT PROVIDE THE CLASSROOM OR OTHER PHYSICAL FACILITIES NEEDED TO MEET THE PROJECTED GROWTH IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS. THEREFORE, THIS SALES TAX INCREASE IS BEING CONSIDERED AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO RELYING SOLELY ON THE RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY TAX TO FUND THE HIGH DEMANDS AND NEEDS OF OUR EVER GROWING STUDENT POPULATION AND SCHOOL FUNDING NEEDS.

SO STAY TUNED..... YOU WILL BE HEARING MORE ABOUT THIS PROPOSAL IN THE COMING MONTHS. IF YOU BELIEVE IN THE SUCCESS OF OUR SCHOOL

SYSTEM, I WANT TO ENCOURAGE EACH OF YOU, AS REGISTERED VOTERS, TO GO TO THE POLLS IN SUPPORT OF THIS PROPOSAL, IF IT IS PLACED ON THE BALLOT FOR CONSIDERATION.

THE RECENTLY APPROVED 2017-18 OPERATING BUDGET DID NOT REQUIRE A PROPERTY TAX INCREASE TO FUND THE \$557.7 MILLION TOTAL BUDGET. THE SCHOOL'S OPERATING BUDGET OF APPROXIMATELY \$357 MILLION REFLECTS AN APPROXIMATE 64% OF THE EXPENSES. WITH THE INCLUSION OF THE DEBT SERVICES BUDGET DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO SCHOOLS, YOU WILL NOTE THAT THIS PERCENTAGE RISES TO APPROXIMATELY 75 PERCENT.

THIS MEANS THAT FOR EVERY DOLLAR YOUR COUNTY GOVERNMENT FUNDS, OUR LOCAL COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM RECEIVES 75 CENTS OF THAT DOLLAR. I WANT TO THANK THE MEMBERS OF THE 2016-17 BUDGET COMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY COMMISSIONER DANA AUSBROOKS AND TO COMMISSIONERS LEW GREEN, DWIGHT JONES AND DAVID LANDRUM FOR THEIR HARD WORK ON ONE OF THE TOUGHEST BUDGET PROCESSES I CAN RECALL.

I ALSO WANT TO THANK OUR BUDGET DIRECTOR, NENA GRAHAM FOR HER DUE DILIGENCE THROUGHOUT THIS PROCESS AND TO OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS AND DEPARTMENT HEADS FOR WORKING HARD TO MAINTAIN THEIR BUDGETS

WITHIN THE GUIDELINES AND CONTINUE TO GIVE OUR RESIDENTS PROFESSIONAL AND EFFICIENT SERVICE.

AS YOU ARE AWARE, THE POPULATION THROUGHOUT OUR COUNTY CONTINUES TO RISE. THE 2010 U. S. CENSUS SHOWED THE COUNTY'S POPULATION AT 183,182 AND CURRENT PROJECTIONS REFELCT A TOTAL POPULATION OF 216,717 COUNTY-WIDE.

IF YOU LOOK AT THIS MAP OVERLAY OF PARCELS PROVIDED BY ASSESSOR, BRAD COLEMAN'S OFFICE, YOU WILL SEE THE PARCELS IN RED THAT REFLECT COMMERCIAL PROPERTY, THE BLUE REFLECTS THE RESIDENTIAL PARCELS AND THE GREEN RELFECTS THE PARCELS IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY THAT ARE STILL ASSESSED AS RURAL, FARM LAND AND WOODS.

THE NEXT SLIDE SHOWS THE AMOUNT OF GREEN BELT PROPERTY ASSESSMENTS, THOSE PARCELS OF 15 ACRES OR MORE WHICH STILL EXISTS THROUGHOUT OUR COUNTY.

NEXT IS A LISTING OF THE CURRENT TOP TEN ASSESSED PROPERTIES IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TOTALING APPROXIMATELY \$850 MILLION.

THE NEXT SLIDE ILLUSTRATES THE COMMERCIAL INVENTORY CHANGE OF 3.8% FROM 2010 TO 2017, WITH AN INCREASED VALUE OF 92.1% IN THAT SEVEN YEAR TIME FRAME.

FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2016, THERE WERE 3,324 RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED COUNTYWIDE. OF THESE, 2,348 NEW HOMES WERE ADDED TO THE TAX ROLLS AND REPRESENTED THE AVERAGE VALUES, RANGING FROM APPROXIMATELY \$290,000 TO A HIGH AVERAGE VALUE OF APPROXIMATELY \$917,000.

THIS TYPE OF GROWTH, COUPLED WITH SOUND FISCAL MANAGEMENT, IS IMPORTANT IN RETAINING THE COUNTY'S TRIPLE A (Aaa) BOND RATING ISSUED BY MOODY'S INVESTOR SERVICE. THIS BOND RATING REWARDS EACH OF US, AS TAX PAYERS, WHEN WE GO TO BOND MARKET.

OFTEN TIMES, THE WORD 'GROWTH' IS MET WITH SOME NEGATIVE THOUGHTS; HOWEVER, IT IS MY BELIEF THAT JOB GROWTH IS A POSITIVE THING. FROM JUNE 2015, TO JUNE 2016, EMPLOYMENT INCREASED IN 291 OF THE LARGEST U. S. COUNTIES, ACCORDING TO THE U. S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS. WILLIAMSON COUNTY HAD THE LARGEST PERCENTAGE INCREASE WITH A GAIN

OF 6.7 PERCENT OVER THE YEAR, WELL ABOVE THE NATIONAL JOB GROWTH RATE OF 1.5 PERCENT.

THOUGH GROWTH MAY BE PHYSICALLY SEEN WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF OUR CITIES, OUR GROWTH ALSO AFFECTS THE INCREASED NEED FOR SERVICES AND FACILITIES ON A COUNTY-WIDE BASIS. THOUGH THEY MAY NOT AFFECT EACH OF US PERSONALLY, THEY ARE STILL VALUABLE SERVICES THAT WOULD HAVE AN ADVERSE AFFECT ON OUR QUALITY OF LIFE IF THEY WERE NOT PROVIDED.

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD SOME BOW-WOWING AND SOME MEOWING GOING ON IN THE FRONT LOBBY. THIS WAS NOT YOUR IMAGINATION. ANIMAL CONTROL DIRECTOR, LAURA CHAVARRIA AND HER STAFF ARE HERE WITH SOME WONDERFUL 'FUR BABIES' WHO ARE LOOKING FOR THEIR FOREVER HOMES. THEY REPRESENT JUST A FEW OF THE MANY THAT ARE AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION.

WILLIAMSON COUNTY PROVIDES ANIMAL CONTROL SERVICES THROUGHOUT OUR COUNTY. ALONG WITH THE PEOPLE POPULATION, THE PET POPULATION IS ON THE RISE AND WE HAVE RUN OUT OF ROOM TO PROVIDE OUR MOST EFFICIENT SERVICES.

A TASK FORCE IS BEING ASSEMBLED TO ASSIST IN FORMULATNG THE PROGRAMMING AND EDUCATIONAL NEEDS FOR THE DEPARTMENT SO THAT WE

MAY PREPARE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A FACILITY TO MEET THE ON-GOING NEEDS FOR AN EVER-INCREASING PET POPULATION. DESPITE OUR PHENOMENAL SAVE RATE OF 96%, OUR FACILITY AND THE STAFF CONTINUES TO BE OVERCROWDED. LAST CALENDAR YEAR, OVER 3,900 ANIMALS WERE CARED FOR AT OUR ANIMAL CENTER, REPRESENTING AN INCREASE OF 875 ANIMALS FROM THE PRIOR YEAR.

I AM EXCITED TO REPORT THAT WE ARE MAKING STRIDES IN ACQUIRING A NEW LOCATION TO EXPAND THE FACILITY FOR ANIMAL CARE CENTER AND IT IS WITH EXCITED ANTICIPATATION THAT WE WILL BE CELEBRATING A RIBBON CUTTING TO CELEBRATE THE GRAND OPENING OF A NEW FAILITY.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE REALIZE THAT WHILE SCHOOLS MAY BE THE MOST 'TALKED ABOUT' REASON PEOPLE LIVE IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY, WE MUST ALSO RECOGNIZE OUR OTHER QUALITY OF LIFE ATTRIBUTES, SUCH AS OUR EXCELLENT LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY PROFESSIONALS, BOTH IN OUR MUNICIPAL JURISIDICTIONS AND THROUGHOUT OUR COUNTY.

ON THE WAY IN, I HOPE YOU NOTICED SOME OF OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY VEHICLES ON DISPLAY ON THE GROUNDS. AT THE BACK OF THE ROOM, YOU WILL ALSO SEE TWO LAW ENFORCEMENT MOTORCYCLES. AS FUNDING AVAILABILITY CONTINUES TO TIGHTEN, IT IS NOT UNCOMMON FOR SHERIFF LONG TO ASK FOR AND RECEIVE DONATIONS FOR HIS DEPARTMENT.

OFTEN TIMES, HIS OFFICE RECEIVES FINANCIAL DONATIONS FOR OUR K-9 UNIT, THE TACTICAL UNITS, AND FOR OPERATIONS WITHIN THE FIELD DIVISION.

THE 2017 PATHFINDER ON THE LAWN WAS DONATED BY OUR PARTNERS AT NISSAN. THE MOTORCYCLES IN THE BACK OF THE ROOM WERE DONATED BY OUR LOCAL HARLEY DAVIDSON DEALER.

THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE IS COMPRISED OF 303 EMPLOYEES WHO DEDICATE THEIR DAILY CAREERS TO HALTING CRIMINAL ACTIVITY THROUGHOUT OUR COUNTY. THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE THE RESERVE DEPUTIES WHO ALSO VOLUNTEER FOR THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE WHEN SPECIAL NEEDS ARISE.

THE CAREER OF A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER IS ONE OF BOTH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL STRENGTH, AS THEY FACE DAY-TO-DAY SITUATIONS MANY OF US ONLY DARE TO IMAGINE. YET, SOME OF THE TOUGHEST CRIMES THEY BATTLE ARE THE ONES HIDDEN BEHIND THE COMPUTER SCREEN - THOSE CRIMES THAT ARE COMMITTED THROUGH THE INTERNET. TECHNOLOGY IS OFTEN THE WEAPON OF CHOICE FOR PREYING ON THE INNOCENT LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN, THE ELDERLY AND OTHER LOVED ONES.

AT A RECENT NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES (NACo) CONFERENCE, FOUR-STAR GENERAL, JOHN R. ALLEN, USMC-RETIRED, EXPRESSED HIS FEARS AS IT RELATES TO CYBER CRIME AND HOW QUICKLY THOSE WHO WOULD DO HARM

TO US CAN OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT INDIVIDUALS, COMPANIES AND OUR GOVERNMENT WITHIN A 60 SECOND TIME FRAME.

WE ARE THANKFUL FOR OUR MEN AND WOMEN IN UNIFORM AND WE MUST ALL JOIN OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONALS IN THEIR FIGHT AGAINST CYBER CRIMES – AT WORK, AT HOME, LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY.

LIKEWISE IN OUR PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT, WE HAVE OVER 60 EMPLOYEES WHO ARE CONSTANTLY TRAINING, RECRUITING AND WORKING TO ENSURE THE CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSES WHEN DISASTERS STRIKE OUR COUNTY. UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF BILL JORGENSEN, MAC PURDY AND STEPHEN MARTINI, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND ENTITIES THEY WORK WITH, I AM PROUD THAT OUR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY ACHIEVED ACCREDITATION FROM EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ACCREDITATION PROGRAM (EMAP) FOR ITS INTEGRATED EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM. THIS WAS THE FIRST ACCREDITATION GIVEN TO A LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN TENNESSEE AND IT IS NOW ONE OF ONLY 41 OTHER LOCAL PROGRAMS NATIONALLY TO RECEIVE THIS RECOGNITION AND ONE OF ONLY TWO COUNTIES IN THE STATE TO HAVE RECEIVED THIS ACHIEVEMENT.

THOUGH PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, IT BEARS REPEATING THAT THROUGH THE COOPERATIVE EFFORTS OF THE CITY OF FRANKLIN MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN, AS WELL AS THEIR STAFF, THE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTERS OF WILLIAMSON COUNTY AND THE CITY OF FRANKLIN ARE NOW UNITED AS A TEAM. THIS CONSOLIDATION IS A RESULT OF ON-GOING PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE CITY OF FRANKLIN, AND ALL OUR MUNICIPALITIES, TO BEST SERVE OUR RESIDENTS.

TENNESSEE IS KNOWN TO BE THE VOLUNTEER STATE AND WILLIAMSON COUNTY IS NO EXCEPTION. THROUGH THE OVERSIGHT OF FIRE AND RESCUE COORDINATOR, JAY BONSON, THERE ARE 217 VOLUNTEER FIRE FIGHTERS FROM SIX STATIONS WHO BRAVE HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS TO PROVIDE FIRE PROTECTION AND RESCUE SERVICES, COVERING 548 SQUARE MILES IN THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS OF THE COUNTY. EACH OF THESE MEN AND WOMEN MUST LOG OVER 90 HOURS OF TRAINING THROUGH THE STATE OF TENNESSEE BEFORE THEY CAN FULLY ACT AS A FIREFIGHTER. THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, THEY CONTINUE TRAINING, MEETING AND COLLABORATING WITH ONE ANOTHER TO ENSURE OUR RESIDENTS RECEIVE RAPID, EFFICIENT AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSES TO THEIR EMERGENCIES.

MANY OF YOU MAY NOT BE AWARE OF ANOTHER SET OF VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE ALSO ACTIVELY TRAINING AND PARTICIPATING IN DISASTER EXERCISES

FOR WILLIAMSON COUNTY. THESE VOLUNTEERS, OF ALL AGES, ARE KNOWN COLLECTIVELY AS THE WILLIAMSON COUNTY AMATEUR RADIO EMERGENCY SERVICES (“WCARES”) ORGANIZATION. I HOPE YOU HAD A MINUTE, OR WILL DO SO ON THE WAY OUT, TO OBSERVE THIS GROUP OF TALENTED ‘HAM RADIO’ OPERATORS IN ACTION. TOGETHER, THEY BRING A UNIQUE SKILL-SET AND ALSO TAKE PART IN A NUMBER OF SPECIAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES. SHOULD THE TECHNOLOGY EQUIPMENT WE UTILIZE TODAY BE INCAPACITATED FOR ANY REASON, WE WILL RELY HEAVILY ON THESE VOLUNTEERS TO COMMUNICATE FOR, AND WITH, EMERGENCY RESPONSE PERSONNEL FROM ALL AGENCIES.

AS YOU MAY BE AWARE, OUR COURT SYSTEM WORK LOADS ALSO INCREASE WITH OUR POPULATION INCREASES. THEREFORE, OUR JAIL, JUVENILE COURT SYSTEM, GENERAL AND CIRCUIT COURT SYSTEMS AND THE ALTERNATIVE LEARNING CENTER ARE EACH FACING THEIR OWN OVERCROWDING ISSUES.

THERE IS A “TRIPLE J” TASKFORCE OF STAFF AND CITIZENS MEETING MONTHLY AND REVIEWING THE CURRENT AND PROJECTED CASE LOADS, FACILITIES, PROGRAMS AND PERSONNEL NEEDED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR JAIL, JUVENILE AND JUDICIAL SYSTEMS. WE WILL WORK WITH THE INFORMATION

THEY GATHER TO GO FORTH IN PLANNING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW FACILITIES TO ADDRESS THEIR GROWING NEEDS.

AS YOU ARE AWARE, THE LEGISLATURE RECENTLY PASSED THE “IMPROVE ACT” WHICH INCREASED THE GAS TAX IN AN EFFORT TO RAISE THE REVENUES NEEDED TO IMPROVE THE ROADWAY AND BRIDGE INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGHOUT OUR STATE. AS A PART OF THAT LEGISLATION, WILLIAMSON COUNTY WILL HAVE SIX BRIDGES REPAIRED OR REPLACED, INCLUDING THREE ON NOLENSVILLE ROAD, TWO ON COLUMBIA PIKE AND ONE ON MURFREESBORO ROAD.

THE TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (TDOT) WILL ALSO MAKE ROAD IMPROVEMENTS IN OUR COUNTY ON FRANKLIN ROAD, COLUMBIA AVENUE AND A FEW OTHERS. OH, AND THAT LITTLE OL’ SMALL PROJECT YOU MAY HAVE HEARD ABOUT CALLED THE ‘MACK HATCHER EXTENSION’ PROJECT FROM HILLSBORO ROAD TO HIGHWAY 96, WEST IS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN IN 2018.

THESE ROAD & BRIDGE IMPROVEMENTS WILL BE QUITE BENEFICIAL TO OUR RESIDENTS AND I WANT TO BE SURE AND THANK OUR GENERAL ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATIVES FOR THEIR HARD WORK AND DUE DILIGENCE ON THE PASSAGE OF THIS LEGISLATION. (Recognize and thank those legislators present)

OUR HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF SUPERINTENDENT EDDIE HOOD, CONTINUES TO MOVE FORWARD TO ADDRESS OTHER ROAD AND BRIDGE PROJECTS NEEDED IN OUR COUNTY. ROAD IMPROVEMENTS WILL SOON BE SEEN ON THE FIRST PHASE OF THE ARNO ROAD PROJECT WITH RIGHT-OF-WAY ACQUISITIONS TO BE UNDERWAY SOON.

THE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT RECENTLY CONTRACTED WITH BROWN BUILDERS FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF THE BRIDGE ON TRINTY ROAD. AT 110 FEET IN LENGTH, THE COST OF THIS BRIDGE PROJECT WILL EXCEED \$785,700.

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT QUALITY OF LIFE, WE CERTAINLY THINK OF OUR PARKS AND LEISURE SERVICES UNDER THE OPERATIONS OF DIRECTOR, GORDON HAMPTON AND HIS STAFF. I AM VERY PROUD THAT WE HAVE RECENTLY OPENED THE NEW ENRICHMENT CENTER AND PERFORMING ARTS FACILITY AT ACADEMY PARK. THESE FACILITIES REPRESENT A TRUE JEWEL WITH THE OPPORTUNITIES THEY PROVIDE FOR OUR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES, ADULTS, AND OUR ACTIVE SENIORS POPULATION.

AT THIS LOCATION, YOU CAN CHECK OUT A BOOK FROM THE ADJACENT COUNTY LIBRARY, RELAX ON ONE OF THE QUIET PORCHES OR UNDER A SHADE TREE, CATCH AN AWARD WINNING THEATER PERFORMANCE, OR ENGAGE IN A FRIENDLY GAME OF PICKLE BALL. IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY DONE SO, BE SURE TO BRING THE WHOLE FAMILY TO ACADEMY PARK.

SPEAKING OF FAMILY ACTIVITIES, OUR AWARD WINNING WILLIAMSON COUNTY FAIR IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER. SEVERAL CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE THIS YEAR AND I WANT TO CALL SPECIAL ATTENTION TO AND RECOGNITION OF OUR VETERANS. (veterans in the audience stand and be recognized)

WITH A "COUNTRY PRIDE, COUNTY WIDE" THEME, WE HAVE A SPECIAL DISPLAY IN TRIBUTE TO OUR TENNESSEE AND LOCAL VETERANS AT THIS YEARS FAIR. THOUGH THE DISPLAY IS THERE ALL WEEK, REMEMBER THAT ALL ACTIVE AND RETIRED MILITARY GET IN FREE ON PATRIOT DAY, SATURDAY, AUGUST 12TH! SOME OF YOU MAY BE AWARE THAT LAST FALL, THE COUNTY COMMISSION AUTHORIZED THE FORMATION OF A SPORTS AUTHORITY FOR WILLIAMSON COUNTY. THE INITIAL THREE (3) MEMBERS INCLUDE RICHARD HERRINGTON, STEPHEN B. SMITH AND LARRY WESTBROOK. IN THE COMING MONTHS, THEY WILL BE JOINED BY OTHER RESIDENTS AND REVIEWING THE FINDINGS OF A RECENT AMATUER SPORTS STUDY. SOON AFTER, THERE WILL BE A SPORTS COUNCIL FORMED AND THESE MEN AND WOMEN WILL WORK WITH THE NUMEROUS INCOMING REQUESTS FROM THOSE SEEKING FACILITIES IN OUR

COUNTY TO HOLD VARIOUS SPORTING EVENTS. WILLIAMSON COUNTY IS WELL POSITIONED FOR A REGIONAL-TYPE SPORTS FACILITY AND THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS FOR THE ECONOMIC IMPACT THAT HOSTING THESE TOURNAMENTS WOULD HAVE.

ABOUT A MONTH AGO I ATTENDED A MEETING WHERE A PROMINENT, WELL KNOWN BUSINESS MAN MADE THE COMMENT THAT HE HAD RECENTLY EXTENDED HIS LIVE EXPECTANCY BY MOVING TO WILLIAMSON COUNTY, COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS ONE OF THE STATE'S HEALTHIEST COUNTIES.

I DIDN'T THINK TOO MUCH ABOUT IT UNTIL EARLIER THIS WEEK WHEN I RECEIVED A 'SMART ASSETS' REPORT AGAIN SHOWING WILLIAMSON COUNTY RANKED AS THE HEALTHIEST COUNTY IN THE STATE.

AS I THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT IT MEANT, IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT IT MEANS A NUMBER OF THINGS FOR OUR COUNTY. THE OBVIOUS COMES TO MIND IN THAT IT MEANS WE HAVE ACCESS TO OUTSTANDING HEALTH CARE, INCLUDING OUR OWN WILLIAMSON MEDICAL CENTER.

HOWEVER, BEING A HEALTHY COUNTY COVERS MORE THAN THAT. IT MEANS 'TOTAL HEALTH'. IT MEANS THAT WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE A TOP RATED OVERALL HEALTHY COUNTY – FROM EXCELLENT SCHOOLS TO LOW CRIME RATES TO PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND ACCESS TO NUMEROUS QUALITY OF LIFE ATTRIBUTES.

IT MEANS WE ALL WORK HARD EACH DAY TO OFFER HEALTHY CHOICES TO OUR RESIDENTS. IT MEANS WE HAVE OPTIONS THAT PROVIDE SPIRITUAL, MENTAL AND PHYSICAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR FAMILIES. IT MEANS THAT ALL OF THE PROJECTS DISCUSSED TODAY CONTRIBUTE TO THE HEALTH OF THIS COUNTY.

IT MEANS THAT WE WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE A BALANCE FOR OUR 'TOTAL HEALTH'. WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE THESE CHOICES AVAILABLE FOR OUR RESIDENTS AND I AM PROUD TO SAY THAT THE STATE OF OUR COUNTY IS HEALTHY.

IN CLOSING, I WANT TO SAY WHAT AN HONOR IT IS TO SERVE AS THE MAYOR OF WILLIAMSON COUNTY. IT DOES NOT COME WITHOUT OPPORTUNITIES, HEADACHES AND CHALLENGES BUT IT IS A POSITION I ENJOY.

IT IS MY PLEASURE TO COME TO WORK EACH DAY AND WITNESS FIRST HAND THE WONDERFUL THINGS TAKING PLACE THROUGHOUT OUR BOUNDARIES.

MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS EACH ELECTED OFFICIAL AS WE FACE THE TOUGH DECISIONS WE MAKE ON BEHALF OF THOSE WE REPRESENT.

MAY WE ALL FACE OUR DIFFICULTIES WITH HONESTY AND INTEGRITY AND MAY WE ALL BE UNITED AS UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS, COLLECTIVELY SERVING FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THIS GREAT COUNTY.

AGAIN, THANK YOU FOR CHOSING TO BE HERE TODAY AND I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING ON THE OPPORTUNITIES WE FACE AS A GROWING COMMUNITY TOGETHER IN THE FUTURE.