

ANNUAL STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS

JULY 22, 2024

225 YEARS OF HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS

1799 – 2024

THANKS TO EVERYONE FOR BEING HERE TODAY.

I WANT TO BEGIN TODAY RECOGNIZING ANY VETERANS WHO MAY BE IN ATTENDANCE. WOULD YOU PLEASE STAND AND LET US THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE.

THANK YOU TO WILLIAMSON, INC., FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO ANNUALLY REFLECT UPON OUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

IN PREPARING FOR TODAY, I FOUND THAT THE FIRST CHAMBER IN THE COUNTY WAS ORGANIZED IN 1954. I AM WILLING TO VENTURE A GUESS, THAT THERE IS NO ONE HERE TODAY THAT HAS BEEN A CHAMBER MEMBER LONGER THAN OUR BELOVED, NANCY CONWAY, WHO BEGAN WORKING FOR THE WILLIAMSON COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN 1980.

THANK YOU, NANCY, FOR THE DECADES OF LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT YOU HAVE GIVEN TO BUSINESSES THROUGHOUT OUR COUNTY!

SINCE THE FORMATION OF OUR COUNTY IN 1799, COMMUNITY MINDED CITIZENS HAVE BEEN ELECTED TO OFFICE TO OVERSEE THE OPERATIONS OF GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITIES.

TODAY, WE CONTINUE TO HAVE THE PRIVILEGE AND OPPORTUNITY TO ELECT COMMUNITY MINDED CITIZENS WHO ARE WILLING TO GIVE BACK BY PLACING THEIR NAMES ON THE BALLOTS FOR ELECTION.

THERE ARE NUMBER OF YOU HERE TODAY THAT MADE THE DECISION TO PUT YOUR NAME ON THE BALLOT AND ASK REGISTERED VOTERS TO ALLOW YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR RESPECTIVE CITIES, THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY, IN THE STATE OR EVEN AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL.

IF YOU ARE AN ELECTED OFFICIAL IN THE AUDIENCE TODAY, PLEASE STAND AND LET US TAKE A MOMENT TO THANK YOU.

IN OCTOBER, WE WILL CELEBRATE THE 225TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WILLIAMSON COUNTY IN 1799 AND THE COUNTY SEAT WAS NAMED TO BE FRANKLIN.

THERE HAVE BEEN SO MANY CHANGES IN THIS COUNTY SINCE 1799 AND I WANT TO LOOK AT SOME OF THOSE AS WE LOOK WHERE WE ARE TODAY.

THE EARLY MINUTE BOOKS OF OUR QUARTERLY COURT HAVE BEEN ARCHIVED AND THE EARLIEST BOOK STILL AVAILABLE IN THE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE BEGIN WITH 1900.

IN THE MINUTES OF THE QUARTERLY COURT ON OCTOBER 1, 1900, THE COUNTY JUDGE WAS MR. F. C. RUSSELL AND THERE WERE 46 JUSTICES. JUSTICES WERE LATER KNOWN AS MAGISTRATES AND TODAY, THEY ARE KNOWN AS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS.

THE FIRST COUNTY DISTRICTS UNDER THE NEW TENNESSEE CONSTITUTION WERE 25 IN NUMBER AND WERE BASED ON THE TOTAL COUNTY VOTING POPULATION OF 3,000. THERE HAVE BEEN AS MANY AS 48 MAGISTRATES.

TODAY, WE HAVE 12 VOTING DISTRICTS AND 24 ELECTED COUNTY COMMISSIONERS – 2 FROM EACH VOTING DISTRICT.

ACCORDING TO THE REVIEW APPEAL'S 1986 HOMECOMING ARTICLE, THE FIRST COUNTY COURT CLERK WAS N. P. HARDEMAN.

IN JUNE OF THIS YEAR, MRS. ELAINE ANDERSON, WHO SERVED AS COUNTY CLERK FROM 1998 TO 2021, CELEBRATED 57 YEARS OF PUBIC SERVICE IN THE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE, HAVING WORKED FOR COUNTY CLERKS CASEY JONES AND CHARLIE FOX, JR. BEFORE SERVING AS COUNTY CLERK, HERSELF, FOR OVER 23 YEARS! (APPLAUSE)

THOUGH STILL WORKING PART-TIME, MRS. ANDERSON HAS BEEN SUCCEDED IN OFFICE BY HER GRANDSON, JEFF WHIDBY. DURING THIS PAST FISCAL YEAR, 2023-24, THE CLERK'S OFFICE STAFF HAD 284,576 MOTOR VEHICLE TRANSACTIONS. THIS INCLUDES WHAT WAS CONDUCTED IN PERSON, THROUGH KIOSKS OR THE NEW DRIVE-THROUGH IN THE PARKING LOT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEX. THAT IS MORE CAR TAGS THAN THERE ARE PEOPLE IN THE COUNTY!

THE FIRST CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE OF WILLIAMSON COUNTY WAS THOMAS STUART. THE CIRUIT COURT WAS AUTHORIZED BY ACT OF THE TENNESSEE LEGISLATURE NOV. 16, 1809.

TOAY, CIRCUIT COURT CLERK, DEBBIE BARRETT AND HER STAFF PROVIDE COURT SERVICES TO FOUR (4) CIRCUIT COURT JUDGES FOR THE 21ST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT DISTRICT.

THE FIRST LAWYER BEFORE THE COURT WAS ALFRED BALCH. TODAY, THERE ARE 1,635 ACTIVE PRACTICING ATTORNEYS IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY, ACCORDING TO THE TENNESSEE BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

THE COUNTY'S ORIGINAL COURTHOUSE, BUILT IN 1800, STOOD IN THE CENTER OF THE SQUARE AND WHEN SLATED FOR DEMOLITION WITH A NEW ONE TO BE BUILT IN THE CURRENT LOCATION, THE NOVEMBER 30, 1855 NEWSPAPER READ:

'PASSING AWAY' – THE OLD COURTHOUSE WHICH FOR SOME TIME HAS BEEN A REPROACH TO THE PRIDE OF THE COUNTY AND AN EYESORE TO EVERY PERSON THAT IS OF TASTE, IS ABOUT TO UNDERGO THE PROCESS OF DEMOLITION.

THE ENTERPRISING COMMISSIONERS WHO WERE APPOINTED BY THE COUNTY COURT, COMMENCED ON WEDNESDAY LAST, THE WORK OF TAKING AWAY THE WINDOW BLINDS, SASH, ETC., PREPARATORY TO A VIGOROUS ONSLAUGHT UPON IT NEXT WEEK. THE WORK WILL BE THOROUGHLY DONE AND THE MISERABLE OLD PEN WILL VERY SOON BE NUMBERED AMONG THE THINGS THAT WERE BUT ARE NOT. SO MOTE IT BE.

IF THE CONCERN WHICH STANDS IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO IT AND HAS BEEN CHRISTENED BY COURTESY "THE MARKET HOUSE" IS NOT VERY SOON REMOVED BY PUBLIC AUTHORITY, WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF THE "B" BOYS TAKE THE MATTER IN HAND AND CAUSE IT TO FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE COURTHOUSE.

PS-SINCE THE ABOVE WAS WRITTEN, THE CHIEF GLORY OF THE VENERABLE BUILDING – THE CUPOLA – HAS BEEN REMOVED. IT CAME DOWN ON WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON WITH A

PERFECT SMASH, AMONG THE JUBILANT SHOUTS OF AS HAPPY A SET OF CITIZENS WE EVER HEARD SHOUT ON ANY OCCASION. THE WORK WILL NOW GO BRAVELY ON AND SOON NOT ONE STONE WILL BE LEFT UPON ANOTHER, TO TELL WHERE THE OLD FABRIC SO LONG REARED ITS ANTIQUATED HEAD.

AFTER THAT, THE COURTHOUSE THAT REPLACED THE OLD MARKET SQUARE LOCATION WAS COMPLETED IN 1858 AND IS STILL STANDING AND IN OPERATION TODAY.

THE 30 FEET ANTEBELLUM COLUMNS WERE STYLED AT AN IRON FOUNDRY LOCATED ON THE BANKS OF THE HARPETH RIVER IN FRANKLIN AND CAST FROM ORE THAT WAS MINED IN THE FERNVALE REGION OF THE COUNTY.

THE FERNVALE COMMUNITY WAS THE HOME OF THE COUNTY'S FIRST HOTEL. IT WAS A LUXURIOUS HOTEL WHICH BURNED IN 1906 AND NEVER REOPENED.

THE MINUTES REFLECT THAT THE FIRST SHERIFF OF WILLIAMSON COUNTY WAS EDMUND HALLS AND WE HAVE HAD SEVEN (7) JAILS SINCE 1800. BRIDGE STREET HAS BEEN THE LOCATION OF FIVE (5) OF THOSE JAILS, IRONICALLY LOCATED IN A MOSTLY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT OF DOWNTOWN FRANKLIN.

IN THE QUARTERLY COURT MINUTES, RECORDS REFLECT THAT THE WAY WE OPERATE TODAY IN THE BIDDING PROCESS IN AN OPEN AND FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE MANNER WERE ALSO IN EFFECT IN 1900.

THERE WAS A COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO INVESTIGATE AND MAKE A REPORT IN REGARD TO BUILDING A NEW COUNTY JAIL. THEY REPORTED *THAT IT WAS NOT PRACTICAL TO REMODEL SO AS TO CONFORM TO THE CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR A MODEL JAIL, SECURITY, PROPER SANITARY CONDITIONS AND SO AS TO CLASSIFY THE PRISONERS.*

THE REPORT GOES ON TO READ THAT *THEY HAD SECURED BIDS AND PLANS SUBMITTED BY THE SOUTHERN STRUCTURAL STEEL COMPANY OF SAN ANTONIO, TX AND THE PAULY COMPANY OF ST. LOUIS, WHICH WERE CAREFULLY EXAMINED. THEY NOTED THAT THE PAULY PLANS WERE NOT "AT HAND, OWING AS WE BELIEVE, TO A MISCARRIAGE BY THE MAIL".....*

THE MINUTES STATE THAT SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE JAIL WAS TWO STORIES, WITH THE LOWER FLOOR TO BE TWO ROOMS AND A HALL IN FRONT FOR THE JAILOR AND COMPARTMENTS FOR FEMALE PRISONERS AND JUVENILE PRISONERS WITH A KITCHEN.

THE UPSTAIRS WOULD BE 32 CELLS, 7x7x7, AND COULD BE EXPANDED BY ADDING TO THE SECOND TIER UP TO 52 CELLS.

THE COMMITTEE REPORT NOTED *"THE PROBABLE COST WE THINK FOR THE BUILDING, CELLS AND SEWERAGE, NOT INCLUDING FURNACE OR STEAM PIPES, WILL NOT EXCEED \$8,500."*

THE REPORT CONCLUDED: *“YOUR COMMITTEE WOULD MOST EARNESTLY URGE UPON THE COURT THE NECESSITY OF TAKING STEPS IN THIS DIRECTION. THE OLD JAIL IS NEITHER SECURE, NOR SANITARY, NOR DOES IT ALLOW PROPER CLASSIFICATION. IN NO PARTICULAR DOES IT COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE STATUTE LAW OR OUR DUTY AS A CIVILIZED PEOPLE TO THE UNFORTUNATE, VICIOUS THOUGH THEY MAY BE, WHO ARE INCARCERATED IN THESE HORRIBLE DUNGEONS. “*

THE REMAINDER OF THE PROCESS WAS TO GIVE PROPER NOTICE, TAKE COMPETITIVE BIDS AND AFTER REVIEWING, TO LET THE CONTRACT TO THE LOWEST BIDDER.

THOUGH THE COUNTY’S BUDGET AND PURCHASING ACT WAS NOT ADOPTED UNTIL 1957, IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THE COMPETITIVE BIDS, ADS AND PAYMENT PROCESSES WERE MUCH THE SAME AS THEY ARE TODAY.

IN 1971, THE SIXTH (6TH) JAIL WAS CONSTRUCTED AND HAS SINCE BEEN TORN DOWN FROM THE ADJACENT PROPERTY TO THE OLD, OLD JAIL. TODAY THIS BUILDING HAS BEEN RESTORED AND RENOVATED AND SERVES AS THE HOME OF THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION.

THIS PRESERVATION EFFORT, LIKE SO MANY OTHERS IN OUR COMMUNITY, WAS MADE POSSIBLE WITH DONATIONS FROM SOME VERY KIND AND GENEROUS RESIDENTS.

THIS FACILITY SERVED THE COUNTY UNTIL THE 7TH “JOHN I. EASLEY” JAIL WAS CONSTRUCTED IN AN INDUSTRIAL AREA IN FRANKLIN. THE CURRENT JAIL OPENED IN 1989 AND COST \$5.3 MILLION.

THE LATE CAPTAIN EASLEY SERVED MANY YEARS IN THE SHERIFF’S OFFICE.

THROUGH HIS FRIENDLY DEMEANOR AND OUTGOING PERSONALITY, CAPTAIN EASLEY HELPED ESTABLISH NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAMS BEFORE THEY WERE “A THING” – HE KNEW HIS NEIGHBORS, AND YOUR NEIGHBORS AND YOUR NEIGHBOR’S NEIGHBORS.

HE BUILT A RAPPORT AMONG HIS PEERS AND PEOPLE HE JUST MET, ESTABLISHING A TRUST THAT LIKENS THAT OF TODAY’S DEPUTIES.

CAPTAIN EASLEY WAS AN ICON FOR THE COUNTY’S SHERIFF OFFICE, ALONG WITH SO MANY OF HIS COLLEAGUES WHO LATER SERVED IN VARIOUS RANK AND FILE POSITIONS, INCLUDING SERVING AS SHERIFF AND POLICE CHIEFS.

TODAY, SHERIFF JEFF HUGHES AND HIS LAW ENFORCEMENT TEAM ARE REVIEWING PLANS AND WORKING TOWARDS THE COUNTY COMMISSION’S APPROVAL FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE COUNTY’S 8TH JAIL.

IT WILL BE REQUIRED TO MEET AN ENTIRELY NEW SET OF FEDERAL AND STATE STANDARDS, INCLUDING THE REMOVAL OF JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITIES BEING HOUSED UNDER THE SAME ROOF. WITH TODAY’S STANDARDS AND

CONSTRUCTION COSTS, IT IS CURRENTLY ESTIMATED TO COST APPROXIMATELY \$189 MILLION AND IS PART OF THE ONGOING DISCUSSIONS FOR THE JUVENILE, JUDICIAL AND JAIL (OR “JJJ” PROJECT) WHICH BEGAN STUDIES IN 2018.

THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF THE 1980’S PLAYED A MONUMENTAL, HISTORICAL ROLE IN SAVING OUR DOWNTOWN FRANKLIN, IMPLEMENTING THE STREETScape PROGRAM TO HELP BEAUTIFY DOWNTOWN FRANKLIN AND ESTABLISHED OUR MAIN STREET INTO THE TOURISM MECA IT IS TODAY. MARY PEARCE, RUDY JORDAN AND ED SILVA WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN ESTABLISHING THIS MONUMENTAL TASK AND SEEING IT TO FRUITION.

TOGETHER, THEY ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIPS FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS THAT LAID THE FOUNDATION FOR MANY PROGRAMS AND THE ECONOMIC TOURISM THAT EXISTS IN OUR COUNTY TODAY. THAT PARTNERSHIP REQUIRED THE BUSINESS, PRIVATE AND GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES TO PAY THEIR FAIR AND EQUITABLE SHARE FOR THE IMPROVEMENTS, BASED ON THEIR RESPECTIVE MAIN STREET ROAD FRONTAGE.

AS YOU DRIVE OR WALK ALONG MAIN STREET TODAY, YOU ENJOY THE RESULTS OF THIS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM AND ITS SUCCESS FOR IMPROVING PROPERTY VALUES.

TOURISM IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY CURRENTLY RANKS 6TH IN THE STATE AND IS ONE OF ONLY SIX COUNTIES TO SURPASS \$1 BILLION IN DIRECT VISITOR SPENDING.

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THE TOURISM TAX REVENUES FOR WILLIAMSON COUNTY SAVES TAXPAYERS AN ANNUAL SAVINGS OF APPROXIMATELY \$1,522 LAST YEAR.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS CANNOT BE STRESSED ENOUGH NO MATTER THE TASK AT HAND.

IN 2000, THE STATE LEGISLATURE PUT INTO PLACE A PROCESS AND A PLAN FOR COUNTIES AND CITIES TO WORK TOGETHER TO ESTABLISH A PLAN OUTLINING DESIGNATED GROWTH AREAS THROUGHOUT OUR COUNTY.

THESE RESPECTIVE CITIES AND TOWNS, TOGETHER WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GROWTH PLAN COORDINATING COMMITTEE, HAVE BEEN MEETING AND WORKING DILIGENTLY TO UPDATE THE 24 YEAR OLD, COUNTY-WIDE URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARIES.

IN RECENT WEEKS, WITH NUMEROUS MEETINGS AND MUCH PUBLIC INPUT, THE LEADERSHIP POSITIONS ON THIS COMMITTEE WORKED TO ESTABLISH AND RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF A GROWTH PLAN THAT OUTLINES BOUNDARIES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS OF GROWTH. AT THAT TIME, THE PLAN WILL BE REVISITED AND REVIEWED AGAIN.

THIS COLLABORATION OF “GIVE AND TAKE” AMONG ALL OF THE CITIES AND THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS REPRESENTATIVES DEMONSTRATES THE IMPORTANCE

AND SUCCESS OF THE ABILITY TO WORK TOGETHER AMONG OURSELVES AND THOSE WE REPRESENT.

I WANT TO THANK EACH OF THE MAYORS, THE MEMBERS OF THE GROWTH PLANNING COMMITTEE AND THEIR RESPECTIVE CITY LEADERSHIP TEAMS FOR COMING TO THE TABLE WITH AN ATTITUDE FOR PARTNERSHIPS AND SUCCESS.

THE UNANIMOUS APPROVAL BY EACH OF THE MUNICIPALITIES OF THE RECOMMENDED PLAN REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE IN THE FUTURES OF EACH OF OUR GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES!

WE ALL KNOW THAT WILLIAMSON COUNTY IS WIDELY KNOWN FOR OUR OUTSTANDING PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM.

FOR HISTORIC PURPOSES, WE FOUND THAT IN 1896, THE FIRST COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS WAS MISS LUCY HULME. SHE WAS ALSO THE FIRST FEMALE SUPERINTENDENT. SHE WAS FOLLOWED BY SMITH HOUSE.

MR. FRED J. PAGE SERVED 41 YEARS, W. P. SCALES AND THEN W. C. (CLAUDE) YATES.

BI-CENTENNIAL INFORMATION FROM THE REVIEW APPEAL NEWSPAPER, INDICATED THAT IN 1922, THERE WERE 99 SCHOOLS IN THE COUNTY WITH A TOTAL STUDENT POPULATION OF OVER 10,000.

MR. MILTON LILLARD SERVED 1968-1976 AND MR. KEN FLEMING SERVED FROM 1976 – 1989.

REBECCA HOLT SCHWAB WAS ELECTED IN 1989 AS THE SECOND FEMALE SUPERINTENDENT AND SERVED UNTIL 1996. AT THAT TIME, THE SCHOOL BOARD BEGAN HIRING FOR THE POSITION AS OPPOSED TO IT BEING AN ELECTED POSITION.

IN 1996, THE BOARD HIRED DR. TERRY GRIER, FOLLOWED BY DR. DALLAS JOHNSON, AND IN 2004 HIRED SUPERINTENDENT REBECCA SCHWAB SHARBER. SHE WAS SUCCEDED BY DR. MIKE LOONEY AND CURRENT SUPERINTENDENT, JASON GOLDEN BEGAN SERVING IN 2019.

TODAY, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF SUPERINTENDENT GOLDEN AND THE DIRECTION OF THE 12 MEMBER SCHOOL BOARD, THERE ARE 52 SCHOOLS IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY’S PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT, WITH A TOTAL STUDENT POPULATION OF 42,231.

WHEN VISITING HERE IN THE LATE 1970'S, IT WAS EASY FOR ME TO NOTICE WHAT DECADES OF VISIONARY LEADERSHIP HAD BEEN DOING FOR THIS COMMUNITY.

I NOTICED, AND ENJOYED, WHAT I SAW SO MUCH, THAT I MOVED MY FAMILY HERE IN 1980 AND BEGAN GETTING INVOLVED IN THE GRASSLAND COMMUNITY OF VOLUNTERS, THROUGH THE GRASSLAND ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION.

AS NEIGHBORS AND PARENTS, WE BEGAN WORKING TO BUILD BALLFIELDS FOR OUR CHILDREN, OUR NEIGHBOR'S CHILDREN AND THEIR FRIENDS AT SCHOOL. BUT, WE BUILT MORE THAN BALLFIELDS, WE BUILT NETWORKS, PARTNERSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS – MANY OF WHICH REMAIN TODAY.

BY BEING INVOLVED, I LEARNED THAT WILLIAMSON COUNTY'S SCHOOL SYSTEM, THOUGH GOOD, WAS STRUGGLING TO GARNER FUNDING SUPPORT THROUGH THE COUNTY COMMISSION.

BY WAY OF A GRASS ROOTS EFFORT OF LIKE-MINDED RESIDENTS, WE WERE ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE COUNTY COMMISSION THE NEED FOR NEW SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION TO MEET THE NEEDS OF A GROWING COUNTY.

IN 1988, THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS APPROVED AND FUNDED THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF FOUR (4) NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS RESULTING IN NEW FACILITIES AT BETHESDA, LIPSCOMB, TRINITY AND WALNUT GROVE.

TODAY, THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REMAINS COMMITTED TO FUNDING PUBLIC EDUCATION.

THAT COMMITMENT IS REFLECTED IN THE \$1.09 OF THE TOTAL \$1.88 TAX RATE BEING EARMARKED FOR THE SCHOOL BUDGET OPERATIONS.

FOR THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR, THE COUNTY COMMISSION'S APPROVAL OF THE BUDGET AND THE CORRESPONDING TAX RATE RESULTED IN NO PROPERTY TAX INCREASE FOR THE COUNTY!

THANK YOU TO COMMISSIONERS BRIAN CLIFFORD, DREW TORRES, PAUL WEBB AND CHAIRMAN, CHAS MORTON FOR YOUR STEADFAST LEADERSHIP THROUGHOUT THE BUDGET PROCESS AND FOR LEADING THE EFFORTS FOR THE NEW BUDGET YEAR.

OF THE TOTAL BUDGET \$853 MILLION BUDGET, \$575 MILLION OF THE BUDGET FUNDS DAY TO DAY SCHOOL OPERATIONS. THIS BUDGET MEETS THE 2026 STATE MANDATED TEACHER'S STARTING SALARY OF \$50 THOUSAND A YEAR EARLIER THAN REQUIRED.

WHEN YOU ADD THE RURAL AND GENERAL DEBT EXPENSES DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO SCHOOLS, THAT NUMBER INCREASES TO \$630.3 MILLION.

YOU CAN THINK OF IT IN TERMS OF FOR EVERY DOLLAR OF PROPERTY TAXES YOU PAY, 74 CENTS IS SPECIFICALLY UTILIZED TO FUND THE OPERATIONAL AND CAPITAL EXPENSES FOR OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM.

THAT IS AN INVESTMENT IN OUR COUNTY'S CHILDREN AND OUR FUTURE AND ONE THAT HAS BEEN IN PLACE FOR DECADES!

Budget History

Budget

Year

End	Total Expenditures	Total Schools	%	Total Other	%
1987	\$40,578,313	\$23,612,896	58.19%	\$16,965,417	41.81%
2020	\$626,021,220	\$407,179,805	65.04%	\$218,823,415	34.96%
2021	\$629,471,876	\$417,637,393	66.35%	\$211,834,483	33.65%
2022	\$650,431,207	\$433,586,750	66.66%	\$216,844,457	33.34%
2023	\$723,533,814	\$492,545,267	68.07%	\$230,988,547	31.93%
2024	\$794,197,946	\$542,942,397	68.36%	\$251,255,549	31.64%
2025	\$853,207,687	\$575,295,936	67.43%	\$277,911,751	32.57%
**2025	\$853,207,687	\$630,340,180	73.88%	\$222,867,507	26.12

** Total school debt service is \$55,044,244 in the FY25 budget. If School debt service were accounted for in the School's budget, WC Schools would be 73.88% of the total budget and all Other County Government Funds 26.12%

ODDLY ENOUGH, AN EXCERPT FROM THE 1901 QUARTERLY COURT MEETING MINUTES OUTLINE THE PORTION OF THE RATE OF TAXATION AS FOLLOWS:

ON PROPERTY FOR COUNTY PURPOSES 30 CENTS ON THE \$100.00

TO PUT THAT IN PERSPECTIVE, 26 CENTS OF EACH OF YOUR TAX DOLLARS , OR 4 CENTS LESS THAN THEN, FUNDS THE “COUNTY PURPOSES” OPERATIONS, WHICH IS ANYTHING BEYOND THE 74 CENTS FOR SCHOOL OPERATIONS AND CAPITAL EXPENSES.

ON YOUR TABLES ARE COPIES OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER’S OVERVIEW FOR WILLIAMSON COUNTYS FISCAL HEALTH METRICS, FINANCIAL TRENDS AND BUDGET REVIEW FROM THIS PAST APRIL. THIS REPORT IS LIKE A REPORT CARD AS IT RELATES TO THE BUDGET EXPENSES AND OUTSTANDING DEBT RELATIVE TO ASSESSED VALUE.

WHAT THIS STATE REPORT DOES NOT INCLUDE IS THAT AS A RESULT OF THIS STRONG FINANCIAL PICTURE, WILLIAMSON COUNTY CONTINUES TO RETAIN ITS MOODY’S TRIPLE A BOND RATING. THIS IS THE COUNTY’S “CREDIT SCORE” WHICH EMPHASIZES OUR ABILITY TO BORROW AND PAY DEBT. THIS IS THE HIGHEST RATING THAT YOU CAN OBTAIN THROUGH MOODY’S INVESTOR SERVICES.

YOU CAN SEE ON THE NEXT REPORT FROM PROPERTY ASSESSOR, BRAD COLEMAN THE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY FOR THE COUNTY SINCE FROM 2003-2024. THIS 21 YEAR SNAPSHOT SHOWS AN INCREASE FROM \$4.2 BILLION TO \$19.2 BILLION WITH LARGER ASSESSED VALUE PERCENTAGE CHANGES DURING THE REAPPRAISAL YEARS. WILLIAMSON COUNTY PROPERTIES ARE DUE FOR A NEW APPRAISAL BEGINNING IN 2025.

THE ASSESSOR'S OFFICE CURRENTLY HAS 101,000 PARCELS OF REAL PROPERTY AND 14,100 PERSONAL PROPERTY ACCOUNTS SPREAD OVER 373,979 ACRES.

LET'S REVIEW A FEW OF THE MAJOR OPERATIONAL EXPENSES THAT ARE FUNDED WITH THE REMAINING 26 CENTS ON THE TAX DOLLAR.

IN ADDITION TO THE COST ASSOCIATED WITH OPERATING THE JAIL AND THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE, A PORTION OF THAT 26 CENTS ALSO PROVIDES FUNDING FOR THE OPERATIONS OF CIRCUIT COURT, GENERAL SESSIONS COURT AND THE JUVENILE COURT SYSTEMS.

THE COUNTY OWNS AND OPERATES A LANDFILL. OUR LANDFILL HAS A PROJECTED CURRENT LIFE REMAINING OF 15 YEARS. AND, WITH AN EXPANSION PROJECT IN PROCESS, THE LANDFILL LIFE WILL EXTEND ANOTHER 50 YEARS.

A PART OF THIS EXPANSION PROCESS INCLUDES THE NEED FOR GOOD CLAY SOIL TO BUILD LANDFILL CELLS FOR THE FUTURE AND GOOD TOP SOIL TO COVER THE CELLS.

THIS PAST FISCAL YEAR, THE COUNTY COMMISSION AUTHORIZED AND FUNDED THE PURCHASE OF 547 ACRES ADJOINING THE LANDFILL TO PROVIDE THE PROPER SOIL FOR COVERING OLD CELLS.

DIRECTOR, MAC NOLEN AND HIS TEAM ARE COMMITTED TO STAYING ON TOP OF THE REQUIREMENTS AND TRENDS OF OPERATING OUR LANDFILL IN A HEALTHY, ENVIRONMENTALLY SAFE AND COST-EFFICIENT MANNER.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE NEW ELECTRIC AUGER COMPACTOR AT THE GRASSLAND COMMUNITY CENTER WILL REDUCE THE NUMBER OF TRUCK TRIPS FOR PLASTIC BY 50%. THEY ARE CURRENTLY INSTALLING EQUIPMENT THAT WILL EVAPORATE LEACHATE INSTEAD OF REQUIRING IT TO BE HAULED AWAY TO A WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY. AFTER THE INITIAL INSTALLATION COST, THIS WILL RESULT IN \$700,000 IN TREATMENTS FEES ON AN ANNUAL BASIS.

ANOTHER PORTION OF THAT 26 CENTS IS ALLOCATED FOR THE OPERATIONS OF THE COUNTY'S OUTSTANDING PUBLIC SAFETY SYSTEM. THE DEPARTMENTS OF THE CONSOLIDATED E911 SYSTEM, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, A COUNTY-WIDE VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS AND OTHER FIRST RESPONDERS OF THE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE TEAM COMPRISE THE PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT.

THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ACCREDITATION PROGRAM (EMAP) LOOKS TO BUILD SAFER COMMUNITIES WITH MEASUREABLE STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS.

AT THIS TIME, I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE CONNOR SCOTT, WHO HAS BEEN ADDED TO THE PUBLIC SAFETY TEAM AS THE NEW DIRECTOR. WE ARE EXCITED TO HAVE HIM ON BOARD AND I KNOW HE LOOKS FORWARD TO MEETING AND CONTINUING TO WORK WITH OUR PUBLIC SAFETY PARTNERS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY.

OUR RESIDENTS PLACE AN EMPHASIS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY OF PARKS AND LEISURE SERVICES IN OUR COUNTY. WITH COMMISSION APPROVAL AND UNDER THE LEADERSHIP TEAM OF GORDON HAMPTON, WILLIAMSON COUNTY CURRENTLY OPERATES:

- 6 MAIN RECREATION FACILITIES
- 4 INDOOR ATHLETIC FACILITIES
- 3 SATELLITE CENTERS
- 3 NATURE PARKS – TIMBERLAND, WILKINS BRANCH, PEACOCK HILL
- 21 OUTDOOR PARKS – INCLUDING SPECIALTY PARKS LIKE THE SOCCER COMPLEX EAST AND WEST AND CASTLE PARK
- 2 PERFORMANCE VENUES

THE COUNTY OPENED THE 245-ACRE PEACOCK HILL LAST YEAR ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF COLLEGE GROVE IN RURAL WILLIAMSON COUNTY.

THIS PARK REPRESENTS ANOTHER PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP AND PRESERVES PRIVATE PICTURESQUE FARMLAND INTO ANOTHER PUBLIC NATURE PARK FOR OUR RESIDENTS TO ENJOY.

MUCH LIKE TIMBERLAND PARK, THIS PARK PROVIDES A QUIET RESPITE FROM THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE OF DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES.

SPEAKING OF ESCAPING.....A GOOD BOOK CAN ALSO BE A GREAT ESCAPE.

HISTORIC RECORDS INDICATE THAT MRS. SARAH OPHELIA CANNON LOVED A GOOD BOOK AND IN 1974 BECAME A LIFE MEMBER OF THE FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY SYSTEM FOR WILLIAMSON COUNTY. YOU MAY KNOW HER BY HER ALIAS, "MISS MINNIE PEARL"!

FROM 1983 TO 1993, A GENEALOGICAL CENTER FOR THE COUNTY'S LIBRARY WAS CREATED, INCLUDING OVER 100,000 FAMILY NAMES AND HUNDREDS OF RARE GENEALOGICAL BOOKS.

IN 1995, WITH A \$14,500 GRANT, AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN GENEALOGY COLLECTION WAS ESTABLISHED. WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THELMA BATTLE, THIS COLLECTION HAS GROWN AND PEOPLE FROM ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY UTILIZE THIS RESOURCE TO FURTHER THEIR RESEARCH AND UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR RESPECTIVE FAMILY HISTORIES.

IN 1997, THE WAR MEMORIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY OFFICIAL BECAME THE WILLIAMSON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM. WITH AN AUTOMATED CATALOG SYSTEM, ACCESSIBLE ON-LINE, THE LIBRARY SYSTEM CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF THE MOST PROLIFIC PROVIDERS OF CHILDRENS' AND ADULT PROGRAMMING IN THE COUNTY.

WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING AT WAYS TO INCREASE REVENUES WITHOUT LOOKING AT THE PROPERTY TAX STRUCTURE.

LAST FISCAL YEAR, THE COUNTY COMMISSION APPROVED A PART-TIME GRANT WRITER POSITION. WE CONTRACTED WITH BETH LOTHERS, AND SHE HAS BEEN BUSY AND SUCCESSFUL!!

ON THE COUNTY'S BEHALF, SHE WORKS DILIGENTLY PURSING GRANT APPLICATIONS OF ALL TYPES. KNOWING THAT WILLIAMSON COUNTY WILL OFTEN HAVE POINTS DEDUCTED OFF THE TOP DURING THE GRANT REVIEW PROCESS BECAUSE OF OUR TIER 1 AND ATTAINMENT STATUS DOES NOT SLOW HER DOWN!

TO-DATE, WE HAVE RECEIVED OVER ONE MILLION DOLLARS IN COMPETITIVE GRANT AWARDS AND HAVE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS CURRENTLY PENDING IN THE GRANT REVIEW PROCESS.

THESE GRANTS INCLUDE ARTS BUILDING COMMUNITIES GRANTS, CONVENIENCE CENTER GRANTS, SAFE STREETS FOR ALL GRANTS, BROADBAND READY COMMUNITIES GRANTS, RESCUE SQUAD GRANTS AND CONNECTED COMMUNITY FACILITIES GRANTS, JUST TO NAME A FEW.

LAST YEAR, I MENTIONED THAT WE HAD A GOAL TO BECOME THE MOST WELL-CONNECTED COUNTY IN THE STATE. THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP WITH MIDDLE TENNESSEE ELECTRIC, UNITED COMMUNICATIONS AND ARPA FUNDING, I AM EXCITED TO SAY WE HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE FOR OUR RESIDENTS.

COMMUNITIES THAT WERE PREVIOUSLY UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED ARE NOW GETTING CONNECTED, WITH A TARGET OF AN ADDITIONAL 8,000 ADDRESSES IN THE COUNTY.

THIS OUTREACH WILL RESULT IN CONNECTIVITY FOR 26,000 HOMES AND BUSINESSES BY EARLY 2025 AND WILL REPRESENT ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP BRINGING QUALITY OF LIFE SERVICES TO OUR RESIDENTS, SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES.

AS STATED EARLIER, WE ARE A GROWING COMMUNITY. WE FOUND SOME EARLY POPULATION INFORMATION DATING BACK TO 1900 FOR WILLIAMSON COUNTY, AS FOLLOWS:

1900 26,429

1910 24,213

1920 23,409

1930 22,845

1940 25,220

1950 24,207

1960 25,267

1970 34,423

1980 58,108

1990 81,021

1996 97,714 - SPECIAL CENSUS FOR WILLIAMSON COUNTY

2000 126,638

2010 183,182

2020 241,523

SO....IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY ONE OF THE ESTIMATED 246,000 RESIDENTS LIVING
IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY TODAY, WELCOME! YOU ARE PART OF THE
ESTABLISHMENT.

YOU ARE HERE BECAUSE OF WHAT HAS BEEN, AND CONTINUES TO BE, A 225 YEAR
OF HISTORY OF ESTABLISHING A GREAT PLACE TO WORSHIP, LIVE, WORK, AND
RAISE A FAMILY!

AND, LET US NOT FORGET THE IMPORTANCE AND THE VALUE TO OUR QUALITY OF LIFE OF HAVING A LOCAL, AWARD-WINNING HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL FACILITIES!

EARLIER LAST MONTH, WILLIAMSON MEDICAL CENTER AND THOUSANDS OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS CELEBRATED THE OPENING OF A NEW WING, RENOVATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS TO THE FACILITY. EACH OF THESE IMPROVEMENTS WILL RESULT IN MORE FUNCTIONAL LAYOUTS, MORE MODERN AND SPACIOUS ROOMS, EXPANDED WAITING AND EXAM ROOMS, AND ADDITIONAL PATIENT BEDS.

WILLIAMSON HEALTH IS AN INDEPENDENT, FREE-STANDING NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION. THAT MEANS THE SHAREHOLDERS ARE YOU.....THE MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY. THIS ALLOWS THE HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATION AND THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES TO DIRECT PROFITS BACK INTO THE HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS.

HAVING STATE OF THE ART HEALTHCARE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES IS A VITAL PART OF OUR COMMUNITY AND I CAN PROUDLY SAY THAT WILLIAMSON HEALTH HAS SET THE STANDARD!

WILLIAMSON COUNTY CONTINUES TO ATTRACT NEWCOMERS – BUSINESS NEWCOMERS, CORPORATE NEWCOMERS, AND RESIDENTIAL NEWCOMERS WHO ADMIRE WHAT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED HERE.

SO MANY OF OUR YOUNGER RESIDENTS WERE BORN AND RAISED HERE; SOME OF OUR OLDER RESIDENTS WERE BORN AND RAISED HERE. SOME OF US MOVED HERE.....BECAUSE WE LIKED WHAT WE SAW FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN.

HOWEVER, AS LONG-TERM AND LIFE-LONG RESIDENTS, SOMETIMES WE FAIL TO SEE THE FOREST FOR THE TREES. WE LIVE IN A COUNTY WITH GREAT SCHOOLS, EXCELLENT LAW ENFORCEMENT, PARKS AND OTHER QUALITY OF LIFE AMENTIES, AS WELL AS OUR GREAT PROPERTY VALUES AND LOW TAX RATES.

BECAUSE WE HAVE SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES, BOTH LARGE AND SMALL, WE CONTINUE TO ENJOY THE LOWEST UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN THE STATE OF TENNESSEE. JOBS ARE IMPORTANT TO THE ECONOMY WE ENJOY IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY.

THESE COUNTY ATTRIBUTES DID NOT JUST HAPPEN OVER NIGHT. THEY HAPPENED AND EVOLVED OVER DECADES OF VISIONARY ELECTED LEADERSHIP.

THEY HAPPENED BECAUSE MEN AND WOMEN, WITH VARYING IDEAS AND VARYING LIKES AND DISLIKES SAT DOWN AND HAD CONVERSATIONS TOGETHER. THEY WORKED TOGETHER. THEY COMPROMISED. THEY WORKED TOGETHER FOR THE GOOD OF THE WHOLE.

I WANT TO ENCOURAGE EACH OF US TO PAUSE FROM TIME TO TIME AND REFLECT UPON, AND TO BE PROUD OF, THE LEADERSHIP IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY, ON ALL LEVELS, PAST AND PRESENT, WHO HAVE HELPED US EVOLVE THROUGHOUT THE PAST 225 YEARS INTO WHAT I BELIEVE IS THE BEST COUNTY IN THE NATION!

AND SPEAKING OF 225 YEARS, AND BACK TO WHERE I STARTED EARLIER TODAY, BE SURE TO CHECK OUT THE CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU WEBSITE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE MANY CELEBRATIONS BEING PLANNED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY THIS FALL FOR THIS MILESTONE - FROM THE ARCHIVES TO THE COUNTY FAIR TO THE LIBRARY AND LOCAL BUSINESSES.

AND WHILE WE ARE CELEBRATING, THE WILLIAMSON COUNTY FAIR IS CELEBRATING 20 YEARS NEXT MONTH!

IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE THAT THIS EVENT THAT WAS DISCUSSED AROUND A CONFERENCE TABLE MANY YEARS AGO IS NOW CELEBRATING ITS 20TH YEAR OF FUN, FOCUSING ON AGRICULTURE, EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT FOR ALL AGES!

YOU WILL WANT TO VISIT THE HISTORIC VILLAGE WHERE YOU WILL SEE LIVE DEMONSTRATIONS AND DISPLAYS OF ITEMS FROM DAYS GONE BY.

IF YOU ARE A PARENT OR A GRANDPARENT, YOU KNOW THE WARMTH YOU FEEL WHEN YOU SEE A CHILD'S EYES LIGHT UP WITH EXCITEMENT. ONE OF THE PLACES THIS OFTEN HAPPENS ON OUR FAIRGROUNDS IS IN THE *LITTLE 1'S FARMING EXHIBIT*.

WE ARE STILL SHORT A LARGE NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS FOR THIS AREA AND WOULD LOVE TO HAVE YOU COME EXPERIENCE THE EXCITEMENT IN THE KID'S EYES AS THEY PRETEND TO BE A FARMER FOR A DAY.

THERE ARE MANY OTHER AREAS WHERE YOU CAN VOLUNTEER, AS WELL.

WE LIVE IN A SPECIAL PLACE – AN ENVY OF CITIES AND COUNTIES THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES.

I AM BLESSED TO HAVE BEEN MENTORED BY THOSE BEFORE ME. I AM BLESSED TO HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE BACK TO A COUNTY THAT HAS GIVEN SO MUCH TO ME AND MY FAMILY.

I AM BLESSED TO BE AN AMERICAN AND A WILLIAMSON COUNTY RESIDENT. MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS US ALL AND MAY WE ALL NOT TAKE WHAT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED IN OUR COUNTY FOR GRANTED.

THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE TODAY AND MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS THIS GREAT COUNTY FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS MORE TO COME!