

STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS
“WILLIAMSON COUNTY IS A COMMUNITY”

WILLIAMSON COUNTY CHAMBER LUNCHEON
JULY 16, 2013

WELCOME – AS I BEGIN TODAY, I BELIEVE THAT IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO SERVING THE PUBLIC IN THE ROLE OF AN ELECTED OFFICIAL. I WOULD LIKE TO RECOGNIZE A NUMBER OF ELECTED OFFICIALS IN THE AUDIENCE WITH US TODAY:

STATE OFFICIALS PRESENT:

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AND COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

CITY ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR SERVICE.

I WANT TO CONGRATULATE THE WILLIAMSON COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ON YOUR SUCCESS DURING THE PAST FEW MONTHS AND THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TODAY. LIKEWISE, I WANT TO THANK EACH OF YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO BE HERE TODAY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR COUNTY.

AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, WILLIAMSON COUNTY HAS JUST ADOPTED THE 2013-14 FISCAL YEAR BUDGET, TOTALING APPROXIMATELY \$434.8 MILLION DOLLARS. I AM HAPPY TO REPORT THAT THE COUNTY’S TAX RATE REMAINS UNCHANGED FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR AT \$2.31 PER \$100 OF ASSESSED VALUE. EVERYONE LOVES TO HEAR THAT WE ARE HAVING “NO TAX INCREASE!”

ADOPTING A BUDGET IS NOT AS EASY AS IT LOOKS. OFTEN TIMES, I HEAR THE COMMENT MADE THAT “THE BUDGET WENT THROUGH WITH NO PROBLEM, 24-0”. HOWEVER, THE RESULTS OF THAT VOTE ARE CONTINGENT UPON THE HOURS, DAYS AND WEEKS OF MEETINGS, STUDIES AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN NUMEROUS STAFF MEMBERS, DEPARTMENT HEADS AND ELECTED OFFICIALS. THERE ARE MULTIPLE REQUESTS, NEEDS, WANTS AND SCENARIOS THAT MUST BE CONSIDERED BEFORE BRINGING A BALANCED BUDGET FORWARD FOR A VOTE.

AT THIS TIME, I'D LIKE TO PERSONALLY THANK ALL OF MY DEPARTMENT HEADS INVOLVED IN THE BUDGETING PROCESS FOR THE TIME AND COMMITMENT YOU DEDICATE TO WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE "GOOD OF THE WHOLE".

-RECOGNIZE DEPARTMENT HEADS -

AS INDICATED ON THE SLIDE, \$272.9 MILLION OF THE \$434.8 MILLION BUDGET FUNDS THE GENERAL PURPOSE SCHOOL BUDGET, WHICH REPRESENTS 62.7% OF THE BUDGET. THIS EXPENDITURE LINE INCLUDES OPERATIONS, TRANSPORTATION AND THE SELF-SUPPORTING FUNDS FOR THE CAFETERIA AND EXTENDED DAY CARE PROGRAMS.

THE REMAINING 37.3% REPRESENTS GENERAL GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, COURT SYSTEMS, PARKS & RECREATION, SOLID WASTE, HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT, THE DEBT SERVICES AND LAW ENFORCEMENT. INCLUDED IN THESE EXPENDITURES, THE COUNTY COMMISSION FUNDED 32 NEW SCHOOL RESOURCES OFFICERS, AND RELATED EXPENSES, TO BE PLACED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY AND THE FRANKLIN SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT, PROVIDING OFFICERS IN EACH OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.

THE REVENUES TO BALANCE THIS BUDGET ARE DERIVED MOSTLY FROM YOUR LOCAL PROPERTY TAXES, SALES TAXES AND OTHER LOCAL FEES. AT \$282.8 MILLION, YOUR LOCAL TAXES REPRESENT 69% OF THE REVENUES; STATE REVENUES REPRESENT 29% AND 2% IS DERIVED FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

THERE HAS BEEN SOME QUESTION LATELY AS TO WHERE THE COUNTY STANDS ON DEBT AND ITS EFFECTS ON OUR AAA BOND RATING.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY ARE ALWAYS STRIVING TO MANAGE IMPORTANT, BUT SOMETIMES CONFLICTING, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES. FOR EXAMPLE, WE WANT OUR CHILDREN TO HAVE ADEQUATE SCHOOL FACILITIES BUT WE DON'T WANT THE DEBT IT OFTEN REQUIRES. WE WANT TO PAY OFF OUR DEBTS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE AND WE ALSO WANT TO KEEP OUR ANNUAL TAX BURDEN RELATIVELY LOW.

IT'S NOT EASY, BUT OUR JOB IS TO STRIKE THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN THOSE DIFFERING OBJECTIVES. HOW DO WE DO THAT? ONE WAY WE DO IT IS THAT WE TYPICALLY FINANCE THE CONSTRUCTION OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS, WHICH ARE MEANT TO LAST 40 TO 50 YEARS, WITH 20 YEAR BONDS. THAT REDUCES SOME OF THE BURDEN ON CURRENT TAXPAYERS BUT ALSO PROVIDES ADEQUATE FINANCIAL FLEXIBILITY FOR FUTURE NEEDS.

WILLIAMSON COUNTY CURRENTLY HAS APPROXIMATELY \$462 MILLION IN DEBT. TRYING TO DECIDE WHETHER \$462 MILLION IS TOO MUCH WITHOUT TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THE SIZE OF OUR TAX BASE IS LIKE TRYING TO EVALUATE WHETHER A PERSON WEIGHS TOO MUCH WITHOUT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THEIR HEIGHT AND AGE. FIVE YEARS AGO WE HAD \$20 MILLION LESS IN DEBT...BUT WE ALSO HAD A TAX BASE THAT WAS \$6 BILLION SMALLER. TEN YEARS AGO WE HAD \$120 MILLION LESS IN DEBT...BUT OUR TAX BASE WAS \$15 BILLION SMALLER. WAS OUR FINANCIAL CONDITION BETTER THEN? I DON'T THINK SO.

AS I THINK YOU CAN TELL, OUR DEBT AS A PERCENTAGE OF OUR TAX BASE IS DECREASING...NOT INCREASING. THAT'S JUST ONE REASON WHY OUR AAA RATING IS STABLE. IF THE RATING AGENCIES ONLY LOOKED AT TOTAL DEBT, THERE WOULDN'T BE A SINGLE LARGE GOVERNMENTAL BODY WITH A TRIPLE A RATING. THE REALITY IS THEY EVALUATE DEBT AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL TAX BASE.

THE FACT THAT OUR TOTAL INDEBTEDNESS IS INCREASING DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE ARE NOT MAKING SUBSTANTIAL PAYMENTS ON OUR PRINCIPAL. WE ARE CURRENTLY SCHEDULED TO RETIRE OVER ½ OF OUR INDEBTEDNESS WITHIN THE NEXT SEVEN YEARS. AND WE *WILL* DO THAT ON OUR EXISTING DEBT. IF OUR TOTAL DEBT GROWS, IT IS NOT BECAUSE WE ARE DELAYING PRINCIPLE REPAYMENTS...IT IS BECAUSE WE ARE CONTINUING TO INVEST IN NEW PROJECTS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH OUR VALUES IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY. THESE ARE THE SAME TYPES OF INVESTMENTS THAT HAVE MADE US WHO WE ARE IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY.

MAINTAINING CONSERVATIVE DEBT RATIOS IS DIFFICULT IN A GROWING COUNTY. IT'S EASY TO REDUCE YOUR INDEBTEDNESS WHEN PEOPLE ARE LEAVING AND THE DEMAND FOR INFRASTRUCTURE IS DECLINING...IT'S MORE CHALLENGING WHEN THEY KEEP COMING. BUT WE STRIVE TO MANAGE THAT GROWTH...AND OUR AAA BOND RATING IS AN AFFIRMATION THAT WE ARE DOING A GOOD JOB.

FOR THE “GOOD OF THE WHOLE”, MANY THINGS OCCUR THROUGHOUT OUR COUNTY AND OUR REGION ON A DAILY BASIS.

- PLANNERS MEET WITH PLANNERS;
- LAW ENFORCEMENT MEET WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT;
- SCHOOL OFFICIALS MEET WITH SCHOOL OFFICIALS; AND
- MAYORS MEET WITH MAYORS.

REGIONAL ISSUES INCLUDING JOBS, INFRASTRUCTURE, TRAFFIC CONCERNS THROUGHOUT THE MIDDLE TENNESSEE AREA (ROBERTSON, SUMNER, DAVIDSON, WILSON, WILLIAMSON, RUTHERFORD AND MAURY COUNTIES) ARE AT THE FOREFRONT IN MOST ISSUES THAT WE DISCUSS.

THE SUCCESS OF OUR COUNTY AND OUR INDIVIDUAL CITIES, YOUR BUSINESSES, AND YOUR HOMES IS NOT THE WORK OF ONE PERSON. IT IS THE WORK OF THE “WHOLE”. WILLIAMSON COUNTY IS A STRONG COMMUNITY BECAUSE WE HELP EACH OTHER TO MAKE IT THE BEST THAT IT CAN BE!

FROM A STATISTICAL STANDPOINT, I’D LIKE TO SHARE SOME DATA ABOUT WILLIAMSON COUNTY, THE STATE AND THE U.S.

CURRENTLY, THE POPULATION OF WILLIAMSON COUNTY IS ESTIMATED TO BE 192,911. OF THESE RESIDENTS, 10.6% ARE 65 OR OLDER; 6.1% ARE UNDER 5 AND 28.2% ARE UNDER 18. FOR COMPARISON PURPOSES, TENNESSEE’S POPULATION IS ESTIMATED AT 6.4 MILLION AND THE U. S. POPULATION IS AT 313 MILLION.

AS WE LOOK AT OUR EDUCATIONAL STATISTICS, YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT WILLIAMSON COUNTY RANKS FIRST IN THE STATE FOR THE NUMBER OF POPULATION UNDER THE AGE OF 18; FIRST IN THE NUMBER OF RESIDENTS WITH HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS AND FIRST FOR THE NUMBER OF RESIDENTS WITH A COLLEGE DEGREE.

THE GROWTH PROJECTIONS FOR WILLIAMSON COUNTY INDICATE WE WILL REACH OVER 226,000 IN 2020; 280,000 IN 2030 AND 334,000 IN 2040; EXCEEDING THE NASHVILLE-METRO AREA, THE STATE AND THE UNITED STATES BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS.

OUR FEMALE POPULATION IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY, AND EQUALLY SO IN THE STATE AND ACROSS THE U. S. REPRESENTS A LITTLE OVER ONE-HALF OF THE POPULATION AND THEY OPERATE 22.5% OF OUR LOCAL BUSINESSES, COMPARED TO 25.9% IN THE STATE AND 28.28% IN THE U. S.

IT IS REWARDING TO NOTE THAT IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY, 82.2% OF OUR RESIDENTS OWN THEIR HOMES, COMPARED TO 69% THROUGHOUT THE STATE AND 66% IN THE U. S.

WILLIAMSON COUNTY'S MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME STANDS AT \$89,063, COMPARED TO THE STATEWIDE RATE OF \$43,989 AND THE U. S. RATE OF \$52,762.

IT IS OFTEN EASY TO SET ASIDE THOUGHTS OF THE MULTIPLE TRAGEDIES THAT HAVE OCCURRED IN RECENT WEEKS IN OUR UNITED STATES – THE TORNADOES IN OKLAHOMA, THE FERTILIZER PLANT EXPLOSION IN TEXAS AND THE LOSS OF THE 19 FIREFIGHTERS IN ARIZONA.

HOWEVER, WE MUST KEEP THESE COMMUNITIES, THESE ELECTED OFFICIALS, INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR FAMILIES, IN OUR THOUGHTS AND NOT FORGET THAT ALL OF THE SUCCESSES WE ENJOY IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY COULD CHANGE IN AN INSTANT.

OFTEN TIMES, WE AS INDIVIDUALS ARE FACED WITH OUR OWN PERSONAL TRAGEDIES AND WE HAVE FAMILY AND FRIENDS WHO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO HELP US THROUGH. AS A COUNTY, WE ALSO FACE TRAGEDIES. WHEN WE DO, WE ALL PULL TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY AND HELP EACH OTHER TO GET BACK ON OUR FEET SUCH AS WAS THE CASE AFTER THE MAY, 2010 FLOODS THROUGHOUT MIDDLE TENNESSEE.

AT THIS TIME, I'D LIKE TO RECOGNIZE OUR OWN LAW ENFORCEMENT, FIRE PROTECTION AND PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICE PERSONNEL IN THE AUDIENCE TODAY AND SAY THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE.

WE ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO PLAN FOR VARIOUS SCENARIOS THAT COULD REQUIRE ALL OF US TO PULL TOGETHER. THERE ARE LEADERS THROUGHOUT THIS COUNTY, EVEN TODAY, MEETING TO ENSURE THAT PLANS ARE IN PLACE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE WHO NEVER KNOW WHEN AND HOW THEY WILL BE NEEDED.

TODAY, WILLIAMSON COUNTY IS PLANNING FOR A NEW PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY. THESE PLANS ARE NOT THE PLANS OF ONE INDIVIDUAL, OR ONE DEPARTMENT, BUT THE PLAN OF A MULTITUDE OF AGENCIES WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE "GOOD OF THE WHOLE".

IN NOVEMBER, 2012 THE RIBBON WAS CUT OFFICIALLY OPENING STATE ROUTE 840. WITH APPROXIMATELY 95% OF THIS NEW ROAD RUNNING THROUGH WILLIAMSON COUNTY, WE ARE MINDFUL THAT WILLIAMSON COUNTY'S PUBLIC SAFETY STAFF, INCLUDING VOLUNTEER FIRE FIGHTERS, WILL BE FIRST RESPONDERS ALONG THIS ROUTE. THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING FOR PUBLIC SAFETY TRAINING AND FACILITIES, ONCE AGAIN, COMES TO LIGHT.

TODAY, WILLIAMSON COUNTY IS PLANNING FOR A NEW SENIOR CITIZENS FACILITY IN THE HEART OF FRANKLIN. WILLIAMSON COUNTY HAS BECOME KNOWN AS A DESIRABLE PLACE TO RETIRE, DUE IN PART TO OUR GREAT STRENGTHS, LOW TAXES AND THE STATE LEGISLATURE AND THE GOVERNOR'S WORK TO ELIMINATE THE INHERITANCE TAX IN THE STATE.

AND, OF COURSE, IT DOESN'T HURT THAT MANY OF US HAVE GRANDCHILDREN HERE THAT WE WANT TO BE CLOSE TO AND ENJOY!

TODAY, WILLIAMSON COUNTY IS PLANNING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW SCHOOLS. BASED ON THE PROJECTED GROWTH NUMBERS WE OBSERVED EARLIER, THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 18, AND THE PROJECTED GROWTH OF 800-1,000 NEW SCHOOL CHILDREN EACH YEAR FOR THE PAST FIVE (5) OR MORE YEARS, WE KNOW THAT WE MUST ALL WORK TOGETHER TO PLAN FOR OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE.

OUR SOLID WASTE DEPARTMENT IS PLANNING A "SMART CELL" WHICH STANDS FOR SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT USING AERATION RECIRCULATION TREATMENT. THIS UNIQUE PROJECT WILL ALLOW WILLIAMSON COUNTY TO HANDLE THE COUNTY'S WASTE AND LEACHATE ON-SITE SAVING MONEY IN THE PROCESS. THIS BOLD APPROACH HAS THE POTENTIAL TO CHANGE THE WAY SOLID WASTE IS HANDLED IN THE FUTURE.

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED OUR SPECIAL GUEST, "BUTTERCUP" HERE TODAY. BUTTERCUP IS THE MASCOT OF OUR LITTLE 1'S FARMING EXHIBIT AT THE WILLIAMSON COUNTY FAIR. WE ARE ONLY 17 DAYS AWAY FROM THE KICK-OFF OF THIS YEAR'S FAIR. I AM THANKFUL FOR THE THOUSAND+ VOLUNTEERS WHO WORK TIRELESSLY TO PRODUCE THE LARGEST COMMUNITY EVENT IN OUR COUNTY! WITH AN EMPHASIS ON AGRICULTURE AND EDUCATION, THIS CLEAN, FAMILY-FRIENDLY FAIR PROVIDES ENTERTAINMENT FOR EVERYONE. I AM ESPECIALLY PROUD OF THE WAY PEOPLE FROM ALL OUR COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTY COME TOGETHER FOR THIS EVENT.

I'VE OFTEN SAID THAT GOVERNMENT DOESN'T CREATE JOBS, BUT WE WORK TOGETHER AND LAY THE GROUNDWORK TO ENSURE JOB GROWTH OCCURS. CURRENT PROJECTIONS INDICATE OUR JOB GROWTH WILL EXCEED 13% IN THE NEXT FIVE (5) YEARS AND 23% IN THE NEXT TEN (10) YEARS. THESE ARE ALL GOOD SIGNS THAT WE LIVE IN A HEALTHY, VIBRANT AND GROWING COMMUNITY.

WILLIAMSON COUNTY IS GROWING BECAUSE WE COME TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY. WE ARE GROWING BECAUSE WE HAVE MEN AND WOMEN, SUCH AS YOURSELVES, WHO ARE WILLING TO SERVE IN PUBLIC SECTOR, PRIVATE SECTOR AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE "GOOD OF THE WHOLE". DOING SO, WE PROVIDE AN ARRAY OF QUALITY OF LIFE FACTORS THAT MANY COMMUNITIES DO NOT OFFER.

NOT TOO MANY DAYS GO BY THAT SOMETHING NEW DOESN'T OCCUR SOMEWHERE THROUGHOUT WILLIAMSON COUNTY WHICH ADDS TO OUR QUALITY OF LIFE. RECENTLY, A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE TENNESSEE WILDLIFE RESOURCES AGENCY ALLOWED FOR THE OPENING OF AN ARCHERY RANGE, LOCATED AT THE AG EXPO PARK. THIS ARCHERY RANGE IS ALREADY SEEING GREAT USE AND PROVIDES ANOTHER RECREATIONAL OUTING FOR OUR SCHOOL CHILDREN AND OUR CITIZENS.

WE CONTINUE TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS IN OUR ANIMAL CONTROL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES. SOME OF THESE, STARTED BY FORMER DIRECTOR, DOUG BRIGHTWELL, ARE BEING EXPANDED UPON BY OUR NEW DIRECTOR, LAURA CHAVARRIA. A BUNDLE OF ENERGY, LAURA COMES TO US FROM LEE COUNTY, FLORIDA AND WE ARE EXCITED TO HAVE HER ON BOARD!

ALSO NEW TO OUR TEAM THIS YEAR, WE ARE DELIGHTED TO WELCOME AIMEE SAUNDERS AS THE NEW COUNTY ARCHIVIST. SHE ASSUMED THIS ROLE UPON THE RETIREMENT OF MRS. LOUISE LYNCH LAST FEBRUARY, DURING WHICH TIME THE FACILITY WAS RENAMED IN HER HONOR. WELCOME ABOARD, AIMEE!

TODAY.....WILLIAMSON COUNTY IS ONE OF THE MOST EDUCATED, HEALTHIEST, BUSINESS-FRIENDLY PLACES TO LIVE IN AMERICA. WE ARE STRONG. WE ARE GROWING. AND, WE ARE PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE.....BECAUSE TODAY, WE REALIZE..... IT CAN ALL CHANGE TOMORROW.

THIS COUNTY IS BLESSED TO HAVE INDIVIDUALS SUCH AS EACH OF YOU WITH YOUR UNIQUE TALENTS. WE ARE BLESSED THAT YOU CHOOSE TO GIVE OF YOUR TIME AND SERVICES IN VARIOUS WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR COMMUNITY. THIS COUNTY IS STRONG BECAUSE EVERYONE WORKS TOGETHER, "FOR THE GOOD OF THE WHOLE".

THANK YOU FOR COMING TODAY. THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE AS YOUR COUNTY MAYOR AND I LOOK FORWARD TO CONTINUING TO SERVE YOU IN THE FUTURE.

MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS EACH OF YOU, OUR WILLIAMSON COUNTY COMMUNITY AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.