ORDER SETTING
RULES OF PROCEDURE, CONDUCT, AND DECORUM AT MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSIONERS COURT OF WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TEXAS

Pursuant to the Laws and Rules of the State of Texas, the Texas Constitution, article V, § 18 (providing that commissioners court shall "exercise such powers and jurisdiction over all county business"), the Texas Local Government Code, §§ 81.022 & 81.023 (setting forth process and contempt powers of the commissioners court "for the proper execution of its powers and duties and enforcement of its jurisdiction"), the Texas Health and Safety Code, § 121.003(a) (authorizing commissioners court to "enforce any law that is reasonably necessary to protect the public health"), and the common law granting the County authority to regulate facilities and the public health and safety, the Commissioners Court of Williamson County finds that it is necessary to impose reasonable policies pertaining to meetings of the Williamson County Commissioners Court.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT the following policies for the enforcement of Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum at Meetings of the Williamson County Commissioners Court (hereinafter also referred to as the "Court" or "Commissioners Court") are hereby adopted:

I. All Regular, Special, Emergency, Working and Executive Session Meetings of the Williamson County Commissioners Court will be called and conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Texas Open Meeting Act, Texas Government Code, Chapter 551.

II. The Williamson County Commissioners Court normally meets on Tuesdays at 9:30 a. m. in the Commissioners Courtroom on the second floor of Williamson County Courthouse, 710 Main Street, Georgetown, Texas. Unless otherwise amended or provided by the Williamson County Commissioners Court, the Regular Term or Regular Meeting day of the week of the Williamson County Commissioners Court shall be each Tuesday of every month and all other meetings or sessions of Commissioners Court shall be Special Terms or Special Meetings. **Tex. Loc. Gov't Code § 81.005(g)-(h).** Each meeting notice will be approved by the County Judge and posted at the Williamson County Courthouse and on https://agenda.wilco.org/agenda_publish.cfm pursuant to the procedures listed in the Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code, Chapter 551.

III. With the exception of executive sessions (aka, "closed meetings"), all meetings of the Williamson County Commissioners Court are open to the public and to representatives of

the media. Executive sessions of the Commissioners Court are not open to the public or media and only individuals requested or ordered to attend are allowed to attend.

A. The business of Williamson County is conducted by and between the members of the Williamson County Commissioners Court and by those members of the County staff, elected officials, department heads, consultants, experts and/or members of the public requested to be present and participate. While the public is invited to attend all open meetings of the Commissioners Court, participation is limited to that of observer unless a member(s) of the public is requested to address the Commissioners Court on an issue(s) or as otherwise set out herein.

B. Each member of the public who desires to appear before the Commissioners Court to address the Court must fully complete a Public Participation Form and submit it to the County Judge's Executive Assistant or designated staff <u>at least ten (10) minutes prior to the beginning of the Court's meeting</u>.

C. Each member of the public who appears before the Commissioners Court shall state his/her name, city of residence and county of residence for the record of the Court.

D. <u>Public Comment Period for County Matters **Not** on a Meeting's Agenda:</u>

1. The Commissioners Court will conduct a Public Comment Period to allow members of the public to address the Court regarding matters pertaining to or affecting Williamson County **but that do not appear as an Agenda Item on a meeting's Agenda**.
2. Each member of the public who desires and is recognized to appear before the Court during such Public Comment Period shall be limited to a maximum of two (2) minutes to make his/her remarks.
3. The maximum overall discussion time allowed for the Public Comment Period, regardless of the number of members of the public wishing to address the Court during such period, shall be limited to ten (10) minutes. In the event that more than five (5) members of the public wish to speak during the Public Comment Period, then time allocated to members of the public recognized to speak will, to the extent possible, be divided equally amongst the members of the public wishing to speak during the Public Comment Period. However, in matters of exceptional interest, the Court may, by majority vote of the members of the Court in attendance at the meeting, lengthen the maximum overall discussion time allowed for the Public Comment Period.
4. The Commissioners Court may only discuss issues that are properly posted on a meeting's Agenda as an Agenda Item. Thus, the Commissioners Court may not discuss matters addressed during the Public Comment Period since such matters do not appear on the meeting's Agenda.

E. Public Comments Regarding Agenda Items On a Meeting's Agenda:

1. Each member of the public who appears before the Commissioners Court to address the Court regarding an Agenda Item that is on a meeting's Agenda shall be limited to a maximum of three (3) minutes to make his/her remarks.
2. The maximum overall public discussion time allowed on any Agenda Item, regardless of the number of members of the public wishing to address the Court on a particular Agenda Item, shall be limited to thirty (30) minutes. In the event that more than ten (10) members of the public wish to address a particular Agenda Item, then time allocated to members of the public recognized to speak shall, to the extent possible, be divided equally between those members of the public wishing to speak in favor of the particular Agenda Item and those members of the public wishing to speak in opposition to the particular Agenda Item. However, in matters of exceptional interest, the Court may, by majority vote of the members of the Court in attendance at the meeting, lengthen the maximum overall public discussion time allowed on a particular Agenda Item.

F. The Executive Assistant of the County Judge or such other designated representative of the Commissioners Court shall maintain time for each public speaker.

G. **While it is the intention of the Court to provide open access to citizens of Williamson County, members of the public are advised that the Court is a Constitutional Court with both judicial and legislative powers, created under Article V, § 1 & § 18 of the Texas Constitution. Any member of the public shall conduct themselves with proper respect in speaking before the Court.** By adoption of these Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum, the Commissioners Court is not prohibiting lawful public criticism of the Commissioners Court, including criticism of any act, omission, policy, procedure, program, or service of the Commissioners Court. However, the Williamson County Commissioners Court is not a forum to publicly demean any group or individual. Accordingly, the Court will not allow any profane, insulting, demeaning or threatening language directed toward the Court and/or any group or individual, nor tolerate any slurs or epithets relating to race, religion, disability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or any other protected class of individuals.

H. Proper attire for men, women and children is mandatory. Inappropriate attire includes, but is not limited to, items such as cutoffs; tank tops; muscle shirts; shorts; clothing with suggestive, offensive, vulgar, racist, homophobic, sexist pictures, slogans or depictions; provocative clothing styled or worn to provoke, distract or disrupt; barefoot; or flip-flops.

IV. **Any member of the public that is not properly attired or who does not conduct themselves according to the guidelines and rules set out herein will be subject to the following orders, sanctions and possible prosecution:**

A. Cancellation of a speaker's remaining speaking time;
B. Removal from the Commissioners Courtroom;
C. Denial of entry into the Commissioners Courtroom;
D. Refusal to abide by the Court's order and/or continued disruption of the meeting may result in a Contempt of Court citation issued under Tex. Loc. Gov't Code § 81.023.
E. Filing of charges and prosecution under the following sections of the Texas Penal Code:

Texas Penal Code § 42.05. Disrupting Meeting or Procession.
(a) A person commits an offense if, with intent to prevent or disrupt a lawful meeting, procession, or gathering, he obstructs or interferes with the meeting, procession, or gathering by physical action or verbal utterance.
(b) An offense under this section is a Class B misdemeanor.

Texas Penal Code § 38.13. Hindering Proceedings by Disorderly Conduct.
(a) A person commits an offense if he *intentionally* hinders an official proceeding by noise or violent or tumultuous behavior or disturbance.
(b) A person commits an offense if he *recklessly* hinders an official proceeding by noise or violent or tumultuous behavior or disturbance and continues after explicit official request to desist.
(c) An offense under this section is a Class A misdemeanor.

F. Such other civil and/or criminal sanctions as may be authorized under the Constitution, Statutes, and Codes of the State of Texas.

V. The County Judge is the presiding officer of the Williamson County Commissioners Court and is a fully participating member thereof. As presiding officer of the Court, the County Judge is responsible for conducting all meetings. In the event of absence of the County Judge, the senior member of the Court present (in terms of total number of years as an elected member of the Court) shall serve as the Judge Pro-Tem, although such senior member may delegate this duty to another member of the Court. Except as otherwise authorized by the Williamson County Commissioners Court, the County Judge shall be the presumptive signatory of the Williamson County Commissioners Court and, in the County Judge's absence, the senior member of the Court present (in terms of total number of years as an elected member of the Court) shall act as the presumptive signatory of the Williamson County Commissioners Court.

VI. The Williamson County Constable Precinct No. 3 and/or his/her designated deputies shall serve as the Bailiff at all Regular, Special, Executive Session, Emergency Meeting and Public Hearings of the Court. In the event of the absence of the Williamson County Constable Precinct No. 3 and his/her deputies, the Court's presiding officer shall appoint such other commissioned peace officers to serve as Bailiff as may be necessary.

VII. At the discretion of the Court, town meetings, working sessions and public hearings may be conducted. The Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum set out herein shall apply

to such meetings. Supplemental rules may be adopted at the discretion of the Commissioners Court in order to conduct such meetings in an orderly, efficient, and proper manner.

VIII. The Williamson County Commissioners Court recognizes the concept of "ceremonial deism" as a reasonable usage in compliance with constitutional principles on the grounds that the practice is longstanding, has historical significance, and its religious impact is minimal and nonsectarian. Williamson County does not endorse or advance any one, or disparage any other, faith or belief. In line with local customs, history, morals, and application of ceremonial deism, Williamson County fully recognizes legislative prayer, use of "In God We Trust" as the national motto, use of the words "under God" to pledges of allegiance, legislative resolutions honoring local churches, groups, and charitable organizations that contribute to the public good, and any other acceptable use of ceremonial deism without establishing or endorsing any one religion or violating the free will of the people with regard to their individual beliefs.

IX. Special Press & Media Rules:

A. No media personnel or equipment, including lights, cameras or microphones will be located on the Commissioners Court bench nor closer than five (5) feet in front of the Commissioners Court bench during meetings.

B. Reporters and media technicians are required to structure their movements, equipment (including set-up, take-down, and adjustments, etc.) in a manner that does not disrupt deliberations or the ability of the public to see, hear, and participate in the proceedings.

C. Except as otherwise authorized by the presiding officer of the Court, interviews shall be conducted outside the Commissioners Courtroom during the time the Court is in session, as well as during times in which Court's session is in recess.

D. Media interviews which are conducted outside the Commissioners Courtroom must be conducted in a manner that the interview does not disturb, impede or disrupt the Court's proceedings at any time.

X. ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCESSIBLITY STATEMENT FOR DISABLED PERSONS: Entry by the public into the Commissioners Courtroom shall be made only at the designated entry points. The Court's meeting site is accessible to disabled persons as follows: Entrance to the Courthouse is accessible through the south entrance of the Williamson County Courthouse. A wheelchair ramp provides access to the south entrance. The Commissioners Courtroom is on the second floor, and there is a working elevator in the building. If any special assistance or accommodations are needed in order to attend a Commissioners Court meeting, please contact the Office of the County Judge at (512) 943-1550 or the Court's Bailiff in advance so that *reasonable* accommodations can be arranged.

XI. TRANSLATED PUBLIC TESTIMONY: In the event the Court is not using simultaneous translation equipment in a manner that allows the Court to hear a translated public

testimony simultaneously, any member of the public who addresses Court through a translator shall be given at least twice the amount of time as a member of the public who does not require the assistance of a translator in order to ensure that non-English speakers receive the same opportunity to address the Court. The maximum overall public discussion time allowed on a particular Agenda Item or for a Public Comment Period shall be increased as necessary in order to comply with this provision.

XII. These Rules of Procedure, Conduct, and Decorum at Meetings of the Williamson County Commissioners Court shall be effective immediately upon adoption by the court and shall remain in full force and effect until amended or repealed by a majority vote of the Commissioners Court.

ORDERED BY THE WILLIAMSON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS on this 27th day of August, 2019.

Bill Gravell, Jr., Williamson County Judge

Terry Cook
Commissioner, Pct. 1

Valerie Covey
Commissioner, Pct. 3

Cynthia Long
Commissioner, Pct. 2

Russ Boles
Commissioner, Pct. 4