

Tarrant County: Our North Texas Home

Tarrant County Judge B. Glen Whitley

## Tarrant County Stays Conservative on Budget and Expenses – Property Tax Rate Lowered

It's always good news when the tax rate goes down.

Tarrant County has lowered its property tax rate a penny for this next year, from 25.4 cents to 24.4 cents per \$100 of taxable value.

Now a penny might not seem like much, but it's the second year in a row we've lowered the tax rate one cent, which has decreased or stayed the same since 2006.

We can do that in Tarrant County because we are thrifty with the taxpayer dollar and live within our means.

Isn't that the way local government should be?

When the Tarrant County Commissioners Court develops an operating budget, we keep spending in check and, at the same time, make sure we can deliver the quality services our more than two million Tarrant County residents expect.

Tarrant County's operating budget for 2018 is \$602,176,850.

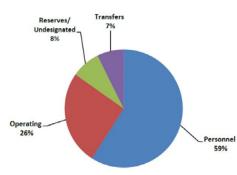
All of our elected officials and county department heads take the budget process seriously. They treat the tax dollars they receive as if they were using their own family's money.

And we only added a total of about a dozen new jobs.

The sheriff added two deputies to patrol downtown, the medical examiner and county facilities got some administrative help and there's a new elections coordinator providing bilingual service in Vietnamese in the elections office.

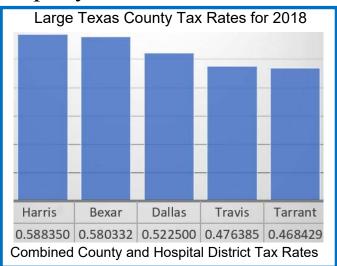
Eight new county positions next year are a result of costly state imposed unfunded mandates. That happens when the Legislature passes laws that require the county to implement programs and measures, without funding them.

#### FY 2018 Operating Budget



Local taxpayers are forced to pick up the tab and it can affect the ability of local governments to provide vital services to Texans and to businesses locating or staying in our cities and county.

It's worth noting the good work of some of our county departments.



The Criminal District Attorney turned over \$300,000 in forfeiture money to the county's general fund., a welcome move.

The County Clerk's office improves service and lowers costs by keeping pace with technological innovation. The clerk's website lets customers get copies of marriage licenses and birth and death certificates around the clock.

If we are faced with an emergency - think about what Harris County now must do in the wake of Hurricane Harvey - we have reserves that can meet the challenge. Our county pension is well-funded and we have a triple-A bond rating.

We run a tight ship in Tarrant County.

Everybody works together to make our county run as efficiently and responsibly as possible.

Tarrant County is the nation's 15th largest county and North Texas, the fourth largest urban area, is one of the fastest growing areas in the country. We could have more than three million people living in our county by 2050.

That kind of growth is a challenge and an opportunity.

We have good jobs, good schools, affordable housing and an excellent quality of life in North Texas.

We need to work to keep it that way.

In Tarrant County, we have a long history of working together and collaborating to improve our community. As County Judge, I pledge to do my part to make Tarrant County the best place to work, live and raise our families. Join me.

Let's get after it together.

### AROUND THE COUNTY

#### **UNITED WAY OF TARRANT COUNTY GETS A NEW CEO**

### T.D. Smyers: A Man with a United Way Mission

A New Strategy of Public Philanthropy - Building a Partnership Network



T.D. Smvers United Way CEO

T.D. Smyers is used to taking on challenges and succeeding.

The new chief executive officer of United Way of Tarrant County says that's a lesson learned from 31 years in the Navy, a journey that started when he enrolled at the U.S. Naval Academy.

"I wanted to take what the Navy taught me, operational leadership, and apply it in the nonprofit or private sector," said Smyers, who retired

as a captain in 2011. "I like to wake up every day and be proud of what I am

doing," he said. Smyers was first hired by the American Red Cross to consolidate some local Texas chapters into a regional or-

ganization. The American Red Cross of North Texas, the regional organization he helped to create, now serves a population of 9 million people in 121 counties.

"While working for the Red Cross, I covered a lot of North Texas on two wheels," said Smyers, who can sometimes be spotted riding his Harley Davidson motorcycle.

He wasn't looking for a new job when United Way approached him two years ago about becoming its chief operating officer. It was an easy call, he said, because he lives in north Fort Worth and his children attend Keller schools.

Smyers, the former commanding officer of the Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base, is now at the helm of United Way. This July he replaced longtime United Way CEO Tim McKinney, who retired.

"I am interested in the potential of what United Way can become," he said.

United Way of Tarrant County is changing, Smyers said, repositioning itself for philanthropy in today's world.

"We have a new strategy. It's called public philanthropy," said Smyers, adding that it's a modern version of the old United Way campaign.

The strategy calls for United Way to bring local government, nonprofits, the private sector and community volunteers together to solve the most pressing issues in our community.

"We want United Way to be the ringleader. We want to be a convener and build a comprehensive partnership network," he said.

It is of vital importance to substantially improve the quality of life for all of Tarrant County's residents, Smyers said.

"Government and nonprofits can't do it alone," he said. The strategy will work in Tarrant County, he said, because

people here have a deep understanding of the need to collaborate and work together.

But donations to United Way are down. The agency is experiencing a shortfall brought on by changes in the economy and within various industries. The agency had to restructure and is operating with fewer employees. It also no longer takes fees for handling donations.

Even so, funding to partner agencies has remained constant, Smyers said.

"We mean business, even though we are in a revenue crisis," Smyers said. "We take only what we need for operational expenses and allocate the rest to the Tarrant County community."

Smyers is not living and working far from his childhood

He grew up in the Wise County town of Boyd, just a few miles northwest of Eagle Mountain Lake.

"I'm a North Texas guy," he said. "Going to Fort Worth was always going into town, into the big city."

At the naval academy, he earned a degree in oceanography and physics and for 18 years held the school record for running the fastest half-mile.

He still has the focus of a runner and the discipline of a naval officer.

"In a service-oriented mission, it is about getting hardware and hands to the fight," he said. "We have to convince people who have philanthropic hearts to give through United Way."

On Smyers desk in his United Way office is a little inspirational message that says it all: "The best way to predict the future, is to create it."



T.D. Smyers with United Way staff, volunteers and the Tarrant Community College mascot, Toro, at a La Gran Plaza health fair.

### A Vehicle With a Mind of its Own — No Driver!

The innovative city of Arlington is making history again. This time it's with a self-driving shuttle named Milo.

Arlington's entertainment district just got a whole lot more entertaining.

Milo is a vehicle with a mind of its own, sort of. It can put the brakes on if a child or a pet runs in front of it and it knows where it is going as it cruises the paved trails around AT&T stadium and Globe Life Park.

Under a one-year pilot program, the city is leasing two selfdriving, electric vehicles from a French company called EasyMile.

The goal is to test a low-speed autonomous vehicle and all its fancy technology and gadgetry in the real world.

Arlington's Transportation Advisory Committee is interested in developing leading-edge technology, said Ann Foss, a principal planner with the City of Arlington.

A system of rooftop lasers reads fixed objects in the environment that are nine to 12 feet off the ground. A separate system of safety lasers has a 360-degree view that covers up to a dozen feet, Foss said.

The company is currently working on software to allow an autonomous vehicle to go on city streets, she said.

The Milo shuttles, that are free to ride and are wheelchair accessible, will run for about one hour before and one hour after major events at AT&T Stadium and Globe Life Park. A certified tion," said Bamonte, adding that the toll tag transponder was Milo operator is always on board.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments and its Regional Transportation Council support exploring a variety of transportation technologies to position the DFW area, as a transportation leader, said Tom Bamonte, the agency's program manager for autonomous vehicles.



Milo, shown by AT&T stadium, is a driverless shuttle that travels on paved trails in Arlington's entertainment district.

"This area has great resources to spur transportation innovadeveloped in North Texas.

There is a consensus that, over time, vehicles will be increasingly automated, Bamonte said.

It took a while to go from horse-and-buggy to cars, and from manually operated elevators to automated ones, Bamonte said. Consumers eventually embrace technological change, he said.

New Bigger and Better Greenhouse

### Tarrant County Master Gardeners Celebrate 30 Years

ty Master Gardeners Association has dedicated a new allweather greenhouse.

What a treat for the 430-member volunteer organization that teaches horticulture, holds classes and workshops, works with adults with special needs and helps schools across Tarrant County establish student gardens.

"It wasn't possible to regulate the temperature in the old greenhouse," said Nancy Curl, a past president of the association. "It just wasn't built for year-round activity."

The greenhouse was made possible through a collaborative grant from Goodwill Industries and the efforts of the Resource Connection, Tarrant County and the Master Gardeners.

The new greenhouse has a water wall – several three-foot



"This project is evolving," Curl

The pride and joy of the Master Gar-

The brand new all-weather greenhouse

Just in time to celebrate its 30th anniversary, the Tarrant Coundeners is the 3-acre demonstration garden at the Resource Connection. The garden is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

The demonstration plot has a perennial garden, a composting area, a shade garden, an herb garden, native and adapted grasslands, an orchard, a cacti area, a container garden and a rainwater collection system. It has a propagation area and raised beds.

The public is welcome to garden there, Curl said.

Master Gardeners started in Texas in 1978, bolstered by the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension program, and eight years later the Tarrant County chapter formed. It first met at the Extension offices on Jones Street, then at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden and finally to its current Resource Connection location.

They have monthly meetings at 10:00 a.m. on the first Thursday of the Month at the Resource Connection and participate in community events around the county on most weekends.

"They give their heart and soul back to the community," said Steve Chaney, Tarrant County Extension Agent for horticulture. "It's a great association."

You can find the Tarrant County Master Gardeners Association at temga.org and on Facebook.

**Tarrant County Master Gardeners Association** 30th Anniversary - Nov. 4th, 2017 - Noon to 3 pm.

The Resource Connection, 1801 Circle Dr., Fort Worth RSVP by October 27 to 817.884.1945

TO LOSE AN OFFICER IS TO LOSE A HERO

### Tarrant County Law Enforcement Memorial Approved



A rendering of Tarrant County's new law enforcement memorial to be built on the west side of the historic 1895 county courthouse in Fort Worth.

A law enforcement memorial honoring peace officers who died in the line of duty will be built on the grounds of the historic Tarrant County courthouse in downtown Fort Worth.

The ring-shaped memorial with a Texas star and a bronze Tarrant County seal in the center will be made from Texas pink granite, matching the stone of the elegant 1895 courthouse.

The memorial will sit in the center of a wide walkway leading to the courthouse's west entrance, which was restored in 2015 to its original park-like setting after an unsightly adjunct courthouse building from the 1950s was torn down.

"It is everything we want it to be as far as a tranquil place to allow families to visit and have a moment of peace to honor those who have fallen," said Sheriff Bill Waybourn.

Commissioner J.D. Johnson, a strong supporter of law enforcement, has been working to get the memorial built for many years. He began doing research on law enforcement memorials and fallen officers in Tarrant County after he was

elected a county commissioner in 1987, he said.

"We had no recognition for fallen officers in the county and I thought it was the right thing to do," he said.

The memorial committee includes Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley and Criminal District Attorney Sharen Wilson, in addition to Waybourn and Johnson.

The county asked its employees to submit designs for the memorial. Janice Pledger, who works in the county's Domestic Relations Office, came up with the winning idea.

Fort Worth architect Michael Bennett has translated Pledger's concept into an artful design.

The memorial will honor 16 Tarrant County peace officers. "Every one of the people has a story that led to their end of watch," said Wilson, whose office published a booklet with the stories of the city and county law enforcement officers who died in the line of duty.

The first entry in the booklet concerns the county's third sheriff, John B. York, who was killed in August of 1861. Legend has it that Sheriff York was stabbed repeatedly by an intoxicated Dallas attorney and left for dead, only to rise in the street and shoot his assailant. The attorney's brother then fired a shotgun at York, delivering a fatal blow.

The most recent peace officer death was just this past September, when Precinct 5 Deputy Constable Mark Gregory Diebold passed away during tactical team qualifying exercises. Constable Diebold achieved community recognition in July of 2016 when he helped deliver a baby girl, Evelyn Hall, on the side of the road. He stayed close to the family and attended her one-year birthday celebration to have an imaginary tea party with her.

Donations for construction of the memorial, expected to cost about \$250,000, can be made through the United Way of Tarrant County and the North Texas Community Foundation.

### CAUTION: FLU SEASON IS NOTHING TO TRIFLE WITH

The flu is just not predictable. It shows up in winter and usually peaks in late January or early February, but it can start by Halloween and last until Memorial Day.

It can be a headachey cold with chills, though it can lead to hospitalization and even death. Mild or severe, flu is a contagious viral respiratory disease that attacks the nose, throat, and lungs.

Fever, cough, sore throat and head and body aches can come on rapidly. Older adults with chronic health conditions and children under 5 years of age can have the most serious com-

plications and be at risk for hospitaliza-

tıon.

FLU

SHOT

The most predictable thing about flu is that, for the most part, it can be prevented by vaccination. Now is the time to get your flu shot. Immunization is especially important for children and adults with chronic heart, lung and immune system diseases.

Tarrant County Public Health will of-

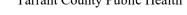
fer flu shots at county public health centers throughout the county. Flu shots are offered at many locations, including pharmacies and college health centers and by some employers and schools.

There are special flu vaccines made for seniors or people with egg allergies.

There is no preferred vaccine except the one right for you based on your age and health. If a special vaccine is required or desired, you should contact your primary health care provider. Nearly everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu shot this year and every year.

### TARRANT COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH FLU INFORMATION

http://health.tarrantcounty.com www.facebook.com/tarrantcountypublichealth flu.tarrantcounty.com

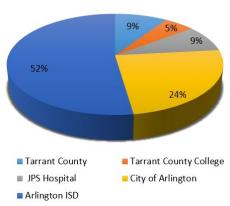


### Tarrant County Budget and Tax Rate Facts

It is important to remember that Tarrant County is only about 9% of the total property tax bill paid by Tarrant County residents.

Roughly half of the property taxes that you and I pay are collected by local school districts. Cities collect around one-quarter of the property taxes paid. The remainder of the tax bill is divided among The Tarrant County Hospital

PROPERTY TAX EXAMPLE



District, Tarrant County College and in some cases, water and special utility districts.

The property taxes that a homeowner pays will dramatically decrease only after the Texas Legislature enacts realistic school finance reform.

Legislative session after legislative ses-

sion, the Legislature kicks the school-funding can down the road.

This past year the Legislature tried to put the blame for high taxes on local government, but I think everybody knows the truth, especially when they hold their tax bill in their hand and read it.

From July 2015 to July 2016, Tarrant County saw the fifth largest population growth of any county in the nation. Over that same time period, Harris County ranked second, Bexar County seventh and Dallas County ninth in growth.

Texas counties are popular places to move to and for good reason.

There are good jobs and good schools, a wholesome quality of life, abundant housing, plenty of land to develop and a pro-business attitude here.

ly decrease only after the Texas Legislature enacts realistic Tarrant County has the lowest property tax rate of the five large urban counties in Texas when you combine the Tarrant County and Hospital District rates.

Like the old advertisement for rental cars about doing a good job for customers: "We try harder."



#### Tarrant County 2018 Operating Budget

• \$602,176,850

Tarrant County's 2018 Operating Budget increased by 2.38% over the previous year. The operating budget includes the General Fund, Road & Bridge Fund and Debt Service.

Tarrant County 2018 Operating Budget - Full Time Employees

3,668

Tarrant County added 13 Full Time Employees in its 2018 Operating Budget.

#### **Current Tarrant County Population**

2,016,872

According to the Census Bureau, Tarrant County's population has increased by more than 11 % since 2010, when the county population was 1.82 million

FY 2018 Tax Rate

\$0.2440

FY 2017 Tax Rate

\$0.2540



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### Lt. Walter Douglas: B-17 Pilot Flew 35 Missions over Germany

#### HONORING THE GREATEST GENERATION: ONE OF OUR REMAINING WW II VETERANS



Lt. Walter Douglas World War II B-17 pilot

When the flak from German antiaircraft guns was too intense, Lt. Walter Douglas would send his B-17 into a steep dive to escape.

"The 300 mph dives seems like yesterday," said the retired Air Force veteran, now 97, sitting in the living room of his Benbrook home.

Returning to his home field with one engine out after bombing Germany, Douglas dropped 16,000 feet, straight down, he said, to no more than 100 feet over the Dutch countryside and skipped over the trees and the sea back to England.

World War II B-17 pilot "I never thought I could do it. I never thought I could think fast enough," Douglas said. "But the truth is, you don't really know what you can do."

Douglas was born in 1920, in the oil fields of far north Bradford, Pennsylvania. He and his brother, who would later fly fighters in the Pacific, were fascinated watching the early airplanes fly.

He joined the Army when he was 19, in 1940, and was assigned to the Signal Corps. He worked at Langley Air Force base in Virginia and was stringing wire under buildings when war was declared.

Douglas was sent to the Eighth Army Air Corps to do communications work, but took an exam to become an aviation cadet.

"I didn't know what I was getting into, flying combat," he said.

He was sent to California for flight school, got his wings at the Army Air Field in Marfa and then to Las Vegas to learn how to fly B-17s.

"I was a utility guy, co-pilot, learned to shoot the guns, navi-



Lt. Walter Douglas, far right, standing, with a B-17 crew at an airfield in England

gate and drop bombs," he said.

One last stop stateside in Louisiana to learn to fly in formation and it was off to Chelveston, England, to join the 364th Bomber Squadron, a part of the Eighth Air Force's 305th Bomber Group.

"When they told us 35 missions, we figured we could never make it," Douglas said.



Walter Douglas, 97, playing the Azle Opry in June

"Afterward, it was hard to believe that I had actually made it, while so many had not."

In fact, it was not uncommon for a B-17 making daylight raids over Germany to last no more than 12 to 15 missions. The Eighth Air Force suffered 26,000 casualties during the war, more than the Marines fighting in the Pacific.

"It got pretty rough," Douglas said, adding that one guy tried to bail out of the plane without a parachute. Others, he said, were taken away in straight-jackets.

"We got shot up, but not shot down," he said. "Overnight they would have the plane repaired and ready to fly."

On his 15th mission Douglas got a pass to get married to a British telephone operator, Elsie, now his wife of 73 years.

When they weren't flying a mission, the pilots were taken to the airfield to watch the damaged planes return, to learn what they could about crash-landing the big bombers.

"Sometimes they would go wingtip over wingtip, and on occasion I had to use asymmetric power to land my plane safely," Douglas said.

> In his bedroom, Douglas still keeps a piece of flak that hit him in the foot, the same foot he once used to kick bombs out of the plane when they would get hung up.

After the war, Douglas stayed in the Air Force, working as an engineer and mechanic on B-29s. He was assigned to the B-36 bomber program at Carswell Air Force Base at the beginning of the Strategic Air Command.

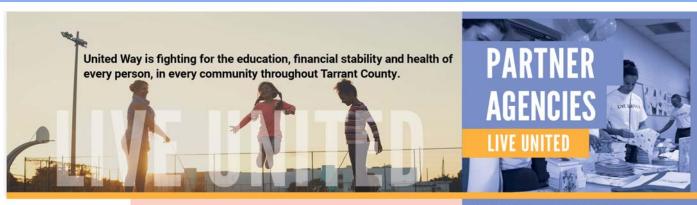
He went to Castle Air Force Base in California to learn how to fly a B-52s, but never got the opportunity to pilot one.

He retired in 1963 from his last duty post, Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, settled in Tarrant County and became a television repairman and played guitar in western bands.

For his service to the nation, Douglas received the Distinguished Flying Cross, five Bronze Stars and an Air Medal with five Oak Clusters.

He is humble about his role in World War II and being part of the Greatest Generation.

"I'm not a hero, just lucky," he said.





LIVE UNITED

#### LEARN WELL

#### **Our Education Initiative**

#### Our LEARN WELL strategies include:

- . Wild About Reading Access to Books
- · Early Learning
- . Summer Reading
- . High School Drop-Out Prevention
- College & Career Preparation
- . Lone Star Literacy Institute (teacher prep program)

#### EARN WELL

**Our Financial Stability Initiative** 

#### Our EARN WELL strategies include:

- VITA Centers (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)
- . Jobs & Job Training
- Financial Coaching
- · Adult Education/GED Classes

#### LIVE WELL

#### **Our Health Initiative**

#### Our LIVE WELL strategies include:

- · Nutrition/Hunger
- Falls Prevention
- Alzheimer's Care for Caregivers
- · Diabetes Care
- · Care for Older Adults

- Tarrant Literacy Coalition United Community Centers Inc The Women's Center of Tarrant

unitedwaytarrant.org/PARTNERS

### GIVE

A little goes a long way. Give once or on a recurring basis online or at work. unitedwaytarrant.org/GIVE or text UWTARRANT to 41444

### **ADVOCATE**

Get informed and speak up for a cause you care about.

unitedwaytarrant.org/ADVOCATE

### VOLUNTEER

Get connected and find an opportunity to donate your time. unitedwaytarrant.org/VOLUNTEER

# GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.

#### MAIN OFFICE:

1500 N. Main St. Suite 200 Fort Worth, TX 76164-0448 (817) 258-8000

#### **NORTHEAST TARRANT:**

221 Bedford Rd, Suite 306 Bedford, TX 76022-6251 (817) 282-1160

AREA AGENCY ON AGING & **AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE** CENTER OF TARRANT COUNTY Toll-free 1 (888) 730-2372

#### ARLINGTON:

401 W. Sanford St. Suite 2600 Arlington, TX 76011-7072 (817) 548-9595

GLOBE LIFE PARK SWINGS FOR THE FENCE

### The Texas Rangers Get a New Ballpark in Arlington

Play ball!!

Soon, in a new stadium.

Construction has started on a transparent, retractable-roof baseball stadium for the Texas Rangers in Arlington.

The Texas Rangers broke ground on the new stadium in September.

Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley joined Arlington Mayor Jeff Williams and the City Council, Texas Rangers co-chairmen Ray Davis and Bob Simpson and Major League Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred for the groundbreaking of the glass-walled ballpark.

Manfred praised the 41,000-seat stadium, the seventh in the major leagues with a retractable roof, saying it will be of great benefit during the long and hot Texas summers.

The ability to have a retractable roof makes a big difference for fan enjoyment and for the competitiveness of the team, he said.

Rangers Hall of Fame catcher Pudge Rodriguez caught a ceremonial first pitch thrown by longtime Rangers pitcher Kenny Rogers, at the groundbreaking for the 1.7 million square foot stadium.

The adjacent entertainment complex, Texas Live, which will feature eateries and a hotel, is already under construction between the current Globe Life Park, which was built in 1994, and AT&T Stadium, where the Cowboys play.



An artist's rendering of the interior of the new Texas Rangers ballpark.

The family-friendly food and entertainment venue, Rangers Republic will be located in Texas Live, along with the Lockhart Smokehouse, Revolver Brewing out of Granbury, a themed Guy Fieri Restaurant and the PBR Country Bar.

Texas Live will also have the Live! Arena, a bigtime 35,000 square-foot "living room" venue and an outdoor event area called the Arlington Backyard.

The Rangers are expecting to play ball in the stadium in the 2020 season.

#### TARRANT COUNTY CONTACTS

County Administrator	817-884-1267	Resource Connection	817-531-7600
County Clerk		Tax Assessor-Collector	
Criminal / Misdemeanor Records	817-884-1066	Auto Tag Renewal / Property Taxes	817-884-1100
Probate Courts	817-884-1770	Texas A&M AgriLife Extension	817-884-1945
Records Intake / Deeds	817-884-1062	Veterans Services	817-531-5645
Records Library	817-884-1069	Sheriff's Office	817-884-3009
Vital Records: Birth/Death Certificates, Marriage		Jail Information	817-884-3116
Licenses, and Business Records/DBA's	817-884-1550	Victim Information	817-894-8463
District Attorney	817-884-1400	Warrant Division	817-884-1320
District Clerk		Commissioners Court meets every Tues	sday at 10 am
	817-884-1240		
District Clerk		Commissioners Court meets every Tues	uilding
District Clerk Civil Records	817-884-1240	Commissioners Court meets every Tue Tarrant County Administration B	uilding
District Clerk  Civil Records  Criminal Records	817-884-1240 817-884-1342	Commissioners Court meets every Tues Tarrant County Administration B 100 E. Weatherford Street, 5th I	uilding Floor
District Clerk Civil Records Criminal Records Family Court / Divorce Records	817-884-1240 817-884-1342 817-884-1265	Commissioners Court meets every Tues Tarrant County Administration B 100 E. Weatherford Street, 5th I County Judge, Glen Whitley	uilding Floor 817-884-1441
District Clerk Civil Records Criminal Records Family Court / Divorce Records Jury Services	817-884-1240 817-884-1342 817-884-1265 817-884-3820	Commissioners Court meets every Tues Tarrant County Administration B 100 E. Weatherford Street, 5th I County Judge, Glen Whitley Commissioner Roy C. Brooks, Precinct 1	uilding Floor 817-884-1441 817-531-4500

**GENERAL INFORMATION 817-884-1111** 

For additional information, visit: www.tarrantcounty.com