

# SAM HARLESS

State Representative District 126  
June 2021 Newsletter



*Texas House of Representatives*



**Texas  
House District  
126**

**News  
and  
Information**



## The Interim Begins - Almost

### Special Session #1

The 87th Session went out with a bang and we've almost caught our breath as Governor Abbott has called a Special Session of the Texas Legislature to begin on July 8th. There have been indications that items such as "Voter Security" or "Bail Reform" are issues that could be added to the call since a number of those died when Democrats walked out in the waning hours of the final night of the session. There are also pundits referring to "Critical Race Theory" as being an item of interest. The [Governor's press release](#) states the

specific agenda items will be announced prior to convening the special session.

We should all be interested in the integrity of our election system and value the principles of ballot security. I support an honest approach and an open dialogue about voting security, including how we use voting locations, mail in ballot requests, and early voting.

### **Article X Veto**

Since the Governor followed through on his commitment to vetoing Article X of the budget, the section that funds the legislature and its support agencies, a new budget addressing that will have to be passed. Our existing fiscal year ends at the end of August and it is fully funded through then. The veto is currently being challenged at the Texas Supreme Court.

### **Special Session #2**

We already know that a second special session will be necessary to address the re-districting that follows each new census. Governor Abbott joined with several other governors in asking the federal government for quicker release of the census data, which is reported to be delayed until late September. Further delays in getting the full data necessary for reapportioning legislative districts will have an impact on filing deadlines, pushing primary election dates past the normal March primary elections, until later in the year. The exact date for this session won't be known until the Governor makes that call.

### **District Office**

Since we will be going back to Austin for a special session, our District Office will remain closed as we consolidate our personnel and resources to the Capitol. We will announce re-opening for the District at a later date.

### **Constituent Issues**

Even though the regular legislative session has ended, that doesn't mean that the work for myself and my staff is done. One of the primary responsibilities of my office is to assist and direct my constituents with various issues they are encountering that pertain to government entities. While my staff continue to assist many individuals with Texas Workforce Commission related matters, now that life continues to return to normal and people are beginning to travel again, we are experiencing a growing number of people contacting my office regarding passport renewal and wondering if my office can assist in expediting this process.

Since the U.S. Passport is a federal document and is issued by the U.S. Department of State, as a State Representative my office is unable to expedite any passport applications. However, you can contact the offices of your U.S. Senators or Congressman and their offices may be able to assist with this. To find out who your Congressman is, please visit <https://wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home>.

Much of the assistance you may need can be found online at their [passport](#)

[website.](#)

Phone: [1-877-487-2778](tel:1-877-487-2778)/ [1-888-874-7793](tel:1-888-874-7793) (TDD/TTY)

- Customer service representatives are available:
- Monday- Friday 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Eastern Time
- \*Except on Federal Holidays

## **Constitutional Propositions**

There were eight proposals passed for constitutional amendments during the legislative session that will be on the next general election ballot. Later this fall, we will be mailing a more detailed information newsletter about all of the propositions to the registered voters in our District. This is a brief summary of those propositions.

### **Prohibition on Limiting Religious Services or Organizations Amendment**

Amends the Texas Constitution to prohibit the state or any political subdivision from enacting a law, rule, order, or proclamation that limits religious services or organizations.

### **Homestead Tax Limit for Surviving Spouses of Disabled Individuals Amendment**

Amends the Texas Constitution to allow the legislature to extend a homestead tax limit for surviving spouses of disabled individuals as long as the spouse is 55 years old and resides at the home.

### **Changes to Eligibility for Certain Judicial Offices Amendment**

Changes the eligibility requirements for the following judicial offices: a justice of the supreme court, a judge of the court of criminal appeals, a justice of a court of appeals, and a district judge

### **State Commission on Judicial Conduct Authority Over Candidates for Judicial Office Amendment**

Authorizes the Texas State Commission on Judicial Conduct to accept and investigate complaints and reports against candidates running for state judicial office.

### **Homestead Tax Exemption for Surviving Spouses of Military Fatally Injured in the Line of Duty Amendment**

Amends the Texas Constitution to allow the legislature to apply a homestead tax exemption for surviving spouses of members of the military to those fatally injured in the line of duty.

### **Authorize Charitable Raffles at Rodeo Venues Amendment**

Authorizes professional sports team charitable organizations to conduct raffles at rodeo venues

### **Right to Designated Essential Caregiver Amendment**

Amends the Texas Constitution to state that residents of nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, or state-supported living centers have a right to designate an essential caregiver that may not be prohibited from visiting the resident.

### **Authorize Counties to Issue Infrastructure Bonds in Blighted Areas Amendment**

Authorizes a county to issue bonds to fund infrastructure and transportation projects in

undeveloped and blighted areas

## **Texas Electrical Grid & ERCOT**

The Public Utility Commission and ERCOT both have a new face with new challenges as the summer heat ramps up with record demand for electricity. We had restricted use warnings midway through June which were due to generation outages, both planned and unplanned. The Ft Worth's Comanche Creek nuclear plant, owned by Vistra Energy that is capable of generating 2.3 gigawatts of power, had a transformer fire which took down one of the nuclear generators, impacting capacity for several days.

Legislature and citizens have demanded increased transparency and communication from ERCOT and PUC, we are likely to see these notices more widely broadcasted. Please keep in mind though, these conservancy notices do not mean that our power grid is in eminent danger. It's similar to a water conservation notice asking people to be more mindful of their consumption at peak times.

· ERCOT and PUC also acknowledged that their messaging and distribution of this information needs to be improved to help citizens better understand what is happening and to help avoid confusion and worry.

The Public Utility Commission also has now imposed a "three day rule" on ERCOT, requiring them to disclose information about power plant outages within that time frame. They previously had up to 60 days. This new disclosure time frame applies to all of Texas' non-nuclear power plants. The nuclear plants report under the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which regulates nuclear power plants, which requires plants to report all incidents and outages.

## **Our Legislation This Session**

### **How Our Authored Bills Faired**

**House Bill 759** - Relates to the creation of an electronic process to track school threat assessments created in the last session of the Texas Legislature. The student threat assessment database would take the by-product of the threat assessment teams and allow it to follow the students permanent school record electronically. **Status - Died In Committee**

**House Bill 766** - This is the same bill I filed and pursued last session. It creates a database that would contain any conditions of bond imposed on a defendant for violent offenses, like family violence. It is designed to protect the victims of family violence and responding police officers in the time between the initial arrest until a protective order is issued by a court. I worked with Senator Kolkhorst last session to pass a similar bill that was ultimately vetoed by the Governor due to a bad amendment that tainted the bill.

**Status - Signed by Governor-Effective 1-1-22.**

**Update** - We learned from the Department of Public Safety that this system is

now complete and with the passage of HB 766, Sheriff Departments across Texas have already begun entering defendants who have been charged with violent crimes into a statewide database that will notify law enforcement that their release on bond is conditional. This process now also requires notification of the victim so they are aware and can prepare accordingly. This process goes a long way towards protecting the victims of violent crime and the law enforcement officers who respond to them. This law is about the conditions they are released under, not the amount of the bond. As of the writing of this newsletter, more than 250 defendants have already been entered into the system.

**House Bill 1049** - This bill clarifies the peace officer authority of deputy sheriffs and constables in the time after the expiration of the term of the Sheriff or Constable at midnight December 31st, until the deputy can be issued a new oath of office for a new term of office or under new office holder.

**Status - Signed the Governor - Effective 9-1-21.**

**House Bill 1417** - Relates to the development of a campus improvement plan that includes, violence and bullying prevention and intervention on campus for dropout deterrence, including providing a research-based teacher development program that provides teachers continuing education that includes creating a nurturing classroom environment; developing respectful and caring relationships with students; promoting student emotional health, and more. **Status - Died In Committee**

**House Bill 1681** - Relates to restrictions for issuance of permits for construction of any new assisted living facility within a 100 year floodplain. Many of our constituents complained when an assisted living center was built immediately adjacent to Cypress Creek after the Harvey Flood exposing many of our vulnerable seniors to hazards that could impair a rescue in an area known to flood. **Signed the Governor - Effective 9-1-21**

**House Bill 1684** - This is an omnibus crime bill to enhance the penalties for offenses committed during mass riot events. While peaceful protests are an American right, damage to property and injury are not. Last year rioters in Austin did \$60 thousand dollars in damage to our State Capitol and vehicles. **Status - Died in Committee (Several independent bills passed)**

**House Bill 2610** - Relates to the time for completion of a fire code inspection following submission of an application request. This bill extends the timeline to 10 business days. *\*Indoor retail fireworks sites are the sole exception, and remain on a 5 business day timeline* **Filed by the Governor- Effective 9-1-21**

**House Bill 3256** - This bill addresses the confidentiality of a public school employee's home or residence address in certain government records and documents to protect their home and families from potential retaliation from school related actions or decisions. It permits them the option to "opt out" of public access to tax records, vehicle registration, or driver's license data. **Status - Died in Senate Committee**

**House Bill 3363** - The bill addresses issues currently being experienced by law enforcement and prosecutors in dealing with social media companies such as Facebook responding to search warrants issued under Texas law.

**Status - Signed by the Governor - Effective 9-1-21**

**House Resolution 23** - Relates to congratulating the Champions Golf Club on their hosting the 75th Annual US Women's Open the 10th through the 14th of December.

### **Status of Specific Legislation**

Now that the 87th regular session has concluded and the Governor's veto period has passed, my office has been receiving many phone calls and emails from constituents who would like to know the final status of specific legislation that was important to them during the 87th session. My staff is always happy to answer questions from constituents and inform them of the final status of a piece of legislation, but we also know that sometimes you may want to see the information for yourself and dive deeper into the finer details. Thankfully the State of Texas has provided citizens with access to the Texas Legislature Online (TLO) system. This system is a consolidated hub of all things involving the Texas Legislature. Using this system you can search for specific bills based on various search criteria to find out the status of a particular piece of legislation. You can also look up Member information, Committee information, live and recorded broadcasts, and much more. If you would like to explore TLO for yourself, you may do so here: <https://capitol.texas.gov/>. Additionally, if you have any questions on the status of a particular piece of legislation please don't hesitate to contact my office.

## **Our 87th Session Statistics**

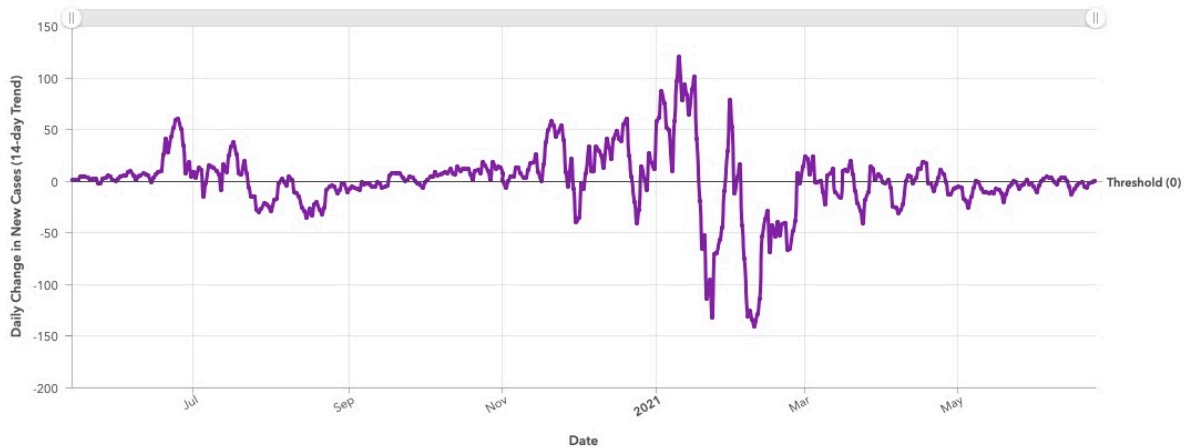


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## **COVID STATS & INFO**

### **COVID In Harris County**

### New Cases Trend



**Indicator:** 14-day flat or decreasing trend in new COVID-19 cases Harris County, including City of Houston  
**Threshold:** 0 (same threshold Red > Orange > Yellow)

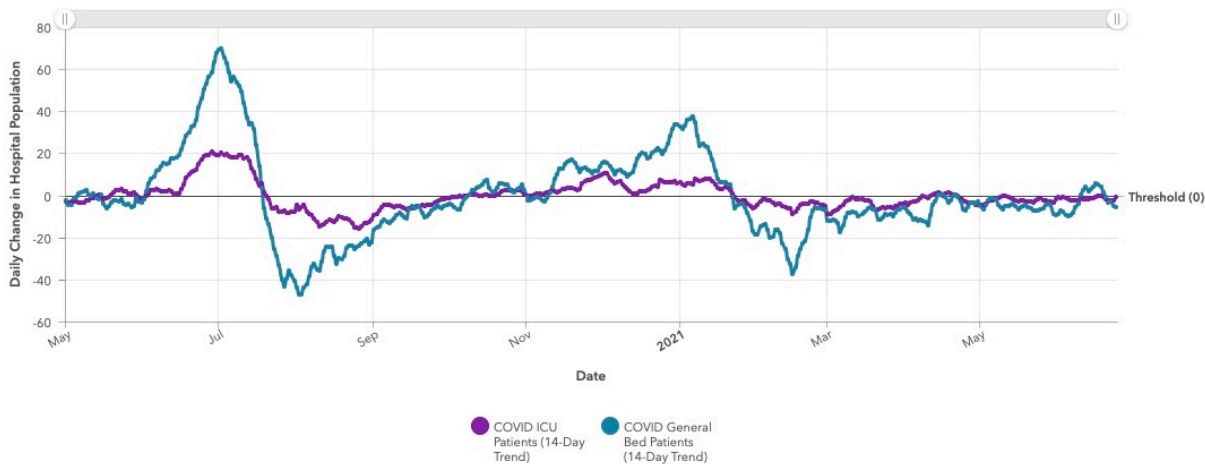
**Date Updated:** 2021-06-25

**Data Source\*:** Harris County Public Health (HCPH), Houston Health Department (HHD)

\*Due to backlogged cases that have increased over time due to delays in test reporting, missing information, and lags in processing, we have updated metrics involving case counts to only include cases that have specimen collection dates within 14 days of the date of reporting.

The chart above provides a reflection of the trend for COVID-19 cases reported for all of Harris County during the last 14 days.

### Hospital Population Trend



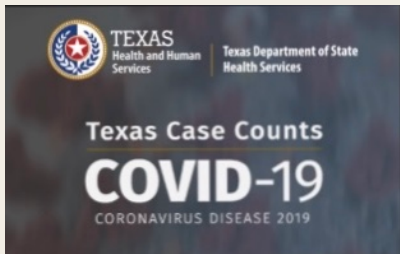
The second chart displays the hospital population trend of COVID cases. It should be noted there will be occasional time lags or delays in reporting that can affect total numbers.

These charts can be found at the Harris County COVID Dashboard [www.readyharris.org](http://www.readyharris.org)

**Thankfully, Harris county has reduced it's threat level to YELLOW.**

At present, over **48%** of Harris County's population has been vaccinated with at least one dose. We still rank among the lowest of Texas' large counties in vaccination rates.





## Texas COVID Cases Statewide

To see charts reflecting details on Covid and vaccination activity follow this link to the [Texas Covid Dashboard](#)

### COVID VIRUS & VACCINES IN TEXAS

COVID cases in Texas now number almost 3 million confirmed cases statewide and the death toll stands just over 52,000 and everyone 12 years old and older are now approved to receive the vaccines. Texas has a vaccination rate of 47.7% statewide of at least one dose and just over 40% being fully vaccinated. While these are just statistics, remember these cases and fatalities are friends, neighbors, and loved ones.

To find a vaccine distribution site near you, the state has created this map: [COVID Vaccine Provider Map](#)

If you are in the eligible tier, to find doses available in your area, check this link: [Vaccine Dose Availability Map:](#)

If you need to find a testing site near you, follow this link: [COVID Testing Locations](#)

As your State Representative, I continue to maintain contact with our county and state officials and provide you details and updates from those calls. I try to keep you posted on updates to news and announcements about local actions and state efforts to contain this virus and to provide the highlights so you aren't inundated and hope you find our information useful. Like many of you I am concerned about the growing restrictions on our lives and businesses and I hope it yields a continued improvement in the spread of the virus in the coming months.

Let me say again how proud I am to be chosen once again to represent the residents of House District 126. I will continue to work to make our business and communities better places to work and live, even during these trying times.

**Sam Harless**  
**State Representative, District 126**

Please follow my Facebook page for daily updates and new information at: [www.Facebook.com/samharless126](http://www.Facebook.com/samharless126)

or our Twitter Page at <https://twitter.com/SamHarless126>

# COVID-19 Resources

## Texas Workforce Commission

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) continues to explore options to keep the 2021 tax rates as low as possible for Texas employers as Texas and the entire nation continue to deal with the economic disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more about 2021 tax rates in the press release.](#)

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TWC Website to Apply for Benefits: [TWC Unemployment Benefits](#)

Texas Workforce TeleCenter - 800-939-6631

TWC has a new Chat service on their website in the bottom right of the screen, called "Chat With Us". This new function will be able to answer most general questions from individual. <https://www.twc.texas.gov>

## Harris County COVID Resources

**ReadyHarris Website:** <https://www.readyharris.org/#resources>

**Harris County Fire Marshal** hotline to report businesses who are in violation of the County and State COVID-19 health and safety policies - 832-839-6941

**Precinct 4 Commissioner Community Assistance -**  
[Pct 4 Community assistance](#)

People can sign up to receive emergency alerts from Harris County at: [Ready Harris Alert Signup](#).

Also, 2-1-1 is a resource hotline set up by Harris County. If someone is in need of resources fast they can call that number and they will be connected to resources in their community. They can also text CV19 to 888-777. This hotline is available 24/7.

## City of Houston

Houston Public Health Dept - <https://houstonemergency.org/covid19/>

## Federal Resources / Websites

CDC- Center for Disease Control: [CDC Coronavirus](#)

Small Business Administration: [SBA](#)

SBA Paycheck Protection Program - [Paycheck Protection Loans](#)  
An SBA loan that helps businesses keep their workforce employed

(during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis.)

FEMA Corona Response: [FEMA CoronaVirus](#)

## Around The District

### Our Schools and COVID

Fortunately, we haven't seen the dramatic spike in COVID cases associated with school reopening that was anticipated by some, largely as a result of the planning and preparation by each of our districts, their leadership, and superintendents. We should all be very thankful that they are monitoring the health and safety of our children.

Our School Districts are closely monitoring COVID cases in the staff and student population. You can see the COVID Campus Dashboards for each of our area districts here:

[Klein ISD COVID Dashboard](#)

[Cy-Fair ISD COVID Dashboard](#)

[Tomball ISD COVID Dashboard](#)

[Spring ISD COVID Dashboard](#)

COVID statistics in Texas Public Schools may be found here:

[TEA School Campus COVID Link](#)

Scroll down and you can get Excel reports that are searchable by school district or campus.

### College Student Accomplishments

I think it's important to recognize the accomplishments of our kids as they work hard extending their secondary education in colleges and universities. If you have a child that has reached a significant milestone, such as making the Dean's or President's List, receiving Faculty Honors, or received their undergraduate or postgraduate degree, send us an email with their name and address, details on the accomplishment, and the institution they are enrolled in, so that we may send them a congratulatory letter. You may email it to [District126.Harless@House.Texas.Gov](mailto:District126.Harless@House.Texas.Gov) with the subject of "College Accomplishment" and we'd be happy to recognize them.

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**Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program (TASSP)**

The Texas Armed Services Scholarship Program (TASSP) was created to provide higher education financial assistance to promising students from the State of Texas who are committed to education and service to their state and nation. The TASSP encourages students to complete a baccalaureate degree and participate in the Texas Guard or become a commissioned officer within the U.S. Military post-college. Each year, the Governor and Lieutenant Governor may appoint two students each, and each state senator and state representative may appoint one student to receive a TASSP award. I usually try to save my nomination for a deserving young applicant from within my District (however these nominations are not restricted to individuals within a Representative's district), and I'm happy to say that this year I was able to nominate Tanner Hecker. He is an outstanding young man with a bright future and I'm happy that I was able to do my part to support him.

If you know of someone who may be interested in receiving a TASSP nomination, you can visit the following website to learn more about eligibility requirements and how to receive a nomination: <http://www.hhloans.com/index.cfm?ObjectID=8FB593C7-EE1E-7872-00A8808886543AEE>

## In The District

### *Pearl Fincher Museum of fine Arts*

#### Summer Art School Program

Registration is still open for the Pearl's Summer 2021 Art Camps! These week long camps run through August 6th and invites young artists to engage their imagination as they explore different mediums and techniques. Sessions are offered for ages 5-8 and 9-12, and provide fun art enrichment experiences for kids in a small group environment. Summer Art Camp is a great way for kids to make art while making new friends! There is a cost associated for registration.

Pearl Summer Camp Info



## Precinct 4 Commissioner Capital Project Status Update

(Our thanks to Pct 4 Commissioner Cagle's Office)

- **Boudreaux Road 3 between Old Boudreaux Lane and Gleannloch Forest Drive at SH 99**
  - Summary: Proposed improvements include widening Boudreaux Road to a 4-lane concrete pavement section with improved drainage accommodations and traffic signal installation/modification as warranted.
  - Status: Study Phase
  - Construction Timeline: TBD
  - Construction Cost: TBD
- **Bourgeois Road between Cutten Road and West Richey Road**
  - Summary: Proposed improvements include upgrading Bourgeois Road as a 2-lane concrete pavement section with improved drainage accommodations and traffic signal installation/modification as warranted.
  - Status: Study Phase
  - Construction Timeline: TBD
  - Construction Cost: TBD
- **Cutten Road between Bavaria Drive and Cossey Road**
  - Summary: Proposed improvements include the extension of Cutten Road as a 4-lane concrete pavement section with improved drainage accommodations and traffic signal installation/modification as warranted.
  - Status: Pre-Planning Phase
  - Construction Timeline: TBD
  - Construction Cost: TBD
- **Cypress North Houston Road** (*being pursued in two phases*)
- **Cypress North Houston Road between Jones Road and Perry Road**
  - Summary: Planned improvements include widening Cypress North Houston Road (formerly Lou Edd Road) as a 4-lane concrete pavement section with improved drainage accommodations and traffic signal installations at Misty Moss Drive, Autumn Mills Drive.
  - Status: Design Phase – It is Harris County's goal to advertise for construction purposes in 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2021 (barring any unforeseen circumstances beyond Harris County's control).
  - Construction Timeline: TBD
  - Construction Cost: TBD
- **Cypress North Houston Road Segment 2 between Perry Road and FM**

1960

- Summary: Planned improvements include extending Cypress North Houston Road as a 4-lane concrete pavement section with drainage accommodations and traffic signal installation FM 1960.
  - Status: Design Phase
  - Construction Timeline: TBD
  - Construction Cost: TBD
- **Hollister Street 4 between Log Hollow Drive and Breen Drive**
    - Summary: Proposed improvements include extending Hollister Street as a 4-lane concrete pavement section with improved drainage accommodations and traffic signal installation/modification as warranted.
    - Status: Pre-Planning Phase
    - Construction Timeline: TBD
    - Construction Cost: TBD
- **Hufsmith-Kohrville Road 2 between Hollow Glen Lane and Ezekiel Road**
    - Summary: Planned improvements include widening Hufsmith-Kohrville Road as a 4-lane concrete pavement section with improved drainage accommodations and traffic signal installations at Lacey Road and Ezekiel.
    - Status: Design Phase
    - Construction Timeline: Goal to advertise for construction purposes in early 2022 (barring any unforeseen circumstances).
    - Construction Cost: TBD
- **Hufsmith-Kohrville Road 3 between Ezekiel Road and Holderrieth Road**
    - Summary: Planned improvements include widening Hufsmith-Kohrville Road as a 4-lane concrete pavement section with improved drainage accommodations and traffic signal installation at Woodland Shore Drive.
    - Status: Design Phase
    - Construction Timeline: TBD
    - Construction Cost: TBD
- **Fairbanks North Houston Road at Terrace Brook Drive**
    - Summary: Planned traffic signalization of intersection as warranted.
    - Status: Design Phase
    - Construction Timeline: Goal to begin construction in third quarter of 2021 (barring any unforeseen circumstances).
    - Construction Cost: TBD

## Greater Tomball Area



Chamber of Commerce

### Committee

2nd Tuesday of each month  
Meeting Location:  
29201 Quinn Rd.  
Tomball, Texas 77375  
Upstairs Conference Room

Tomball Government Affairs  
Committee

### Cy-Fair Chamber of Commerce Transportation\Government Affairs Committee

The committee meets the 1st Thursday of each month to discuss governmental issues that confront their Cy-Fair area. They meet at the Chamber offices located at 8711 Highway 6 North, Ste. 120 Houston, TX 77095.

## CY-FAIR HOUSTON Chamber of Commerce

Cy-Fair Chamber Website



Houston NW Chamber Website

### Houston NW Chamber Public Safety Forum

Public Safety Forum Meeting:  
4th Thursday each month  
8:30 am - 9:30 am  
Champions Emergency Services District  
12730 Champion Forest Dr.  
Houston, TX 77066

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