



The Auditor's Report

Travis County Auditor's Office Newsletter



Posts from Patti

Can you Hear Me Now?.

Is this the real question or should it be, "Are you listening to me now?" When someone is listening, they are completely and attentively listening not only to the words, but also to the feeling of what is being conveyed; to the whole of it, not part of it. Hearing is simply one of the five senses.

I know how hard it is when you are super busy and you want to multi-task when someone comes into your office. You may think you can listen and read emails at the same time, but really you can't. Take time to face the person, make eye contact, and make them feel they have 100% of your attention. Not only will you make that person feel valued for what they have to say, but you might learn something you would've missed otherwise. Listening can build better relationships both at work and at home. I am fortunate to have a spouse that actually listens to what I have to say (at least most of the time). 😊 I know others are not as fortunate.

Next time someone walks in your office and wants to talk to you (I know you are screaming in your head "I don't have time for this now"), stop what you're doing, look them in the eye and give them all of your attention. You'll be glad you did!



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Employee News & Moves

Retirements created new career opportunities. It's felt a little like musical chairs with individuals transferring to new areas , new roles and new floors. We welcome and congratulate the following individuals:



- ♦ **Payroll:** **Karen Doane** (GL) and **Matt Naper** (Grants) replacing retirees **Sharon Martindale** and **Ryan Harris**.
- ♦ **Grants:** New hire, **Cindy Dreese**, (Juvenile Probation) replacing Matt Naper.
- ♦ **GL/Disbursements Auditing (GL/DA):** **Patty Turner** promoted to Financial Analyst II. **Raquelle Gonzalez** promoted to Associate Auditor filling vacancy by Jen Romero (Purchasing). New Associate Auditor hires— **Butch Soto** (Juvenile Probation), **Alexa Rabb**, and **Deb Owens**.
- ♦ **Financial Systems Integration/Reporting:** Jennifer Ballard promoted to Business Analyst.

- ♦ **Administration:** Ely Allen promoted to Executive Assistant. **Shaina Johnson** hired as Office Assistant.

2018 United in Giving Wrap-Up

As we wrap up the 2018 United in Giving campaign, the Auditor's Office is excited to report that we fundraised **\$2,174.01** through various activities such as: Trick-or-Treat Grams, Penny Wars, Bowling, Snack Contests, the Kick-Off Party, and BINGO.

Also, we had **26** employees donate through payroll contributions totaling **\$17,448**.

Finally, we had people donate their time. We racked up **56.5** volunteer hours, worth a total of **\$1,647.33**.

In total, we were able to raise **\$21,269.34!** Thank you to all of the County employees who helped us reach this total by supporting our fundraising and volunteer efforts.



Trick or Treat Grams



"At the end of the day it's not about what you have or even what you've accomplished... it's about who you've lifted up, who you've made better. It's about what you've given back."

— Denzel Washington, American actor

Travis County Superstar "Shout Outs"



Joseph Chew (HHS) and **Christian Longue Dessug (TNR)** for their responsiveness in iterative testing to resolve an issue with the Revenue Certification Form.

Jose Barrientos (FMD) for going above and beyond, coming in on a Saturday to meet/oversee contractors, who were stretching carpet in 11th floor offices.

Jennifer Espinosa (TNR) for her ongoing responsiveness and availability to answer questions and provide information that helps to quickly resolve vendor and invoice issues.

Leslie Dippel and **Laurie Eiserloh (County Attorney's Office)** for the wonderful training seminar for our managers.





Around the Office: Financial Reporting & Grants

It's been a busy few months for the Financial Reporting and Grants divisions. In the last several months, they have been working on several key assignments. They include:

- ❑ **External Audit.** The Financial Reporting division manages the annual independent external audit of the County's financial statements. The audit validates that the County's financial statements are accurately reported according to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and conform to Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) statements. The County's external auditor completed its review of Fiscal Year 2018 financial statements in February. During the audit, grant funds were also examined to ensure compliance with the *2 CFR 200 Uniform Guidance* and the *State of Texas Single Audit Circular*. The desired audit outcome is to receive an *unqualified audit opinion* (no significant financial findings). Audit findings are expected to be finalized and reported to the County in March.
- ❑ **Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).** The CAFR, the County's set of financial statements that represents the County's financial health (fiscal position). It encompasses accurate reporting of government-wide (consolidated) financial statements including: 63 governmental funds, 3 proprietary funds, and 17 agency funds (including blended component units). Travis County is required to annually file its CAFR no later than March 31st. This year, we are filing early (by March 22nd) because of bond issuances associated with the Civil Courts project.
- ❑ **Bond rating meetings.** Members of the Commissioners Court and staff from Planning & Budget and the Auditor's Office conducted meetings with two bond rating agencies: Standard & Poor's (February 22) and Moody's (February 25th). These meetings typically occur in April, but are earlier due to the desired issuance of bonds associated with the Civil Courts project. In these meetings, raters rely heavily on the County's financial statements in making their determinations. A *triple-A bond rating* is the highest and most desired rating, which results in low interest rates for borrowing. Travis County has maintained a triple-A rating since 2000.



Disbursements Auditing: Important Invoice Payment Deadline



The Commissioners Court will not be meeting Tuesday, March 19th to approve payments.

Invoices received by **March 5th, 5:00 PM** will be included in the Court's payment approval on **March 12th**.

The next Commissioners Court approval date for payments will be Tuesday, March 26th. Please notify and work with your vendors accordingly.



Around the Office: Economic Outlook Do You Know...

WHO develops the *Economic Outlook*?

- The Revenue Estimation and Financial Analysis (REFA) division of the Auditor's Office (Dan Wilson and Vanessa Robles) develops and issues the *Outlook*.

WHAT the *Economic Outlook* is and what it contains?

- It's a quarterly compilation of local, state and national economic results, existing conditions and future trends to provide clues as to how the economy might perform in the near future. It also includes an *In-Depth* segment, focusing on economic topics that directly affect the nation and world.

Examples of trends that are monitored include: *Housing, Jobs, Consumer Confidence, Leading Indexes, Inflation and Oil and Gas (we are Texas after all)*.

The *In-Depth* segment focuses on economic innovations that are changing the world such as: *blockchain technology, expansion of facial recognition, China's path to global expansion, the importance of a 5G network, and more*.

WHEN the *Economic Outlook* is published?

- It is published quarterly.

WHERE you can find the *Economic Outlook*?

- It is on the Auditor's website — look for the *Economic Outlook* link in the navigation bar. Or, contact REFA (512-854-8833) and ask to be added to the email distribution list.

WHY the *Economic Outlook* was developed?

- County decision makers were monitoring economic trends in various documents and looking for a tool that provided a single, comprehensive picture of trends that could have an impact on budgetary policies and decisions. The *Economic Outlook* consolidates complex economic information into a single, readable document—similar to private sector analyses.

The *Outlook* contains extensive charts and graphics displaying key trends and indicators. It uses dozens of sources including documents provided by the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Texas Workforce Commission.

Click [here](#) to view copies of the *Economic Outlook*

Around the Office: SAP Team Outreach

In January, the SAP business team went 'on the road' to see STARFlight operations first hand. It was a great opportunity for staff to gain an understanding of how STARFlight works and how to best support their unique business needs as a 24/7 operation. This was the second visit to a 24/7 operation, the first being a tour of the jails. The technical SAP team (developers, security, BI, and Netweaver) visited STARFlight in February.

Since much of the SAP team's communication is digital, the opportunity to spend time together face-to-face was invaluable for building relationships and improving communication, which enables the team to provide improved customer service.

Thank you to STARFLight staff for a rewarding experience!



SAP Business Team



SAP Technical Team

Around the Office: Legislative Analysis

On January 8, 2019, the Texas Legislature began its 86th regular session. With the session's start, Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) staff, reached out to various County departments for their help in monitoring and analyzing legislative bills.

The County Auditor's Office is one of many that participates in this event. Within the Office, analyzing the bills is a team effort. Based on the topic of the bill, anyone who has been identified as a *subject matter expert* (SME), contributes towards the analysis.

The largest portion of bills reviewed by our Office are related to items such as: open space issues, appraisal caps, tax exemptions and roll back rates.

There have also been a number of bills received that focus on State databases, transparency, court costs and reporting.

Typically as a bill progresses through the legislative process, analysis is further refined to ensure a complete understanding of the legislation's benefits or the costs and resources necessary to implement it.

During the **2017 legislative session** (regular and special session), Auditor's Office staff **reviewed and commented on more than 300 bills** of 6,631 filed. We expect to exceed that number in this year's session.





Cards for Kids Valentines

For the third consecutive year, Auditor’s Office staff created home made valentines as part of **Cards for Kids**. The valentines were distributed to children in hospitals and shelters.



“I have learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

— *Maya Angelou, American author, poet, and civil rights activist*



Audit Schedule



Upcoming Reviews

CSCD	Data Security Review (Pilot)
Constable 1	HHS Permits
Medical Examiner	Treasurer
Special Revenue Fund Disbursements	

Wear Red Day

On Friday, February 1, staff donned their red for the annual **National Wear Red Day**. The event, which occurs on the first Friday of every February, commemorates American Heart Month. It brings together millions of people for a common goal: the eradication of heart disease and stroke.



New Employee Meet and Greet

On February 14, we held a 'Meet and Greet' to welcome new staff to our Office.

As part of the festivities, each new person received a *badge*, which helped their co-workers get the 'lei' of the land. The badge had their name along with pictures of their interests and things that are special to them, like their college alma mater.

Welcome everyone!



Butch Soto, Cindy Dreese, Deb Owens, Alexa Rabb, Shaina Johnson

Meet the Auditor's Office

Meet Holly

Holly Huff has been with the Auditor's Office since 2007. She is a Financial Auditor Analyst III with the General Ledger Division. She is originally from Austin, but has moved around to Los Angeles, Chicago, San Antonio, and Corpus Christi before returning to Austin. She has a BBA from UT San Antonio, with a concentration in International Business and a Master's degree in accounting from St. Edwards. As a self-described 'people person', Holly enjoys working with department staff, and showing them how to do something or walking them through it.



She has a 19-year old daughter, who is currently taking classes at ACC. Before obtaining her degrees, Holly was a hair stylist and worked her way through college by doing hair and managing salons. She enjoys traveling and has already visited eight European countries, with two more coming up in the next few weeks.

Ask Holly * *What is your favorite part about working for Travis County?* My co-workers.

* *What is something you cannot live without?* My daughter and coffee.

* *What is on your bucket list?* Visiting as many countries as possible and retiring in Europe.

Meet Andy

Andy Pearson has been with the Auditor's Office since 2000. He is a Lead Records Analyst in the Disbursements Auditing Division, where he primarily is responsible for maintaining the Office's compliance with records management and retention requirements. The youngest of five siblings (all Army brats), Andy currently lives in Lockhart with wife Gretchen, and daughter Emily (17), who Andy says "*occasionally acknowledges our existence when it suits her needs.*"

Andy enjoys the variety of work that comes with the job. One of his most rewarding projects has been purging eligible off-site records that were past their required retention dates. Andy's wish list in the next 5-10 years is to "*finish out my career here and shuffle off to retirement, telling all who will listen how much better it all was in my younger days, which is typical codger talk.*"

Ask Andy * *What is one thing you can't live without?* The intrinsic belief (probably firmly rooted in naivety and unwarranted optimism but I digress) that the best of times is still ahead. And oxygen, give me said belief and oxygen and I am good to go, the rest I can work my way round.

* *What three words best describe you?* Irreverent, loyal and introspective.

* *What are your top three life highlights?* Meeting my wife at a party when we were both at Sam Houston State, my daughter's birth, and the Spurs winning their first championship in 1999 (after what seemed like a lifetime of "*just wait 'til next year!*").



Auditor Speak

Things you've heard us say,
but didn't want to ask!

Every profession has its own lingo, like a "foreign language". So to "translate", check out our new feature, **Auditor Speak**. It is a list of acronyms or terms you've probably heard us mention before and their meanings.

Test your knowledge—how many did you already know? Heard others that you want to know? Email them to Donna Scarbrough for future boards.



REM Statement

(check or pay stub)

Accrual

(paid leave such as sick, vacation, etc.)

ESS

(Employee Self-Service module of SAP)

SRM

(Supplier Relation-Ship Management, procurement module of SAP)

PAF

(Personnel Action Form, used for hiring, terminations, promotions, etc.)

TCDRS

(Texas County & District Retirement System, the county's retirement system)

PERNR

(your Personnel Number, or employee ID #)

LWOP

(Leave Without Pay)

NEO

(New Employee Orientation)

UWL

(SAP Universal Work List, where you approve travel, mileage, leave requests, etc.)