

TARRANT COUNTY

NEWS & INFORMATION



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A Financially Sound County

Tarrant County has been diligently working to deliver high quality services, employ dedicated public servants and adapt to a rapid growth rate while maintaining a healthy financial portfolio without raising the tax rate for the past 16 years.

Two recent events were noteworthy and received the notice of two nationally recognized financial investment firms. The first exemplified the trustworthiness of Tarrant County as it made good on promises made at the end of the last decade.

On August 11, the Tarrant County Commissioners Court approved the sale of the last remaining bonds approved by voters in 2006. The bonds will finance a new Juvenile Justice facility and portions of several road projects in cities throughout the county.

This was the second of two major bond programs totaling \$527,420,000. During the run-up to both bond elections, commissioners promised that the tax rate would not be increased to repay the bonds. Since 1998, when the first bond program was approved, Tarrant County has been able keep that promise. In fact, the tax rate today is lower than the tax rate in 1998.

Prior to issuance of the last bonds, a rating profile was issued by Standard and Poor's. Of the many words of praise, one significant passage stood out from all the rest:

“Tarrant County is rated higher than the sovereign (United States government) because we believe the County can maintain better credit characteristics than the U.S. in a stress scenario based on its predominantly locally derived revenue base and our view that pledge revenue supporting debt service on the bonds is at limited risk of negative sovereign intervention.”

The profile also noted that the company viewed the County's management as “strong,” with “good” financial policies because it “uses external and internal data and sources to forecast revenue and expenditures conservatively” and reports budget-to-actual and investment results monthly to the Commissioners Court. It noted that the County has a formal facility space master plan and has identified its capital project needs, as well as appropriate funding sources.

The second event illustrated Tarrant County's year-to-year commitment to efficiency in government by providing its residents with quality public services in a fiscally conservative environment.

On August 17, Tarrant County staff presented the Commissioners Court with a balanced budget and continued a 16-year trend in which the tax rate has either stayed the same or decreased. This trend was accomplished despite a statewide economic downturn in 2008 and the fact that the county's population grew by more than 34 percent (adding almost 500,000 people) over the same time period – creating additional demand for services.

The \$560,529,263 proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 budget funds a criminal justice system that includes 20 courts and four jail facilities; a civil justice system that includes 24 courts; public health programs ranging from monitoring mosquitoes to inspecting milk; human services programs that provide a safety net when needed; the storage and issuance of records ranging from court documents to marriage licenses; the maintenance of more than 350 miles of roads in our unincorporated areas; as well as many other services that impact the lives of county residents.

Further, since 2007, Tarrant County has issued no debt for operating capital. The FY 2016 budget continues that trend, earning kudos from the Standard and Poor's profile. The profile also noted that the County has “very strong budget flexibility,” because it keeps its general fund reserves at 10 percent of operating expenditures for the last three years. Once again, the FY 2016 budget continues this trend.

Standard and Poor's noted that Tarrant County can be expected to continue to be a financially strong governmental entity. Standard and Poor's joined with Moody's to issue the County their highest bond ratings – AAA and Aaa, respectively. This is a distinction it has held since 1999.

Tarrant County's proposed FY 2016 (as well as the approved budgets for the past five years) is posted on our website at www.tarrantcounty.com. Click on Government, then click on Budget and Risk Management. The Commissioners Court is scheduled to approve the FY 2016 Budget and set the tax rate on September 15.

Dinner Tonight: Healthy Cooking School

Learn how to Better Yourself Over Brunch – a free cooking demonstration and workshop provided by the Tarrant County Agrilife Extension Service.

Topics covered in the workshop are Cooking Basics 101, Cooking With Herbs, Smoothies Versus Juicing and All About Eggs. Light refreshments will be served. Participants will receive a cookbook and a gift bag.

The workshop will be held on Saturday, October 3, from 10 a.m. to noon, on the fourth floor of the Trinity Building at the Trinity River Campus of the Tarrant County College District, 300 Trinity Campus Circle.

Pre-registration is required, call 817-884-1294, weekdays during business hours, or email tbell@ag.tamu.edu.

You Can Stop the Flu

Tarrant County healthcare workers are reminding residents it's never too early to get your flu shot. According to Tarrant County Public Health, it takes about two weeks for the flu vaccine to take full effect.

“Getting a flu shot before the season peaks is your best protection,” said Health Director Vinny Taneja.

Flu is a contagious disease caused by the influenza virus. It can be spread by coughing, sneezing or nasal secretions. Symptoms usually come on suddenly. Key indicators include fever, cough, sore throat, nasal congestion, headache, body aches and extreme fatigue.

Taneja says good hygiene is the first step in stopping the flu.

Fortunately, people can get flu shots at many local pharmacies and supermarkets, as well as public health centers in Tarrant County.

“Everyone six months of age and older should receive one. It's especially important for people at risk of severe influenza, including children under the age of two, persons over 65 years, pregnant women and persons with chronic conditions,” said Taneja.