



# ONE TO ONE

ISSUE NO. 1 • APRIL 2016

*A Report to the Residents of Harris County Precinct One ... from Commissioner Gene L. Locke*

## New Precinct One leader following death of longtime commissioner

*Lee leaves behind a legacy of service*



**The late Commissioner El Franco Lee places an award on Doris Crisp during the 2011 Street Olympics Final Event.**

Harris County Commissioner El Franco Lee, who served Precinct One for 30 years, passed away Jan. 3. He was 66.

Lee, elected in 1984 as Harris County's first African-American commissioner, grew up in Houston's Fifth Ward and Kashmere Gardens, where he resided at the time of his death in his childhood home-stead. Working with prominent community leaders such as the late U.S. Rep. Mickey Leland, Lee became politically active on issues such as health care and social programs.

His political career started in 1979, when he was elected as a Texas Representative for District 142, a position he held for five years. In 1985, Lee

was elected Harris County commissioner.

As commissioner, Lee's primary job was building and maintaining roads, bridges and parks. However, since most of his precinct is in Houston's inner-city neighborhoods, he expanded his role to provide social services, education, recreation and health assistance for his constituents, especially youth and seniors. He built those programs by establishing partnerships with other governmental entities, health-care agencies, nonprofits and other organizations.

In 1986, Lee started a Summer Youth Program that later grew into the Harris County Precinct One Street Olympics.

*(Lee continues on page 2)*

*Emmett appoints Locke to County Commissioner*



**Gene L. Locke, left, with his wife, Aubrey, holding the Bible, takes the oath of office from Harris County Judge Ed Emmett.**

Gene L. Locke, a local attorney, has been appointed to fill the unexpired term of Harris County Commissioner El Franco Lee, who died Jan. 3 of an apparent heart attack.

Harris County Judge Ed Emmett, who on Jan. 22 announced his appointment of Locke, said he wanted someone who knew Lee and his family as well as someone who understands the workings of Harris County government.

Locke thanked Emmett for the opportunity to continue Lee's legacy. Lee, who served as commissioner for 30 years, maintained 32 parks and 961 miles of roads in Precinct One. He also established comprehensive seniors and youth programs, including the nonprofit

Harris County Street Olympics.

"This precinct belongs to El Franco Lee," Locke said at a news conference. "And anything that I do over the next several months is dedicated to him."

Afterward, Locke, of counsel with Andrews Kurth law firm, met with Precinct One's administrative staff.

"This is really about El Franco," Locke said. "This is not about me. This is about making sure that all of us dig down real deep and make sure the rest of this year is the best year that Precinct One has ever had in memory of him."

Locke and Lee were close friends who enjoyed a 35-year

*(Locke continues on page 2)*



## Precinct One

# Commissioner Gene L. Locke

### Comments on current and future activities

The past few weeks have been extremely busy for Precinct One employees and me. After I was sworn in as commissioner following the Jan. 3 death of my dear friend, El Franco Lee, I immediately set into motion a plan to preserve exiting programs, create new projects and solicit feedback from many of you in various Precinct One neighborhoods. Commissioner Lee was a tremendous servant who worked tirelessly to make government serve the people. I want to assure you that I will carry on his legacy. The future is bright for Precinct One.

Since a significant portion of Precinct One is within the City of Houston, I have developed an unprecedented partnership between Harris County and the city to improve the quality of life for all residents. The Precinct has initiated an aggressive street-repair program and developed plans

to construct badly needed sidewalks in Houston neighborhoods. Also, the Precinct has launched a project to clean nuisance properties in portions of Harris County that are in Houston.

Meanwhile, the staff will continue to provide high-quality programs for senior citizens and youth. After-school and summer programs are offered at many of our community centers.

For seniors, there are seven centers that provide services such as a writing program, special events, drama and classes for exercise, nutrition and computer.

If Precinct One staff can help you in any way, please feel free to contact us by calling the numbers on the back of this newsletter.

#### **Toll Road Projects**

Construction is scheduled to start early

this year on the widening of the Sam Houston Tollway from two lanes in each direction to four lanes between Texas 288 and Interstate 45. The work also includes the construction of an inside safety shoulder and the reconstruction of tolled exit and entrance ramps. A similar widening project has been completed on the tollway between the Southwest Freeway and Texas 288.

#### **Flood Control Projects**

Work has been completed on the Sims Bayou Federal Flood Damage Reduction Project. The project involved widening and modifying 19.3 miles of channel, replacing or extending about 20 roadway bridges at channel crossing, and creating three stormwater detention basins that will create 700 acres of green space for recreation.

## Lee's developed variety of programs for seniors and youth

*(Lee continued from page 1)*

Over the years, the Street Olympics developed into a network of recreational, educational and health programs that include the Harris County Aquatics Program (HCAP), the Northeast Adolescent Program (NEAP), the Bright Futures Fair and the Discovery Camp. Street Olympics now serves thousands of youth annually.

In addition to the Street Olympics, Lee also established

after-school and summer programs at three Precinct One community centers.



**El Franco Lee**

Lee's Seniors Program, which operates at seven Precinct One centers, offers hundreds of senior citizens a variety of services that include health and fitness, arts and crafts, drama, gardening and tours.

El Franco Lee was born on Jan. 30, 1949, in Houston to Selma A. and Robert E. Lee. He attended youth programs at Julia C. Hester House, which played a pivotal part in his early development and appreciation for fitness. He graduated from Phillis Wheatley High School, where he was a member of the swim team (freestyle and butterfly) and track and field squad (100 meters, 200 meters and pole vault).

Lee attended San Jacinto

Junior College on a gymnastic scholarship. He later received a Bachelor of Science degree from Texas Southern University (TSU). He completed post-graduate studies at TSU School of Public Affairs and University of Houston School of Engineering.

He married his high school sweetheart, Ethel Kaye Kingberry, and they have two children, Franchelle Lee Stewart and El Franco Lee II.

## Locke will expand on the late Commissioner Lee's programs and services

*(Locke continued from page 1)*

relationship that included Lee serving as a groomsman in Locke's wedding.

In the public sector, Locke served as Houston City Attor-

ney from 1995-98. He was also lead counsel for the Harris County-Houston Sports Authority in connection with the development of Minute Maid Park, NRG Stadium and Toyota Center. He also represented

Commissioners Court during the county's most recent redistricting.

Locke said he and Lee worked together on numerous other projects.

"I know of his love for the people of Precinct One in Harris County," Locke said. "I know he was really committed to seniors and youth ... and working with the disadvantaged."



## Street Olympics celebrates 30 years of serving youth

The Harris County Streets Olympics will celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this summer and also commemorate the late Precinct One Commissioner El Franco Lee, who founded the nonprofit organization that now serves thousands of youth annually.



The anniversary celebrations will center on the Street Olympics Summer Games' marquee

events – 3-on-3 Basketball Championship Tournament, Splashdown swim meet and the Final Event/Bright Futures Fair.

Before the competition begins, however, Street Olympics' officials will host a participating agency luncheon from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. April 15 at Finnigan Park. Representatives of youth agencies – including parks' community centers, YMCA's and churches – can attend the lunch to get information about the Summer Games.

Street Olympics' officials sends representatives to the



**Doug Wong**, left, an engineer at NASA, which had a booth at Bright Futures Fair during the 2015 Final Event, assists youth trying on space gear. The fair exposes children to health, education and careers.

agencies to teach youth how to compete and to help them practice for the events, which include softball throw, basketball free throw and dribble, foot races, jump rope, jacks, Hula Hoop and chess. The top athletes from each agency get a chance to compete for medals at the Final Event, which will be held at NRG Arena in August.

Lee, who passed away in January, started the Street Olympics in 1986 to give youth

positive activities during the vulnerable summer months. What started as a summer event morphed into year-round programs that include:

The **Summer Games** that includes **3-on-3 Basketball**, **Final Event** and **Bright Futures Fair**.

The **Discovery Camp/Traveling Naturalist Program** that provides a fun and exciting way to learn about nature and the environment.

The **Harris County Aquat-**

**ics Program** that offers free Learn-to-Swim sessions and competitive swimming.

The **Northeast Adolescent Program** – a partnership with Baylor College of Medicine, Houston and Aldine school districts, and the Harris Health System – provides free clinics for teens and young adults to address infant mortality, teenage pregnancy and other health and social issues.

## Precinct One's abatement program starts in Houston neighborhoods

Commissioner Gene L. Locke's abatement initiative, which will allow the use of general funds for public health and sanitation, has been approved by Commissioners Court.

Precinct One will now vacant lots, remove trash and remediate public nuisances in portions of Harris County within the City of Houston.

Through a joint Harris

County–City of Houston initiative, Precinct One will hire contractors to clean dozens of abandoned or neglected vacant lots that have been declared a public nuisance through civil court proceedings.

The program also will require a partnership with neighborhood residents. The community will be asked to assist Precinct



One with the location's upkeep and report new incidents of dumping or neglect by calling 713-991-6881.



Workers remove debris dumped on Mariah Street.

## EFL Park boardwalk completes trail loop around wetland

A 2-mile trail – including a 70-foot boardwalk – has been completed around the 100-acre wetland at El Franco Lee Park.

The loop, which provides an opportunity to explore the ecosystems surrounding the wetland and Clear Creek, is just a portion of the work that will beautify the area and make it more accessible to nature lovers.

### Planned butterfly garden

Construction will begin soon on an observation tower that will connect to the perimeter trail on the eastern side of the wetland and provide a different perspective for viewing. In spring 2016, an informal butterfly garden will be planted with native and other butterfly-attracting plants.

The nearby Dobie High School's Environmental Sci-



Neil Arnett and his dog, Chloe, walk on the El Franco Lee Park boardwalk in the wetland.

ence class will maintain a kiosk with information about the wetland environment. Also, the class will adopt several of the flower beds in the butterfly garden.

### 'Fantastic facility'

Neil Arnett, who was walking one morning with his dog,

Chloe, calls the trail a "fantastic facility."

"This is so much different even from the (South Belt) Hike and Bike Trail," Arnett said. "When I use that facility and when I walk along the ditch, I have someone's backyard on the other side. Right here I have nature. I have what

the good Lord gave me."

### Protected wetland

The wetland, which once served as a rice farm, supports a diverse range of plant and animal life. It is protected from future development under an agreement with the city of Houston and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department as mitigation for a runway at Bush Intercontinental Airport. Members of the Houston Ornithological Society, as well as Dobie High School faculty, participated in the planning stages of the trail and butterfly garden.

The project is made possible by the Coastal Impact Assistance Program, funded by revenues from Outer Continental Shelf energy-related activities in the Gulf of Mexico and managed by the wildlife department.

## Road and Park Construction Projects

### Sidewalks in Fifth Ward

Commissioners Court has granted county officials the authority to negotiate with an engineering firm to design sidewalks that will connect Julia C. Hester House, Wheatley High School, Finnigan Park and Atherton Elementary School in the Fifth Ward. Residents asked Precinct One to build better sidewalks to improve safety and create better access to schools, neighborhoods and community parks. The 1.3-mile walk will safely connect nearby Finnigan and Wheatley, which are south of Interstate 10, to Hester House and Atherton, which are across the street from each other north of I-10. Wheatley students utilize services at the Finnigan Park campus, which also includes the Youth Education Town. Also,

Atherton students participate in Hester House after-school programs.

### T.C. Jester

The 1.25-mile extension of T.C. Jester Boulevard between Spears Road and FM 1960 is expected to be completed this summer. The four-lane extension will be divided by a grass median and will include concrete curbs and gutters. A traffic signal will be installed at T.C. Jester and Sablechase Drive. Another traffic signal is planned at T.C. Jester and Bammel North Houston.

### E. Mount Houston

Contractors have completed a 3.1-mile improvement of East Mount Houston between Beltway 8 and Mesa. The two-lane road was converted to a four-lane, concrete street with bike



Traffic flows easily at East Mount Houston at Mesa. The road was expanded from two to four lanes between Mesa and Beltway 8.

paths. Workers are still completing landscaping.

### Splash pad in EFL Park

Work is expected to start in April on a splash pad at El

Franco Lee Park. When completed in July, the water spray facility will be the first in a Precinct One park.



## NRG Park-area roads to be repaired in time for Super Bowl

Harris County Commissioner Gene L. Locke plans to move quickly on a number of projects that will help improve the quality of life for people living in Precinct One.

Harris County Commissioners Court has approved multiple items placed on the agenda by Precinct One to enhance infrastructure and address nuisance properties that are considered unsafe for hardworking families in several Precinct One neighborhoods.

The items include an inter-local agreement with the City of Houston that allows the Precinct to spend \$12.5 million to repair four streets – Holly Hall, Knight, Ardmore and El Rio – in the NRG Park-area in time for next year's Super Bowl in Houston.

Houston City Council in March unanimously voted to give Harris County permission



**Holly Hall, a major road leading to NRG Park, will be repaired by Harris County Precinct One.**

to repair the streets.

“Well, the Super Bowl is there, but that’s not really the primary reason,” Locke said. “The primary reason is people want their streets fixed and they care little whether the city does it or the county does it.”

The agreement also will allow the county to improve other roads and bridges in Precinct One neighborhoods that are in the city limits. The improvements include sidewalks, traffic control devices and other infrastructure-related items.

In turn, Commissioner Locke is asking Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner to pledge some of the city’s Community Development Block Grant money to fund county programs and services.

## Precinct One seniors attend memorial services for late Commissioner

**T**o the Precinct One Seniors Program participants, the late Harris County Commissioner El Franco Lee was a man they admired because he provided hope for those in their golden years.

“We feel very grateful for all the work that he did not just for the seniors, but for everyone in the community,” said Joe R. Dominguez, who along with his wife, Yolanda, attends the Seniors Program at El Franco Lee (EFL) Community Center. “We feel honored to have known Commissioner El Franco Lee.”

Dominguez and about 200 other seniors from EFL and Tom Bass community centers participated in a Precinct One-sponsored memorial for Lee – who passed away Jan. 3 – at

Tom Bass on Feb. 10. A similar event was held Feb. 12 at Julia C. Hester House for about 300 seniors from the Hester House, Lincoln Community Center, Finnigan Park, Deussen Park and Hardy Seniors Center.

Commissioner Gene L. Locke, who was appointed in January, reassured the seniors at both services that he will carry on Lee’s legacy.

“I plan to honor El Franco,” Locke said. “First and foremost, this Seniors Program, it’s going to stay just as it is.”

Terrell Holiday, who attends Lincoln Park, commended Lee because he made the seniors “feel special” with the activities at the community centers and the special events such as April in Paris and the Seniors Holiday Celebration.

“He was always there for



**Wayne King with Precinct One Seniors Program sings “America the Beautiful” at a memorial for the late Commissioner El Franco Lee at Julia C. Hester House on Feb. 12.**

the seniors,” she said. “He was down to earth. The only time I saw the commissioner suited up was on very special occasions.”

Said Deljon Price, a Hester House participant: “He gave

everybody hope around here. He gave them a better quality of life – something to look forward to besides sitting around the house.”

## LEE Program gives students internships and professional training



**Marisa Richard, a Leadership Experience and Employment Program intern last summer, views a video that features Christina Wright, Harris County Protective Services community relations specialist, talking about the dangers of leaving children unattended inside hot cars.**

**M**arisa Richard's broadcast journalism studies provide her the latest skills in video editing and social media. Her Leadership Experience and Employment Program (LEE Program) internship last summer at Harris County Protective Services allowed her to ply her skills in a professional setting.

"I was kind of surprised with my task this summer," said Richard, a 21-year-old student at Florida A&M University. "I have been doing a lot of social media, particularly Pinterest, Twitter and Facebook. So it's kind of like brand management and social media for Harris County Protective Services."

Richard was among 120 high school graduates and col-

lege students who participated last summer in the 10-week LEE Program, which arranged for internships at Harris County departments and private companies.

This summer, another group of interns will participate in the program, which was started by the late Precinct One Commissioner El Franco Lee to give youth on-the-job training and

### How to apply for internships

**WHAT:** LEE Program Internships

**WHO:** Students ages 17-23

**CONTACT:** Robyn Codner

**PHONE:** 713-991-6881

**WEB:**

[hcp1.net/Programs/LEEPProgram](http://hcp1.net/Programs/LEEPProgram)

**DEADLINE:** April 8

professional work experience.

Applications for this summer are being accepted through March 31.

Christina Wright, community relations specialist for Protective Services, said Richard has been a "godsend."

"We've had an agency video project," Wright said. "She led our social media. She also helped get smaller things done in the office that have been on backburner. She's a really hard worker."

Richard said she gained a lot of experience working with Wright and others in the office.

"I've learned a lot," she said. "I've been able to participate in writing blurbs for the newsletter that we put out quarterly."

## HazMobiles will visit two Precinct One sites on April 16

Harris County HazMobiles, mobile collection events that each can accommodate household hazardous waste from approximately 100 homes, will be at two Precinct One sites from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. April 16.

The locations are 11901 W. Hardy Rd. and 15530 Miller Rd. One.

The waste will be collected on a first-come, first-served

basis until the HazMobiles are full. Residents must have the waste in original containers that do not exceed 5 gallons.

### Acceptable items

Items that will be accepted are tires, fertilizers, pesticides, paint-related materials, household cleaners, fuels, anti-freeze, pool chemicals, glues and solvents, used motor oil

and filters, batteries and thermometers.

### Unacceptable waste

Things that will not be accepted are electronics, business waste, medical waste, radioactive waste, PCBs or dioxins, ammunition, explosives, compressed gas cylinders, smoke detectors, washers, dryers, refrigerators, freezers and air conditioners.

## HazMobile

**When:** April 16

**Where:** 11901 W. Hardy Rd.

15530 Miller Rd. One

**Contact:** 281-560-6200

**Website:** [CleanWaterways.org](http://CleanWaterways.org)



# IN MEMORY OF COMMISSIONER EL FRANCO LEE

Jan. 30, 1949-Jan. 3, 2016



Commissioner El Franco Lee with Street Olympics' athletes.



Commissioner El Franco Lee watches a seniors' water aerobics class.

## Gene L. Locke, Commissioner

Harris County Precinct One  
1001 Preston Ave., Ste. 950  
Houston, TX 77002  
[www.hcp1.net](http://www.hcp1.net)

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### Precinct One Parks' Reservations

All reservations are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. Please read the park rules and regulations for reserving pavilions and community buildings prior to making reservations. This information can be found on our website at [hcp1.net/parkreservations](http://hcp1.net/parkreservations).

Refer to the following schedule when making 2016 reservations:

Reservations for the months:	Reservations will be accepted on or after:
Jan. 2016—March 2016	Monday, Nov. 9, 2015
April 2016—June 2016	Monday, Jan. 11, 2016
July 2016—Sept. 2016	Monday, March 14, 2016
Oct. 2016—Dec. 2016	Monday, May 9, 2016

Our reservations office is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. We can be reached at 713-440-1587.

### Get e-Connected with Precinct One



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- Facebook: [facebook.com/CommissionerPrecinctOne](https://www.facebook.com/CommissionerPrecinctOne)
- Visit us online: [hcp1.net](http://hcp1.net)

### PRECINCT ONE SITES and PHONE NUMBERS

#### REGIONAL OFFICES

El Rio Service Center	713.991.6881
Downtown Office	713.755.6111
El Camino Office Annex	713.741.1096
Kashmere Office "Annex 36"	713.675.0004
Leland Office "Annex 31"	713.697.1104
Neartown Office "Annex 1"	713.755.9300
Hardy Service Center	281.820.5151

#### COMMUNITY CENTERS

Christia Adair Community Center	713.991.6881
Tom Bass Community Center	713.733.3717
Challenger Seven Learning Center	281.332.5157
Deussen Seniors Center	281.454.4108
EFL Community Center	281.464.9708
Finnigan Community Center	713.678.7385
Hardy Seniors Center	281.260.6772
Barbara Jordan Community Center	281.591.6951
Kashmere Office "Annex 36"	713.675.0004
Lincoln Park Community Center	281.445.1617
Finnigan Park YET	713.676.0519

#### PROGRAM INFORMATION

Aquatics Program	713.748.7333
Discover Camp Program	281.332.5157
Northeast Adolescent Program	713.673.1655
Seniors Program	713.733.3717
Street Olympics Summer Games	713.741.0851