

**Texas Board of Criminal Justice
236th Meeting**



Minutes

**August 23, 2024
El Paso, Texas**

TEXAS BOARD OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

**The Plaza Pioneer Park
106 West Mills Avenue
El Paso, Texas 79901**

**Friday – August 23, 2024
8:00 AM – 2:00 PM**

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Call to Order

Convene Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ) Meeting

I. Regular Session – Trost Ballroom

A. Recognitions

B. Consideration of Approval of Consent Items

1. Hazardous Duty Pay Authorization Requests
2. Personal Property Donations
3. 235th TBCJ Meeting Minutes

C. Public Comments

D. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Amendments to Board Rules Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Sections

1. 152.1, “Correctional Institutions Division”
2. 152.21-.27, “Correctional Capacity”
3. 163.31, “Sanctions, Programs, and Services”
4. 163.37, “Reports and Records”

E. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Adoption of Amendments to Board Rules Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Sections

1. 151.75, “Standards of Conduct for Financial Advisors”
2. 152.61, “Emergency Response to Law Enforcement Agencies or Departments and Non-Agent Private Prisons or Jails”
3. 155.23, “Site Selection Process for Additional Facilities”
4. 163.36, “Supervision of Offenders with Mental Impairment”

F. Report from the Executive Director, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)

G. Report from the Chairman, TBCJ

H. Report from the Presiding Officer, Judicial Advisory Council

I. Internal Audit Status Report

- J. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Audit Plan
- K. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Purchases and Contracts Over \$1 Million
- L. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Fiscal Year 2025 Proposed Operating Budget and Fiscal Years 2026-2027 Legislative Appropriations Request
- M. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Salary for the TDCJ Executive Director
- N. Report from the Office of the Inspector General
- O. Report from the Office of the Independent Ombudsman
- P. Report from the State Counsel for Offenders
- Q. Report from the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Ombudsman
- R. TDCJ Parole Division Spotlight
- S. Team Supervision Pilot Presentation
- T. Wave Millimeter and X-Ray Body Scanner Presentation
- U. Engaging the Field Presentation
- V. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Facilities Division Construction Projects
 - 1. Request to Replace Plumbing and Controls at 3, 4, 7, 10 and 11 Bldgs. – Inmate Housing, Connally Unit, Karnes County, Kenedy, Texas
 - 2. Request to Replace Plumbing and Controls at 8, 12, 18 and 19 Bldgs. – Inmate Housing, Connally Unit, Karnes County, Kenedy, Texas
 - 3. Request to Install Monitored Pulse Fence Detection System – Perimeter, Allred Unit, Wichita County, Iowa Park, Texas
 - 4. Request to Install Monitored Pulse Fence Detection System – Perimeter, McConnell Unit, Bee County, Beeville, Texas
 - 5. Request to Install Monitored Pulse Fence Detection System – Perimeter, Robertson Unit, Jones County, Abilene, Texas
- W. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Land Transactions
 - 1. Request for a New Gas Pipeline Easement, Gist Unit, Jefferson County, Beaumont, Texas
 - 2. Request for a New Gas Pipeline Easement, Stiles Unit, Jefferson County, Beaumont, Texas

Recess Texas Board of Criminal Justice Meeting

The TBCJ may discuss and/or take action on any of the items posted on this meeting agenda.

II. Executive Session – Tom Lea Room

- A. The TBCJ may convene into Executive Session.
- B. Discussion of personnel matters relating to the Board of Criminal Justice, the Executive Director, the Inspector General, the Director of the Internal Audit Division, the Director of the State Counsel for Offenders, the Director of the Office of the Independent Ombudsman, and the Prison Rape Elimination Act Ombudsman or to hear a complaint or charge against an employee (closed in accordance with Section 551.074, Government Code).
- C. Discussion regarding deployment of security personnel, devices, or security audits (closed in accordance with Section 551.076, Government Code).
- D. Discussion regarding security assessments or deployments relating to information resources technology, confidential network security information, or the deployment, or specific occasions for implementation, of security personnel, critical infrastructure, or security devices (closed in accordance with Section 551.089, Government Code).
- E. Consultation with legal counsel regarding pending or contemplated litigation or settlement offers; to receive legal advice on items posted on this agenda; or consultation on a matter where the TBCJ seeks the advice of its attorney as privileged communications under the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct of the State Bar of Texas (closed in accordance with Section 551.071, Government Code).

Adjourn Texas Board of Criminal Justice Meeting

The TBCJ may discuss and/or take action on any of the items posted on this meeting agenda.

**MINUTES OF THE
TEXAS BOARD OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE
Meeting No. 236**

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice convened on Friday, August 23, 2024, in regular session at 8:08 a.m. at the Plaza Pioneer Park in El Paso, Texas, recessed in executive session at 12:20 p.m., and adjourned at 1:56 p.m.

TBCJ MEMBERS PRESENT:

Eric J.R. Nichols, Chairman
Hon. Faith Johnson, Vice Chairman
Rodney Burrow, M.D., Secretary
Thomas Fordyce
Hon. Molly Francis
Ambassador Sichan Siv
Pastor Nate Sprinkle
General Bill Welch
Sydney Zuiker

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF
CRIMINAL JUSTICE STAFF
PRESENT:**

Bryan Collier, Executive Director
Oscar Mendoza, Deputy Executive Director
Kate Blifford
Chris Carter
Jason Clark
Tina Clark
Jennifer Gonzales
Carey Green
Rene Hinojosa
Ron Hudson
Bill Lewis
Bobby Lumpkin
Mary McCaffity
Angie McCown
Ron Steffa
David Sweetin
Rebecca Waltz
April Zamora

TBCJ STAFF PRESENT:

Chris Cirrito
Jill Durst
Wyvonne Long
Cris Love
Cassandra McGilbra
Brian Patrick

Convene the Texas Board of Criminal Justice

Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols convened the 236th meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ or board) on Friday, August 23, 2024, at 8:08 a.m., noted that a quorum was present, and declared the meeting open in accordance with Texas Government Code Chapter 551, the *Open Meetings Act*. He stated the TBCJ would be conducting business from the agenda posted in the *Texas Register*.

Chairman Nichols stated that the TBCJ is committed to providing the opportunity for public presentations on posted agenda topics and public comments on issues within its jurisdiction in accordance with Board Rule 151.4, "Public Presentations and Comments to the Texas Board of Criminal Justice." Two registration cards were received for public comment prior to the deadline and would be heard later in the meeting.

Recognitions

Executive Director Bryan Collier recognized Stephanie Greger on her recent appointment as the General Counsel. Mr. Collier highlighted Ms. Greger's career, including her most recent position as the Deputy General Counsel for the Governor's Office. He stated Ms. Greger has proven to be a strong member of the team, and her experience and proven leadership ability will serve the agency well. Chairman Nichols thanked her for taking on this role and demonstrating outstanding dedication to the state. Ms. Greger thanked the board and the agency for this opportunity. She stated her career has guided her to this role and expressed appreciation for her staff.

Mr. Collier recognized Victim Services Division Director Angie McCown for her National Crime Victim Service award from the United States Department of Justice Office of Victims of Crime. She will also be receiving an award as one of the Outstanding Women in Texas Government for outstanding community involvement. Mr. Collier highlighted her career, which has been dedicated to assisting victims of crime. Mr. Collier stated she is a respected leader within the TDCJ and the victim services profession and held in high esteem by her colleagues, employees, and the many people she has helped during her career. She has helped shape the careers of her employees and victim service professionals across the nation. She is a tireless advocate for victims and their families, as well as an inspiration to those with a similar passion for serving. She is a caring and compassionate victim services professional who volunteers her time for worthy causes, such as assisting the Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS), a national organization providing support for the families and coworkers of law enforcement officers who died in the line of duty. During National Police Week, she conducted sessions on various subjects, including preparing family members whose loved ones were murdered for the difficult and emotional experience of attending the trial. She also provides counseling to Kids Camp and various family retreats and often stays in contact with the men, women, and children she meets during these events. Her dedicated service on behalf of those who have endured such a tragic loss is deeply appreciated by the survivors and by the leaders of the COPS organization. She has truly led a life of service, and her service has and will continue to make a difference in Texas and across the United States. Chairman Nichols expressed the board's appreciation for her selflessness toward TDCJ colleagues and their families and to victims of crime or anyone who needs a helping hand. Ms. McCown thanked Mr. Collier, executive leadership, and the board for their support. She thanked Mr. Collier and Ms. McCaffity for nominating her for the awards she received. She stated she feels fortunate to do something she loves and leave the victims in a better place.

Chief Financial Officer Ron Steffa recognized Budget Director Rebecca Waltz for twenty years of service with the agency. He highlighted her career, which began in June of 2004 in the Facilities Division, although she quickly promoted to the Budget Office. Her responsibilities as Budget Director include projecting and monitoring the expenses of the agency, compiling the Legislative Appropriations Request, and many other duties. He described her as a talented and knowledgeable member of the leadership team. Chairman Nichols recognized Ms. Waltz for her dedicated service. Ms. Waltz expressed her appreciation for the opportunities given during her career.

Parole Division Director Rene Hinojosa recognized Jose Baez Jr., as the newly promoted Deputy Division Director for the Parole Division. Mr. Baez will oversee field operations for all parole offices in the five regions. Mr. Hinojosa highlighted Mr. Baez's career, which began in 2001 in the Harlingen Parole Office. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from San Diego State University in Criminal Justice. Mr. Baez brings a wealth of experience and, more importantly, an open mind to his new position. It is evident that he cares about his staff and the success of clients and the agency. Chairman Nichols congratulated Mr. Baez on his well-deserved promotion. Mr. Baez thanked leadership for the opportunity.

Correctional Institutions Division Director Bobby Lumpkin recognized Region III Director Michael Britt for his recent promotion. He highlighted Mr. Britt's career, which began as a Correctional Officer in 2004. Mr. Britt is passionate about helping staff succeed and creating an environment that fosters growth and helps staff understand the importance of their role. His level of experience, knowledge, and training make him an asset to the agency. He has a strong operational focus but fully understands the agency's mission and need for change. Chairman Nichols expressed his appreciation for Mr. Britt's sustained success with the agency. Mr. Britt expressed his humility at hearing the accolades from his leadership.

Mr. Lumpkin recognized Regional IV Director Angela Chevalier for her recent promotion. He highlighted her career, which began in 2004 at the Wynne Unit. Her dedication and passion can be seen in her actions on duty. Her efforts demonstrate the humanization of corrections. Chairman Nichols congratulated her on her new role and stated this is a direct result of her outstanding capabilities. Ms. Chevalier thanked the board and Mr. Collier for the honor to serve the agency.

Chairman Nichols recognized the TDCJ employees who have dedicated 25, 30, 35, and 40 years of service to the state of Texas. He stated these individuals represent the strong commitment of this agency's staff systemwide. On behalf of the TBCJ and Mr. Collier, he expressed deepest gratitude for the continued service of these employees. During the months of July and August 2024, 60 employees attained 25 years of service, 37 employees attained 30 years of service, 16 employees attained 35 years of service, and three employees attained 40 years of service. Chairman Nichols stated that the names of these individuals would be submitted for inclusion in the official board meeting minutes. He thanked them for their unwavering loyalty and dedication to the citizens of Texas. As a symbol of appreciation, these employees will receive a board certificate along with a personal letter of gratitude.

(Attachment A – Employee Names)

Consideration of Approval of Consent Items

- 1. Hazardous Duty Pay Authorization Requests**
- 2. Personal Property Donations**
- 3. 235th TBCJ Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any amendments, abstentions, or objections to the proposed consent items. Hearing none, the consent items were approved.

Public Comments

Chairman Nichols stated that for public comment within the jurisdiction of the TBCJ but not items posted on the agenda, two registration cards were received prior to the established deadline. The time limit set was three minutes per individual for each topic, and he reviewed the requirements for speaker registration in accordance with the *Open Meetings Act*. Mr. Nichols noted that the Public Comment portion of the meeting was moved, so the public would not have to wait until the end of the meeting to present comments.

Keidrain Brewster registered to speak and thanked Mr. Collier for his unique approach to rehabilitation and expressed his appreciation for the award he received from the Governor's Office. He spoke about

generational curses and how his daughter being able to see his achievements made a difference. He shared his observations on the commitment and dedication of the administration and described himself as a product of the system, not a victim of it. Chairman Nichols thanked him for his comments.

Frances Vaughn registered to speak and discussed the field ministers. She stated the field ministers work hard to establish a level of trust with the inmate population but are being used for staff duties, such as constant and direct observation (CDO). She said staff should be present during the observation, but this does not always occur which creates a negative impact on the relationship the field ministers have established with the inmate population. She claimed the agency and the Heart of Texas organization do not contribute monetarily to the field ministers who have to use their own funds to purchase supplies. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comments.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Amendments to Board Rules Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Sections

152.1, “Correctional Institutions Division”

General Counsel Stephanie Greger presented Board Rule 152.1, “Correctional Institutions Division,” with proposed amendments that revise “offender” to “inmate” and remove a reference to transfer facilities. The rule will be posted in the *Texas Register* and available for public comment.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Ambassador Sichan Siv moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve for publication in the Texas Register the proposed amendments to Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 152.1, “Correctional Institutions Division,” to receive public comment as presented.

Dr. Rodney Burrow seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

152.21–.27, “Correctional Capacity”

Ms. Greger presented Board Rules 152.21–.27, “Correctional Capacity,” with proposed amendments that revise “offender” to “inmate,” affecting Board Rules 152.21, 152.23, and 152.27; replace references to HB 124 for the appropriate statute, affecting Board Rules 152.23 and 152.27; make grammatical updates, affecting Board Rules 152.23 and 152.25; and revise Board Rule 152.25 to amend the title, update the names of units, remove units that were sold or closed with no possibility of reopening, and update the maximum rated capacity of individual units. The rule will be posted in the *Texas Register* and available for public comment.

Chairman Nichols asked if Ms. Greger has worked closely with the Correctional Institutions Division (CID) to ensure the proposed capacities are correct, pursuant to the appropriate statute. Ms. Greger stated the process is detailed, and the CID along with other divisions have worked together to make sure those numbers are accurate. Chairman Nichols asked if there were any additional questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Judge Molly Francis moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve for publication in the Texas Register the proposed amendments to Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Sections 152.21–.27, “Correctional Capacity,” to receive public comment as presented.

Judge Faith Johnson seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

163.31, “Sanctions, Programs, and Services”

Ms. Greger presented Board Rule 163.31, “Sanctions, Programs, and Services,” with proposed amendments that revise presentence and postsentence investigations to mirror statutory language; revise continuum of sanctions to progressive sanctions; update references to Texas Government Code; and make grammatical and formatting updates. The rule will be posted in the *Texas Register* and available for public comment.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Dr. Rodney Burrow moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve for publication in the Texas Register the proposed amendments to Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 163.31, “Sanctions, Programs, and Services,” to receive public comment as presented.

Pastor Nate Sprinkle seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

163.37, “Reports and Records”

Ms. Greger presented Board Rule 163.37, “Reports and Records,” with proposed amendments that revise presentence report and postsentence report to mirror statutory language. The rule will be posted in the *Texas Register* and available for public comment.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Sydney Zuiker moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve for publication in the Texas Register the proposed amendments to Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 163.37, “Reports and Records,” to receive public comment as presented.

Judge Molly Francis seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding
Adoption of Amendments to Board Rules Title 37
Texas Administrative Code Sections

151.75, “Standards of Conduct for Financial Advisors and Service Providers”

General Counsel Stephanie Greger presented Board Rule 151.75, “Standards of Conduct for Financial Advisors and Service Providers,” for adoption of amendments that add language to specify the disclosure of a relationship or pecuniary interest by a financial advisor or service provider. These amendments were posted in the *Texas Register* for public comment. No public comments were received.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

General Bill Welch moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice adopt amendments to Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 151.75, “Standards of Conduct for Financial Advisors and Service Providers,” as published in the Texas Register, and that the Chairman sign the order to this effect.

Dr. Rodney Burrow seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

152.61, “Emergency Response to Law Enforcement Agencies or Departments and Non-Agent Private Prisons or Jails”

Ms. Greger presented Board Rule 152.61, “Emergency Response to Law Enforcement Agencies or Departments and Non-Agent Private Prisons or Jails,” for adoption of amendments that revise “rule” to “section” and “offender” to “inmate” throughout and make grammatical updates. These amendments were posted in the *Texas Register* for public comment. No public comments were received.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Pastor Nate Sprinkle moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice adopt amendments to Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 152.61, “Emergency Response to Law Enforcement Agencies or Departments and Non-Agent Private Prisons or Jails,” as published in the Texas Register, and that the Chairman sign the order to this effect.

General Bill Welch seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

155.23, “Site Selection Process for the Location of Additional Facilities”

Ms. Greger presented Board Rule 155.23, “Site Selection Process for the Location of Additional Facilities,” for adoption of amendments that revise “offender” to “inmate” throughout; remove references to transfer facilities and the Prison Management Act; and reorganize language for clarity. These amendments were posted in the *Texas Register* for public comment. No public comments were received.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Thomas Fordyce moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice adopt amendments to Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 155.23, "Site Selection Process for Additional Facilities," as published in the Texas Register, and that the Chairman sign the order to this effect.

Judge Faith Johnson seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

163.36, "Supervision of Offenders with Mental Impairment"

Ms. Greger presented Board Rule 163.36, "Supervision of Offenders with Mental Impairment," for adoption of amendments that revise the spelling of judgment. These amendments were posted in the *Texas Register* for public comment. No public comments were received.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Ambassador Sichan Siv moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice adopt amendments to Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 163.36, "Supervision of Offenders with Mental Impairment," as published in the Texas Register, and that the Chairman sign the order to this effect.

Dr. Rodney Burrow seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

Report from the Executive Director, Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Executive Director Bryan Collier provided an update on the Sunset Review process along with the Legislative Appropriations Request process for the agency.

Sunset Review Process

The agency is about to complete the Sunset Review process, which began last fall. This comprehensive review, which included informational sessions and tours with Sunset staff and the review of TDCJ policies, protocols, and contracts, will result in Sunset recommendations and a final report by the Sunset Commission that will be received on September 5th. Upon receipt of the report, the agency will have an opportunity to review and provide input based upon the agency's knowledge to Sunset staff. This report and its recommendations will be the subject of two Sunset hearings that will be conducted later this fall and ultimately will be components of the Sunset bill that will be carried in the 89th legislative session. Mr. Collier thanked the Sunset Commission Staff, describing them as a great team to work with throughout the process. He also thanked the agency's division directors and their staff for all the work performed to get the Sunset Commission the information requested to help in the review. Mr. Collier stated the agency will keep the board updated on the reports and any information received.

Legislative Appropriations Request

Mr. Collier thanked the board for taking time to individually meet with agency leadership over the past few weeks to review the Fiscal Year 2025 budget and 2026-2027 Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR). He expressed the agency's appreciation for the board's time and attention to details of the request.

He also thanked Chief Financial Officer Ron Steffa, Deputy Chief Financial Officer Jennifer Gonzales, Budget Director Rebecca Waltz, and all the staff of the Business and Finance Division (BFD) who have spent countless hours preparing this request. He stated the hard work in preparing this request happens as the BFD continues to do the daily heavy lifting of managing the agency's budget operations. He thanked the finance team for all the hard work. Mr. Collier stated this request is by far the most robust request the agency has ever made to the Texas Legislature, and it will help the agency make significant enhancements to its operations and improve the working environment for the women and men who work for the agency, as well as those clients and inmates who are supervised by the agency.

Chairman Nichols recognized the legislative staff involved in the LAR and specifically recognized the representative from Senator César Blanco's office, Lina Mendez, for her attendance at the meeting.

Report from the Chairman, TBCJ

Chairman Nichols recognized the TDCJ Canine Operations programs, which include the Sanchez State Jail Kennel Program. The kennel program at the Rogelio Sanchez Unit in El Paso is part of the TDCJ Canine Operations Section of the agency. The program provides training and technical advice to kennel staff and gathers and records data on the program. There are a total of 51 kennel programs statewide, including 45 unit-based programs and six regional-based programs. These 45 programs include 22 pack dog programs, 27 scent dog programs, and 32 narcotic/contraband dog programs.

Mr. Nichols recognized the dedicated team of handlers at the Sanchez State Jail:

- Officer Jessie Cisneros, Correctional Officer V (Search and Rescue)
- Officer Jesus Garcia, Correctional Officer V (Search and Rescue)
- Officer Frank Thome, Correctional Officer V (Contraband and Narcotic)
- Officer Ramon Cardona, Correctional Officer V (Contraband and Narcotic)

Chairman Nichols expressed his appreciation for the commitment of these law enforcement professionals to the agency. He introduced two dedicated handlers who play a crucial role in the success of those operations at Sanchez.

Mr. Nichols recognized Kennel Assistant Officer Jessie Cisneros for dedicating an impressive 17.5 years to the TDCJ. Over the past four years, Officer Cisneros has excelled as a kennel assistant with the ability to handle any challenge. Officer Cisneros began his career with the TDCJ in 2009 at the James Lynaugh Unit in Fort Stockton. After two years, he transferred to the Sanchez Unit. As a 24-hour on-call handler, he has developed strong leadership skills and a deep commitment to teamwork. He is an integral part of the kennel team's Search and Rescue (SAR) program. His dedication is evident in the strong bond he shares with his canine partner, Maya. He also works closely with his partner, Officer Garcia, to develop and implement innovative training techniques.

Chairman Nichols recognized Lead Handler Frank Thome, who embarked on his career with the TDCJ in 2008. With a seven-year tenure in the kennel program, he has honed his expertise in both scent-specific bloodhound and narcotics/contraband detection. Beyond his primary role, he readily assists colleagues with various duties, including shift coverage, medical transports, and facility maintenance. He actively supports fellow handlers through on-the-job training, developing innovative search techniques, and fostering a positive work environment. His passion for the role stems from the profound impact of his

work in safeguarding staff and preventing contraband from entering the facility. He has a special bond with his canine partners, Rona and Shelly. Mr. Nichols thanked both officers for their efforts and asked the officers to discuss the kennel program's operations.

Officer Cisneros discussed the Search and Rescue team, which is composed of himself and his canine partner Maya, and Officer Garcia and his canine partner Coco. Both dogs are bloodhounds that are trained to retrieve scent articles to track. The team undergoes an initial 40-hour training upon assignment and are evaluated twice a year. The team supports local law enforcement agencies upon request to apprehend fleeing subjects, and assists with missing persons cases and individuals in crisis. Officer Cisneros described his work on the team as an adventure.

Officer Thomas discussed the Contraband and Narcotics team, which consists of himself, Officer Cardona, and canines Rona, Danny, Shelly, and Grant. The team receives annual certification from the National Narcotic Drug Detection Association and undergoes biannual evaluations. Duties include inspecting incoming mail and property for new inmates, as well as screening vehicles, visitors, and staff during visitation. He expressed pride for his work with the dogs to serve the agency and the community.

Chairman Nichols stated these programs strengthen the agency's internal operations but also directly benefit the public. Mr. Nichols introduced a video of the kennel program. He recognized Warden Teresa Martinez for her work at the Sanchez Unit and thanked the officers for sharing information about the impressive work done at the Sanchez State Jail Kennel Program.

Report from the Presiding Officer, Judicial Advisory Council

Judge Alma Trejo presented an update on behalf of the Judicial Advisory Council (JAC). On behalf of the JAC, she thanked Executive Director Bryan Collier and the board for collaborative efforts in supporting exceptional item requests related to probation. She expressed appreciation for the proposed TDCJ LAR and the funding for the community supervision and corrections departments (CSCDs). Operational needs including salaries continue to remain a priority for the probation departments to continue the high level of supervision and service that communities expect. The LAR also includes additional funding for misdemeanor probations from 182 days to one year. Based on her experience as a prosecutor and misdemeanor judge, less than 10% of all misdemeanor probations are less than 182 days.

She discussed Hurricane Beryl, which made landfall in Texas on July 8, 2024. A total of 11 CSCDs representing 30 counties were affected. Two transitional treatment centers (TTCs) were evacuated as precautionary measures. Core Civic Corpus Christi TTC evacuated 40 probationers who were released to an approved home plan. Treatment Associates of Victoria TTC evacuated 52 probationers, of which 45 were released to an approved home plan. The other seven did not have an approved home plan and were transported to the Austin Transitional Center. She expressed her appreciation for the TDCJ's coordination and support for the impacted CSCDs, community correctional facilities, and TTCs that serve probationers to ensure necessary resources were available.

On July 11, 2024, the JAC held a quarterly meeting in Austin. Presentations were provided by Director of Forensic and Jail Diversion Services Ashleigh Walton with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission on statewide coordination of competency restoration. Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments (TCOOMMI) Deputy Director Emily Eisenman with the TDCJ Reentry and Integration Division presented services available to probationers through local mental

health authorities. The JAC's next meeting will be coordinated with the Probation Leadership Conference in Galveston, where the JAC will have the opportunity to meet with the Probation Advisory Committee in a formal setting. These meetings help the JAC understand the needs of the field and also provide a forum for JAC members to share perspectives on probation issues as related to the judiciary.

Chairman Nichols thanked Judge Trejo for her report and service to the community and the JAC. He also commented on the close coordination of the JAC with the TDCJ to create an LAR that will address issues for the CSCDs.

Internal Audit Status Report

Chris Cirrito, Internal Audit Director, presented updates to the Internal Audit Status Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023:

- **2302 – Parole Division Culture:** Project is in report writing.
- **2309 – Investigation of Sexual Assault Allegations:** Project is a proposed final report.

Mr. Cirrito continued with updates to the Internal Audit Status Report for FY 2024:

- One consultation is in reporting.
 - **2401 – Correctional Information Technology System**
- Eight full scope projects:
 - Three are complete.
 - **2403 – Commissary Operations Supply Chain**
 - **2405 – Correctional Officer Hiring**
 - **2407 – Public Funds Investment**
 - Three are in reporting.
 - **2402 – Mental Health Assessments**
 - **2404 – Travel Services** – This is now a draft report.
 - **2406 – Office of Independent Ombudsman Investigations**
 - One is ongoing.
 - **2409 – Incident Reporting**
 - One has been postponed.
 - **2408 – Inmate Identification Documents** – This has been incorporated into the Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Audit Plan due to the Reentry and Integration Division coordinating with the Texas Department of Public Safety to change processes.
- **2411 – Emerging Risks: Classification and Records State Ready** is in reporting.
- **2412 – Walkthroughs: Artificial Intelligence Readiness** is complete.
- **2413 – Follow-Up and Action Plan Taking: Pre-release Placement Investigations** is a draft report and *Rehabilitation Tier Tracking and Placement* is complete.

Mr. Cirrito discussed the aspects of an audit in the reporting phase, which involves the Internal Audit conducting a comprehensive quality assurance review to ensure accuracy and compliance with internal auditing standards. He stated this process takes a significant amount of time, as the Internal Audit staff ensure reports are written to be accurate and clear. The goal is to let the stakeholder know if an issue needs to be addressed.

Chairman Nichols expressed his appreciation for the Internal Audit's work and the objective standpoint provided, and complimented the clear reports that are grounded in fact and presented in a professional manner with the goal of continuous improvement. Mr. Nichols commented on the Inmate Identification Documents report and stated improvements have been made at some units already, such as ID cameras. He stated the process for releasing inmates has also been improved to ensure those inmates have the documentation needed. Ms. Zuiker expressed her appreciation for the Internal Audit's reporting on the AI readiness of the agency. Mr. Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he thanked Mr. Cirrito for the status report.

(Attachment B – Internal Audit Division Status Report)

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action **Regarding the Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Audit Plan**

Internal Audit Director Chris Cirrito informed the board that Internal Audit has the resources needed to complete the audit plan and faced no interference during the previous year. Mr. Cirrito requested that the board approve the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Audit Plan presented earlier in the Audit and Review Committee Meeting with the amendment proposed earlier and grant the authority to modify that plan if the risk or the need arises so long as it is presented to the board at the next meeting.

Chairman Nichols thanked Mr. Cirrito for the presentation and asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second. Chairman Nichols asked for an explanation of the amendment requested. Mr. Cirrito recommended that rather than conduct a full scope audit for Project 2502, Inmate Custody, the Internal Audit staff should serve in an advisory role, as the area is undergoing a substantial review by Executive Director Bryan Collier and his team.

Judge Faith Johnson moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the Annual Internal Audit Plan for Fiscal Year 2025 as amended to reflect the objective for project 2502 which will be a consultation rather than a full scope audit and authorize the Internal Audit Director to perform audit work outside of the Audit Plan if the Director deems deviations are warranted, documented, as required by the Texas Internal Auditing Act, and presented to the board at the next scheduled meeting.

Dr. Rodney Burrow seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action **Regarding Purchases and Contracts Over \$1 Million**

Chairman Nichols abstained from taking action on this agenda item due to his firm representing entities listed.

Ron Steffa, Chief Financial Officer, reviewed the purchases and contracts over \$1 million. Mr. Steffa stated there will be four items brought for the board's consideration and approval. Item one is a FY 2024 contract for a modular building to be used as the Windham Administration building located at the Wynne Unit. The TDCJ has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Windham School District

(WSD). The agency will be purchasing and installing the building, and the WSD will reimburse the funds. Item two is an increase to the FY 2024–2025 contract for the operation and treatment services for inmates in a Substance Abuse Felony Punishment Facility, Intermediate Sanction Facility, Substance Use Treatment Program, Cognitive Intervention Program, and the DWI Program. This increase is due to additional treatment beds and increased transportation costs. Item three is the FY 2025 renewal of cloud-based analytics technology. Item four is a 180-day extension of the FY 2025 contract for Electronic Monitoring, which will allow for the completion of the Request For Proposal (RFP) process and any vendor transition that may be necessary.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Judge Molly Francis moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the purchases and contracts over \$1 million as presented.

Sydney Zuiker seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Fiscal Year 2025 Proposed Operating Budget and Fiscal Years 2026–2027 Legislative Appropriations Request

Ron Steffa, Chief Financial Officer, presented a review of the Fiscal Year 2025 Proposed Operating Budget. He thanked each of the board members for spending time to individually meet for briefings on the budget, and thanked Jennifer Gonzales, Deputy Chief Financial Officer, and Rebecca Waltz, Budget Director, and the Budget team for all the work put into preparing the budget.

Mr. Steffa stated that the TDCJ's Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 operating budget is consistent with the funding decisions made by the Legislature during the last regular and special legislative sessions. The FY 2025 budget totals \$4.3 billion and provides for the legislatively approved salary increase of 5% with a minimum of \$3,000 for agency employees that will be effective September 1, 2024. Mr. Steffa reported that earlier this summer agencies received a policy letter and instructions for preparing the FY 2026–2027 Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR) from the Governor's Office and the Legislative Budget Board. The agency's LAR was prepared consistent with those instructions. The base request is \$4.4 billion for FY 2026 and \$4.3 billion for FY 2027. This funds the FY 2026–2027 biennium at the FY 2024–2025 level of expenses less any one-time expenditures. Any requests that exceed that baseline are required to be submitted as an exceptional item. Mr. Steffa stated that he would provide a brief description of each of the exceptional items. He stated that all dollar amounts reported are biennial, which is the total amount for FY 2026 and FY 2027 combined.

Mr. Steffa stated that one of the TDCJ's top priorities and focus has been employee recruitment and retention. The first four exceptional item requests address this focus as it relates to employee salaries and retention initiatives. The first exceptional item is to provide a 15% pay raise for parole officers and totals \$28 million. Parole officers provide public safety through the supervision of inmates upon release and are experiencing a 33% turnover rate and a 21% vacancy rate. The second item is a 10% pay raise for correctional staff and totals \$330.6 million. While improvements have been made in filling correctional officer positions, the agency remains at over 5,600 vacancies and a turnover rate of over 30%. The third item is \$73.4 million for targeted salary adjustments. This item would exclude parole officers and

correctional officers to focus on other agency positions that perform critical support functions maintaining the agency's essential operations. A salary comparison shows that, on average, the agency is 18% below the statewide median salary for similar positions with other state agencies. This funding would provide the flexibility to target salary adjustments for positions that are hard to fill or have high turnover rates. The fourth item is staff retention initiatives. This would provide funding for a learning management system, a wellness application, and additional employee support services to provide mental health and wellness support for the agency's employees. It also provides for training program enhancements and new uniforms for correctional staff. Taken together, these items total \$37.5 million and are aimed at supporting agency employees and reducing turnover.

Item 5 is \$117.6 million to address the pressing needs of community supervision and corrections departments. While not state employees, this funding would provide for a 10% salary increase for those local probation staff. This amount would also extend misdemeanor funding from six months to 12 months, and it would maintain the residential and nonresidential treatment services being provided in the community. It would also fund pretrial supervision. Chairman Nichols asked if these were the types of initiatives discussed by Judge Trejo during the report from the Judicial Advisory Council. Mr. Steffa confirmed.

Item 6 is for the Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments (TCOOMMI) contracts with local mental health authorities. It would provide \$12 million in funding to meet existing service delivery needs and add an additional 180 dual diagnosis residential facility beds with post-release, community-based services.

Item 7 is several long-term contracts with private vendors for treatment services in the operations of secure facilities. The \$65.8 million is required to continue the services at the increased per diem rates provided through these contracts.

Item 8 is \$39.1 million to address the day-to-day preventative and corrective maintenance needs of the facilities. The agency continues to experience increased costs and additional maintenance requirements.

Item 9 is funding for major repairs and restoration of facilities. This amount of \$214.8 million represents only a portion of the major projects that have been identified in the agency's capital expenditure plan. Projects include roofing, security fencing, water and wastewater projects, and the installation of additional air conditioning to approximately 11,400 beds. Chairman Nichols stated the agency has funding already dedicated to air conditioning but asked Mr. Collier to provide an update on the initiatives that will be funded based on this LAR regarding air conditioning. Mr. Collier stated based on the funding received so far, the agency has approximately \$85 million for air conditioning last session, which was targeted for approximately 11,000 beds and increased to approximately 14,000 beds. Later in the biennium, the agency will have a total of approximately 46,000 cool beds with the completion of current projects. With the addition of the \$85 million, the agency will have approximately 60,000 cool beds. With the funding being requested, the agency will have more than 75,000 cool beds in the system, which is over half of the beds in the system.

Item 10 is \$54.4 million for capital equipment needs of the agency. This item would replace aging and obsolete agricultural, laundry, food service, security, warehousing, and industry equipment.

Item 11 is \$43.2 million to replace the agency's fleet vehicles that have exceeded the state's replacement criteria. It is primarily for inmate transportation, freight transportation, agricultural operations, and facility maintenance activities.

Item 12 would provide additional information technology staff to support the continued implementation of modern technology solutions within the correctional facilities statewide. This \$14 million would provide the field support needed for these technology advancements.

Item 13 is related to the agency's implementation of the Centralized Accounting/Payroll Personnel System (CAPPS). This \$19.5 million would provide funding for software solutions that will integrate with CAPPS and maintain the necessary functionality of current business processes. It also includes providing community workstations within the correctional facilities to provide computer access for correctional officers.

Item 14 is \$1 million to provide the Office of Inspector General with a new crime management system that would enhance investigative capabilities and facilitate the sharing of information with the Special Prosecution Unit and Fusion Center.

Item 15 is for video surveillance equipment replacement. While maximum security facilities have a comprehensive video surveillance system, the remaining units utilize smaller outdated camera systems. This \$29.1 million would replace these analog cameras and cables with digital video systems.

Item 16 is for telephone system upgrades. Most of the telephone systems in the agency are well past end of life and are no longer supported by the vendor. This \$22 million would replace half of the 178 Legacy Telephone Systems with current technology.

Item 17 would continue the agency's efforts to bring broadband connectivity to the correctional facilities. The agency is finalizing projects that will bring broadband services to the facilities. This \$29.3 million would allow the agency to replace the Legacy copper cables with fiber that would bring the highspeed internet access throughout the unit where it is needed.

Last session, the Legislature provided funding for body-worn cameras for correctional staff working on 23 maximum security facilities. Item 18 would provide \$85.4 million to expand the use of body-worn cameras to the rest of the facilities statewide.

Electronic Control Devices, also known as tasers, are intended to de-escalate potentially violent situations. Item 19 would provide \$7.8 million to deploy these devices to sergeants on correctional facilities statewide and would be used in conjunction with the body-worn cameras.

Item 20 is \$6.6 million to construct Bachelor Officers' Quarters (BOQ) at the Clements Unit in Amarillo. The dormitory would house 80 employees in a double-occupancy suite arrangement. Currently, the Clements Unit only has 43% of its correctional officer positions filled, and this item would provide an additional resource to attract and retain staff.

Item 21 is \$190 million for the reopening of idle units and additional capacity at existing facilities. Consistent with the population projections from the Legislative Budget Board, the inmate population continues to increase. This increase has necessitated the reopening of the Garza East, Bartlett, and Gurney units during the current biennium. This request would provide the funding to operate these units and the additional capacity in the FY 2026–2027 biennium.

Item 22 is \$240 million to construct 12 expansion dorms capable of housing 4,800 inmates. This is also to accommodate the population projections. These dorms would be added to nine existing facilities where there is a strong labor pool. These beds would come with air conditioning.

Item 23 is \$404.5 million for the Correctional Managed Health Care. Of this amount, \$104.7 million would maintain current service levels. \$9.8 million would replace aging capital and pharmacy equipment. \$9.7 million would create a division for Employee Retention and Workforce Development within the University of Texas Medical Branch. \$11.3 million would provide for a 5% market adjustment for Texas Tech University Health Sciences employees. \$9.8 million would provide for additional dental, pharmacy, and medical health services staff, and \$259.2 million would address critical repair and restoration needs at Hospital Galveston.

Mr. Steffa stated that the biennial total of all exceptional items requested is approximately \$2,065,600,000 and reflects the needs and priorities of the agency. He expressed his appreciation to the board for consideration of these items and the continued support of the agency.

Chairman Nichols thanked Mr. Steffa and his staff for their report and briefings and asked for any questions from the board. Ms. Zuiker asked where the utilities increasing due to air conditioning is accounted for in the numbers presented. Mr. Steffa stated it is accounted for in the increased maintenance request. Pastor Nate Sprinkle asked if the 12 expansion dorms will be built during the two years if legislatively approved. Mr. Steffa stated the construction time is just beyond the two years. Mr. Collier stated the agency is working on the design currently to be ahead. Mr. Nichols asked for further explanation about the expansion dorms. Mr. Collier stated an expansion dorm typically houses approximately 400 inmates and is separate from the main part of the unit but within the perimeter fence. Since the expansion dorms are standalone, it is not necessary to alter the infrastructure of the main unit. At approximately \$20 million each, the legislature could approve funds for these dorms to address the expanding population at a location that is staffed. Chairman Nichols asked for any additional questions. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

General Bill Welch moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Fiscal Year 2025 Proposed Operating Budget and Fiscal Year 2026–2027 Legislative Appropriations Request as presented and authorize the executive director of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to make transfers as necessary and as authorized in the General Appropriations Act and other applicable laws.

Judge Molly Francis seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action **Regarding the Salary for the TDCJ Executive Director**

Chairman Nichols presented the discussion regarding the salary of the TDCJ Executive Director in accordance with the *General Appropriations Act* as passed by the 88th Texas Legislature. The board in its meetings over the years has evaluated and continues to evaluate Mr. Collier's performance and his contributions to the TDCJ and to the Texas community at large. Based on that consideration, the board considers the following action as outlined in a proposed letter to the Comptroller of the State of Texas. Chairman Nichols read the proposed letter detailing a salary level increase for Executive Director Bryan Collier for his outstanding performance.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments from members of the board regarding the salary for the TDCJ Executive Director. Chairman Nichols stated the board values Mr. Collier's

service as the Executive Director and how he has moved the agency forward toward servant leadership and building a sustainable team. Mr. Collier thanked the board and his team for their support. Mr. Nichols asked if there were any additional questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Dr. Rodney Burrow moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the salary of the Executive Director of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, as set forth and funded in the General Appropriations Act of the 88th Legislature, with an effective date of September 1, 2024.

Judge Faith Johnson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously when called to a vote.

Report from the Office of the Inspector General

Inspector General Cris Love presented a report on the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). He expressed his honor at serving the agency and the board and stated the TBCJ OIG was created to serve as the primary law enforcement and investigative entity for the TDCJ. The OIG is an independent state police agency that reports to the TBCJ. OIG investigators are certified Texas State Peace Officers, as authorized by the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure and licensed by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement.

Mr. Love shared new developments and programs within the OIG. The OIG implemented a strike force team which will work with the Criminal Investigations Operations Investigators assigned to the units and also the Special Operations Investigators to combat the introduction of illegal contraband into the prison units throughout the state. The team is comprised of a captain, lieutenant, eight criminal investigators, three digital forensic investigators, and three full-time crime analysts. The strike force team works and collaborates with the TDCJ Fusion Center and reports to OIG Criminal Investigative Operations Deputy Director Felicia Taylor. The team's responsibility is to initiate criminal investigations to assist criminal investigation operations in potentially complex and lengthy criminal network investigations and provide resources as these cases encompass various locations and suspects throughout the state. The strike force team's mission is to detect, deter, disrupt, and dismantle criminal networks.

As illegal drugs flow into Texas through the southern border, the TDCJ and OIG must find innovative methods to stop the introduction into the prison units. In 2022, the TDCJ opened the Fusion Center and, as tips and information funnel through the Fusion Center, the OIG disseminates the information through the appropriate regions throughout the state. The need for a more centralized team developed as criminal network intelligence grew. The OIG is streamlining shared intelligence with the Fusion Center. The objective is to expedite time-sensitive intelligence and coordinate with the appropriate strike force team. With all staff working together at the Fusion Center, TDCJ and OIG staff can quickly disseminate criminal investigative intelligence to OIG and TDCJ field offices and units throughout the state. In cooperation with TDCJ personnel, strike force investigators can and will provide expedited responses when intelligence regarding corrupt staff and contraband locations is received.

In addition to collaboration with TDCJ unit leadership and strike force team members, the OIG will work with state and local law enforcement to increase internal and external resources for attacking criminal networks and enforcing contraband interdiction throughout the state. The team has also initiated and developed numerous leads, tips, and informants that are pivotal in preventing contraband from being introduced into TDCJ facilities. The strike force team is dedicated to its mission and will continue to

develop new methods and strategies in conjunction with the Fusion Center to prevent the introduction of contraband.

Mr. Love provided an update on the Fugitive Ankle Monitor Violation Team. In September of 2023, Texas Penal Code § 38.112, Tampering with Electronic Monitoring Device, became law. This makes it a felony for a parolee to knowingly remove or disable the device. In conjunction with this law, the OIG was tasked with developing a team that focused on apprehending TDCJ parolees who violated this law and presenting the new charges to prosecutors throughout the state. OIG Special Operations staff quickly developed procedures and launched this program throughout the state. As of August 15, 2024, the OIG has received 374 ankle monitor violation notifications from TDCJ Parole. Of these, 253 were confirmed to have met the elements of the offense. 304 suspects have been arrested, and 54 of the suspects have been sentenced. The strike force team, Fugitive Ankle Monitor Violation Team, and OIG staff are committed to serving the TDCJ community and cooperating with TDCJ staff and leadership to ensure the success of these programs.

Chairman Nichols thanked Mr. Love and his teams for their work and commented on his experience with EPIC, the El Paso Intelligence Center, and asked for further information about it. Mr. Love stated his experience with EPIC reminded him of his time as a narcotics investigator with the Department of Public Safety (DPS). He said technology has improved greatly and being able to see and collaborate with the DPS was rewarding. He stated the OIG has a drone program, as drones are being used to deliver contraband. Chairman Nichols explained that EPIC is a federally funded intelligence center, which gathers intelligence on law enforcement operations and can provide a call-in center where law enforcement agencies can call and get real-time information. Judge Francis commended Mr. Love and his staff for their dedication and efforts. Ms. Zuiker asked if the OIG is receiving intelligence via Crime Stoppers. Mr. Love confirmed. Ms. Zuiker stated this was valuable as it remains anonymous.

Report from the Office of the Independent Ombudsman

Independent Ombudsman Brian Patrick presented a report on the Office of the Independent Ombudsman (OIO), encompassing the months of May 16th through July 15th of 2024. The OIO received 804 inquiries during this period that required substantive work.

The OIO responded to 762 inquiries from the public or an inmate and 42 elected official inquiries. The three most common inquiries received were related to life and safety; excessive and extreme temperature conditions; and facility related issues, which could be a maintenance issue or the physical structure of the facility. He stated the OIO also conducts respite checks while on site to investigate any facility related issues. The OIO often checks coolers to confirm ice water is available and interview the inmate population and staff to ensure air-conditioned areas are being utilized for respite.

Chairman Nichols expressed appreciation for the OIO investigating heat mitigation protocols. Mr. Nichols asked if the OIO has the resources necessary to conduct their work and if the OIO has experienced cooperation from the TDCJ. Mr. Patrick stated the units have always been cooperative, whether the OIO schedules time there or conducts an unannounced investigation. He stated the OIO received a quality control person, has the necessary resources, and is undergoing an audit through the Internal Audit. The quality control person will develop a plan for investigating and a checklist to ensure a complete report. Judge Johnson asked about the water issue at the Plane State Jail and if the OIO is comfortable with the results of that investigation. Mr. Patrick stated the Plane State Jail had equipment issues and the Facilities

Division had kitchen equipment repaired until that kitchen equipment can be replaced. He stated, based on the feedback from the unit, the OIO is satisfied with the results. Judge Johnson asked about the water issues at the Goree Unit. Mr. Patrick stated OIO staff investigated the unit and confirmed there was a problem. OIO staff, including Mr. Patrick, met with CID staff about access to drinking water and 10,000 bottled waters were purchased for the inmate population.

Report from the State Counsel for Offenders

State Counsel for Offenders (SCFO) Director Wyvonne Long presented an update on SCFO activities, to include recent accomplishments. The SCFO has hired four attorneys in the last year. On July 3, 2024, SCFO attorneys gathered at the gazebo at the Walker County Courthouse to celebrate Independence Day by reading the Declaration of Independence along with the Bill of Rights. This event is an annual tradition for the SCFO and is organized in conjunction with the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association. The SCFO is working with the Administrative Review and Risk Management Division to have more access to video visits with clients. This has been done at many units for the court system, but the SCFO needs to protect attorney/client privilege, as discussions concerning evidence or trial strategy may occur. Video visits would save money on travel expenses and be beneficial for SCFO staff. Judge Francis commented on the nature of an attorney visit, which often involves the client reviewing videos. Employee badges were changed to a white background signifying the SCFO reports directly to the board, which was informative for the clients.

Ms. Long presented an organizational structure of the SCFO and discussed the vacancies, including the law clerk positions, which are difficult to fill as seasonal positions. Legal Services has three attorney vacancies, even though these positions do not travel. Civil Defense has three staff attorney and one supervising attorney vacancies who travel around the state. Criminal Defense has one supervising attorney and two staff attorney vacancies. Although trials are not as likely in the criminal defense section, there are copious dockets across the state. The investigation section and appellate section are fully staffed.

Ms. Long reported quarterly statistics; presented pictures of and information about SCFO staff from administrative services, appellate section, civil defense section, criminal defense section, investigations section, and legal services; and displayed a map showcasing the travel conducted by the civil and criminal defense staff. Ms. Long concluded with positive commentary from Judge Brooks H. Hagler from Texas Judicial District 259 and Judge Earl B. Stover III from Texas Judicial District 88.

Chairman Nichols expressed appreciation for the SCFO who protect the rights of the incarcerated population and serve as legal counsel. He commended Judge Francis for her role as the head of the Legal Committee and her support for the initiative to expand the utilization of video visits. Judge Francis stated the agency's law libraries are receiving new laptops to keep up with technology. Mr. Nichols commented that the expansion of broadband access is a part of the Legislative Appropriations Request which will impact the availability of video visits.

Report from the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Ombudsman

PREA Ombudsman Cassandra McGilbra presented a report from the PREA Ombudsman office. She stated the PREA Ombudsman was established by the 80th Legislature in 2007 and is appointed by the

board. The PREA Ombudsman office was created to provide inmates, family and friends of inmates, and the public with an independent office to report sexual abuse and sexual harassment. The office also provides a confidential avenue for inmates to report PREA complaints and inquiries related to allegations of sexual abuse and sexual harassment. The PREA Ombudsman reports directly to the TBCJ Chairman.

Ms. McGilbra stated the PREA Ombudsman is a small office, consisting of the PREA Ombudsman, one Manager, seven Compliance Specialists, two Program Specialists, and two Administrative Assistants. The office believes in the integrity of its mission and works diligently to provide the TDCJ with a resource that is accessible and knowledgeable. She discussed the dual operations of the office, including inquiries and compliance. The inquiry process begins with an inquiry being received and processed, then forwarded to the unit for investigation. The PREA Ombudsman office reviews the investigation documentation provided by the unit and responds to the inquirer. The PREA Ombudsman office does have the authority to investigate the units on site for any PREA violations. The office will conduct an onsite investigation based on the nature of the allegations. The office has a response deadline of 30 days for inmate inquiries, 10 days for public inquiries, and five days for legislative inquiries. The PREA Ombudsman Program responded to 519 inquiries from April 2024 through June 2024, including 230 inquiries from the public, 288 inquiries from inmates, and one legislative inquiry.

The seven PREA Ombudsman Compliance Specialists have assisted with 11 PREA audits at Correctional Institution Division (CID) and Private Facility Contract Monitoring/Oversight Division (PFCMOD) facilities from April 2024 through August 2024. PREA Ombudsman staff are projected to assist with 46 PREA audits at CID, PFCMOD, and Community Justice Assistance Division (CJAD) facilities from September 2024 through July 2025. The audits will include 26 CID facilities, three PFCMOD facilities, three residential reentry or transitional treatment centers, and 14 CJAD facilities. Currently, the PREA Ombudsman office monitors and inspects 98 secure facilities, two intermediate sanction facilities, eight residential reentry centers, 16 transitional treatment centers, and 25 CJAD facilities. For PREA compliance, the office is responsible for monitoring two sets of PREA standards – Prison and Jail standards and Community Confinement standards. The Prison and Jail standards have 43 operational standards and seven auditing and state compliance standards. The Community Confinement standards have 39 operational standards and seven auditing and state compliance standards.

Chairman Nichols expressed his appreciation for her leadership and her staff.

TDCJ Parole Division Spotlight

Parole Division Director Rene Hinojosa introduced Parole Officer Julie Sanchez who has been with the agency for over five years. She began her career at a residential reentry center (RRC) where she assisted in the supervision of the RRC residents. In 2022, she was assigned to supervise a newly created administrative caseload. As part of the administrative caseload, she supervises clients who report to the Midland District Parole Office.

Ms. Sanchez thanked the board and Mr. Hinojosa for the opportunity to speak. She chose a career in parole for the opportunity to see the positive change in someone's life by providing resources and guidance. She stated this career has challenged her to grow personally and professionally while making a difference. The administrative caseload is geared to supervise clients who have been identified as the lowest risk for reoffending. It provides clients the opportunity to report to a parole officer virtually, reducing time and travel for the clients, which allows more time for them to focus on rehabilitation and family. She

introduced Mr. Eugene Junker as a good example of rehabilitation. He has been released since 2019, successfully completed drug and alcohol continuum of care, and is ahead on his supervision fee payments. He owns an RV park located in Midland, Texas and has maintained a full-time truck driver position since 2021. He is involved in his community by volunteering through his church and Pop-up Food Distribution program. The program provides food every third Saturday of each month to the disadvantaged people in the Midland and Odessa areas.

Mr. Junker shared his experience with addiction and being incarcerated and stated he made the decision to change for his family. He stated the TDCJ drug program, aftercare tools, the Word of God, parole structure, and accountability changed his way of thinking. He responds differently to people and difficult situations. He stated this transformation is a lifelong process. His life and relationships have greatly improved as a result of these changes. He has been voted a board member at his church and is part of an outreach ministry that provides food and clothing to families in need, as well as some of the homeless population in Midland. He stated he and his wife manage and own, debt free, an RV park and own an 18-wheeler leased to a local oil field hauling company. He maintains a current travel pass for this so he can travel back and forth to New Mexico, and this process has been streamlined by his parole officer. He stated his past does not define who he is today and five years on parole has not been an issue because of his efforts to change.

Chairman Nichols thanked Mr. Junker for attending and stated it takes courage and confidence to step forward and speak to show there is a pathway forward. Mr. Nichols commended the Parole Division for creating efficient processes and different levels of supervision for individuals on parole based on the level of risk.

Team Supervision Pilot Presentation

Parole Division Director Rene Hinojosa presented information on the Team Supervision Pilot. Mr. Hinojosa discussed the current supervision practices. There are over 75,000 parolees with approximately 1,150 parole officers available. One parole officer has one caseload and is responsible for all tasks, whether the caseload has 15 parolees or 150. When that model was created, it made sense as there were no staffing issues. Caseloads are determined by a client's risk, needs, and special conditions. Caseload types are regular, therapeutic community, special needs offender program, sex offender, electronic monitoring, super intensive supervision program, and residential reentry centers (RRCs). The largest caseload is regular which includes District Re-entry Centers (DRCs) and requires anger management or cognitive intervention for the clients. The clients also must attend the Victim Impact Panel. Therapeutic Community is the most intensive substance use program available. Special Needs Offender Program receives support from TCOOMMI. Sex Offender caseloads receive support from contracted programs. Electronic Monitoring is for clients who have curfews and are electronically monitored. The Super Intensive Supervision Program is for clients who are monitored by GPS and is the highest level of supervision. Lastly, the RRCs house residents at eight RRCs across the state.

In 2020, COVID created a challenge for the Parole Division, depleting staffing. Parolees could not come into the office and staff could not enter a parolee's home, which caused difficulties for supervision. Technology was used to supervise clients. Mr. Hinojosa discussed the evolution of supervision techniques. The administrative caseload was created in April 2022, allowing clients to be supervised virtually, and was implemented statewide in December 2022 at 67 offices. This allows for effective supervision of low-risk clients. This allowed parole officers to be utilized where needed, such as with high-risk clients. This

means parole officers could supervise low-risk clients remotely, allowing parole officers to cover more locations.

Mr. Hinojosa discussed the Task-Oriented Pilot launched in August 2023. Nine offices across the state participated, including Athens, Austin I, Austin II, Big Spring, Midland, Odessa, Fort Worth I, Houston II, and Houston VII. Parole Officers are assigned specific tasks by supervisors based on needs. Tasks include intake, the Texas Risk Assessment System, office functions, field functions, resource programming, and pre-revocation. All of these tasks were done by specifically trained parole officers. Management responsibilities include meeting with parole officers daily to ensure all tasks are delegated, following up weekly to ensure assignment completion, and ensuring parole officers rotate through each task. The key take aways are staff-to-task ratio, assignment rotation, and work schedule flexibility. Research and Development provided statistics which showed the initial post-pilot results. Reportable violations decreased 5%, warrant issuance decreased 4%, unemployment rate decreased 2%, and arrest rate decreased 1%. Mr. Hinojosa thanked Mr. Collier for his progressive leadership.

Chairman Nichols asked Mr. Hinojosa where he sees the Parole Division going now that the pilot program has been implemented. Mr. Hinojosa said there are 15 offices identified to continue this task-oriented structure. Mr. Nichols asked if there were community partners who were providing technology for those clients who did not have access to a smartphone. Mr. Hinojosa stated there are grants that will help clients qualify for a cellphone. Mr. Nichols expressed encouragement for anyone looking to make a difference in criminal justice reform to consider supporting programs like these. Mr. Collier stated casework is a tough business and staff turnover rate made it rare for an individual to have one parole officer throughout supervision. He stated these programs challenge the culture in a positive way and have been proven effective.

Wave Millimeter and X-Ray Body Scanner Presentation

Correctional Institutions Division (CID) Director Bobby Lumpkin presented information on the millimeter wave and X-ray body scanner technology. Previously, the agency was funded with \$8 million for security equipment in support of detecting contraband. There are 20 millimeter wave body scanners to be used at ingress and egress points for staff and 27 X-ray body scanners to be used for inmates arriving or departing the unit. Both will be deployed at high contraband units. These will operate in conjunction with other contraband detection equipment, such as metal detectors and parcel scanners. There are more X-ray body scanners, as one will be placed at multiple ingress and egress points for inmates on the units. Two millimeter wave body scanners have already been deployed and are in use at the Polunsky and Stiles units.

Mr. Lumpkin stated the millimeter wave body scanners are similar to the ones used in airports. Hexwave uses millimeter wave technology, 3D imaging, and artificial intelligence. It detects metallic and non-metallic contraband concealed on individuals and will be installed at the entry points of 22 high contraband units and five expansion cellblocks to scan individuals. Mr. Lumpkin explained active threat monitoring and presented an example graphic. It is not intrusive and does protect the privacy and modesty of those being scanned. This device does not involve radiation, as the Texas Department of State Health Services does not allow X-ray body scanners to be used on visitors. When no threat is detected, the panels display the solid green “all clear” light and the system resets for the next person to be screened. When a threat is detected, a visual alert appears on the avatar showing the threat location.

The X-ray body scanner detects metallic and non-metallic contraband and threats concealed on or inside individuals. It will be utilized within the facility or at the back gate to scan inmates during ingress and egress. Mr. Lumpkin presented example graphics for threat detection using an X-ray scanner. These scanners will track how often an individual is exposed to radiation. An individual may be exposed to up to 25 millirems of radiation a year, which is approximately 250 scans. It also has the capability to conduct pseudo-scans, so the individual will not know if a scan is being conducted or not. The individual viewing the readout will be of the same gender as the individual being scanned. The agency has a mobile X-ray body scanner which has been used for searches across the state. It has been able to detect a hand restraint key that has been swallowed. For the X-ray body scanner, onsite operation training is conducted at each facility for up to 20 people selected by the warden, including image interpretation training and radiation safety training. A dedicated Radiation Safety Officer will be designated by State Health Services. The viewing station will be in the same room as the body scanner, just outside of the radiation zone. The vertical scanning process ensures the lowest amount of radiation on the body.

Mr. Lumpkin stated all staff, visitors, and volunteers are required to be scanned using the millimeter wave body scanning technology. A process for any staff, visitor, or volunteer who refuses is already in place, as walk-through metal detectors are being used currently. If an inmate refuses a scan, the inmate will be charged with a Level 2, Code 24.5 disciplinary offense. When the scanner alerts to possible contraband, a security supervisor shall immediately be notified. The individual may be subject to an additional search. Mr. Lumpkin stated the disciplinary rules are in revision and will be presented at the October TBCJ meeting. He stated five X-ray body scanners are onsite but not in use yet. The millimeter wave body scanners have not been received, but a plan has been developed for receiving them soon.

Chairman Nichols asked when all of this equipment will be in place and functioning. Mr. Lumpkin stated within the next six months.

Engaging the Field Presentation

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Research and Development Director Andrew Barbee was unable to attend the meeting and will present information on engaging the field at a future meeting.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Facilities Division Construction Projects

Request to Replace Plumbing and Controls at 3, 4, 7, 10, and 11 Bldgs. — Inmate Housing, Connally Unit, Karnes County, Kenedy, Texas

Facilities Division Director Ron Hudson presented a new project for consideration which includes the installation of a water conservation system at the Connally Unit as briefed during the Business and Financial Operations Committee Meeting. The total estimated program cost is \$12,142,700.

Chairman Nichols reminded the board about the discussion on water conservation and cost savings discussed previously. Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Ambassador Sichan Siv moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to replace plumbing and controls at 3, 4, 7, 10, and 11 buildings for inmate housing at the Connally Unit, Karnes County, Kenedy, Texas, as presented.

Dr. Rodney Burrow seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

Request to Replace Plumbing and Controls at 8, 12, 18, and 19 Bldgs. — Inmate Housing, Connally Unit, Karnes County, Kenedy, Texas

Mr. Hudson presented a new project for consideration which includes the installation of a water conservation system at the Connally Unit as briefed during the Business and Financial Operations Committee Meeting. The total estimated program cost is \$12,743,600.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Pastor Nate Sprinkle moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to replace plumbing and controls at 8, 12, 18, and 19 buildings for inmate housing at the Connally Unit, Karnes County, Kenedy, Texas, as presented.

General Bill Welch seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

Request to Install Monitored Pulse Fence Detection System — Perimeter, Allred Unit, Wichita County, Iowa Park, Texas

Mr. Hudson presented a new project for consideration which includes the installation of a non-lethal electric fence perimeter detection system at the Allred Unit as briefed during the Business and Financial Operations Committee Meeting. The total estimated program cost is \$6,272,700.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Sydney Zuiker moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to install monitored pulse fence detection system, perimeter, at the Allred Unit, Wichita County, Iowa Park, Texas, as presented.

Judge Molly Francis seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

Request to Install Monitored Pulse Fence Detection System — Perimeter, McConnell Unit, Bee County, Beeville, Texas

Mr. Hudson presented a new project for consideration which includes the installation of a non-lethal electric fence perimeter detection system at the McConnell Unit as briefed during the Business and Financial Operations Committee Meeting. The total estimated program cost is \$5,727,400.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Dr. Rodney Burrow moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to install monitored pulse fence detection system, perimeter, at the McConnell Unit, Bee County, Beeville, Texas, as presented.

Pastor Nate Sprinkle seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

Request to Install Monitored Pulse Fence Detection System — Perimeter, Robertson Unit, Jones County, Abilene, Texas

Mr. Hudson presented a new project for consideration which includes the installation of a non-lethal electric fence perimeter detection system at the Robertson Unit as briefed during the Business and Financial Operations Committee Meeting. The total estimated program cost is \$5,743,400.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Judge Faith Johnson moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to install monitored pulse fence detection system, perimeter, at the Robertson Unit, Jones County, Abilene, Texas, as presented.

Sydney Zuiker seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action
Regarding Proposed Land Transactions

Request for a New Gas Pipeline Easement, Gist Unit, Jefferson County, Beaumont, Texas

Bill Lewis, Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Logistics Division Director, presented the request of Linde Inc. for a new pipeline easement at the Gist Unit for one twenty-inch pipeline. The easement request includes an area of approximately 3.37 acres or 4,888.69 feet (296.28 rods) long by 30 feet wide to transport hydrogen gas. The easement request also includes 10.80 acres of additional temporary workspace. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area. Linde Inc. has agreed to pay \$746,100 in compensation for the new pipeline easement and the temporary workspaces for a ten-year term. The easement includes language requiring indemnification as the grantee's responsibility and the most-favored-nation clause. The easement has been negotiated at current geographical appraisal value.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

General Bill Welch moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request for a new gas pipeline easement at the Gist Unit, Jefferson County, Beaumont, Texas, as presented.

Judge Faith Johnson seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

Request for a New Gas Pipeline Easement, Stiles Unit, Jefferson County, Beaumont, Texas

General Bill Welch abstained from taking action on this agenda item due to being a shareholder with the entity listed.

Mr. Lewis presented the request of Energy Transfer Pipelines LP for a new pipeline easement at the Stiles Unit for one six-inch pipeline. The easement request includes an area of approximately 94.185 square feet or 188.37 feet (11.42 rods) long by 6 inches wide to transport natural gas liquids. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area. Energy Transfer has agreed to pay \$30,191.50 for a ten-year term. This serves as the initial request. The easement includes language requiring indemnification as the grantee’s responsibility and the most-favored-nation clause. The easement has been negotiated at current geographical appraisal value.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Thomas Fordyce moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request for a new gas pipeline easement at the Stiles Unit, Jefferson County, Beaumont, Texas, as presented.

Dr. Rodney Burrow seconded the motion, which unanimously passed when called to a vote.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Nichols thanked everyone for attending the meeting and announced that the next meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice will be Friday, October 11, 2024, in Bryan, Texas, and adjourned the 236th meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice at 1:56 p.m.

Chairman*

Secretary*

* Signature on File