

**Texas Board of Criminal Justice
237th Meeting**



Minutes

**October 11, 2024
Bryan, Texas**

TEXAS BOARD OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

**The Stella Hotel
4100 Lake Atlas Dr.
Bryan, Texas 77807**

**Friday, October 11, 2024
8:45 AM – 12:00 PM**

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Call to Order

Convene Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ) Meeting – Recess to Executive Session

I. Executive Session – Orion Boardroom

- 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).

Recess Texas Board of Criminal Justice Meeting

Reconvene Texas Board of Criminal Justice Meeting

II. Regular Session – Celeste Ballroom

- A. Recognitions
- B. Consideration of Approval of Consent Items
 - 1. Hazardous Duty Pay Authorization Requests
 - 2. Personal Property Donations
 - 3. 236th TBCJ Meeting Minutes
- C. Report from the Presiding Officer, Judicial Advisory Council
- D. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Readoption of Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 161.21, “Role of the Judicial Advisory Council”
- E. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Amendments to GR-106, “Disciplinary Rules and Procedures for Inmates”
- F. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Annual Review of Board Policy 14.01, “Texas Department of Criminal Justice Investment Policy,” and Resolution Adopting the Investment Policy
- G. Report from the Chairman, TBCJ
- H. Report from the Executive Director, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)
- I. Overview of Sunset Review
- J. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding TDCJ Organizational Structure and Renaming of Divisions
- K. Internal Audit Status Report
- L. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Renaming of the Internal Audit Division
- M. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Purchases and Contracts Over \$1 Million
- 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

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

- S. Engaging the Field Presentation
- T. Manufacturing, Agribusiness, and Logistics Production Overview
- U. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Land Transaction – Request to Renew a Natural Gas Pipeline Easement, Ramsey Unit, Brazoria County, Rosharon, Texas
- V. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Facilities Division Construction Projects – Request to Install HVAC – Inmate Housing (Design Only), McConnell Unit, Bee County, Beeville, Texas

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. 237**

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice convened on Friday, October 11, 2024, in regular session at 9:12 a.m. at the Stella Hotel in Bryan, Texas, recessed in executive session at 9:16 a.m., reconvened in regular session at 10:37 a.m., and adjourned at 1:53 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
Andrew Barbee Ron Hudson
Chris Carter Bill Lewis
Jason Clark Bobby Lumpkin
Tina Clark Angie McCown
Marvin Dunbar Ron Steffa
Carey Green Rebecca Waltz
Stephanie Greger David Yebra
Rene Hinojosa April Zamora

TBCJ STAFF PRESENT:

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

Marsha Moberley, Board of Pardons and Paroles
Tim McDonald, Board of Pardons and Paroles

Convene the Texas Board of Criminal Justice

Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols convened the 237th meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ or board) on Friday, October 11, 2024, at 9:12 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 recessed to executive session at 9:16 a.m. and reconvened in regular session at 10:37 a.m.

Chairman Nichols recognized Dr. Cliff Lamb, Director of the Texas A&M AgriLife Research Department, as a tremendous partner for his assistance with the agency's agribusiness programs. Mr. Nichols then

recognized Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP) Chair Marsha Moberly for her new role as Chair and recognized Tim McDonald, Chief of Staff for the BPP.

Mr. Nichols explained that the board is wearing purple ribbons in honor of former board member, Derrellynn Perryman, and in recognition of a cause that she always held dear, support of victims of domestic violence, as the month of October is Domestic Violence Awareness month. Domestic Violence has affected and continues to affect communities across Texas. Such violence results from a pattern of physical, sexual, and/or psychological abuse. Some of the many costs to victims and to children of victims include increased incidents of depression, acute and chronic health and mental health conditions, developmental issues, and aggressive or delinquent behavior. In 2023, 205 Texans were killed by intimate partners in 64 counties in Texas. Twelve others were injured, and 218 adults and minor children lost a parent. Sometimes, there is a stereotyped narrative around domestic violence, but this issue, much like any other, cannot and should not be stereotyped. Each incident of domestic violence impacts one or more individual human beings. 179 of those murdered in a domestic violence incident were women and 26 were men. The mission of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice that the board supports includes, as a core element, protection and support of crime victims. The Texas criminal justice system plays a significant role in addressing domestic violence by, among other things, holding domestic violence offenders accountable for their actions, enhancing victim safety, disrupting the cycle of violence resulting in intervention opportunities for victims and offenders, breaking the generational cycle and learned effect of domestic violence on children including cycles of multi- and generational incarceration, and sending an important message that there will be real consequences for committing acts of domestic violence. Thus, during this month, the board not only recognizes victims of domestic violence, but see and hear them. Mr. Nichols stated the men and women of the TDCJ will continue to work with and support the victims.

Sydney Zuiker stated roughly one in two women in the United States and approximately two out of five men experience intimate partner violence and report it. This means each and every person knows someone who is currently experiencing some form of domestic violence or has experienced it in the past or will experience it in the future. Domestic violence is a pervasive issue that goes under reported and has a significant stigma. It does not target a singular race or socioeconomic status or gender, as it can happen to anyone. During recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness month, people must educate themselves and advocate for change. The mission of the TDCJ is to provide public safety, promote positive change in offender behavior, reintegrate offenders into society, and assist victims of crime. This means the agency has a clearly established and critical role to play in preventing future domestic violence, by providing rehabilitative services to the inmate population that may have perpetuated violence in the past and restorative services to those in the agency's care, including staff who may have experienced such forms of victimization. Each statistic discussed today represent a person whose story was cut short or who lived a life in fear or experienced the loss of a life. Behind every number is a survivor who deserves support, compassion, and understanding. It is crucial to create space safes for these individuals to find resources to heal and rebuild both inside the prison and for reentry into society. Ms. Zuiker shared her experience as a victim of domestic partner violence and how difficult it was to seek help. Breaking the stigmas of domestic violence victims gives the survivors a voice. Chairman Nichols thanked Ms. Zuiker for her comments and her courage.

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." No registration cards were received for public comment prior to the deadline, so the board will not hear public presentations on posted agenda topics.

Recognitions

Chairman Nichols recognized the TDCJ employees who have dedicated 25, 30, 35, 40, and 45 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 September and October 2024, 66 employees attained 25 years of service, 41 employees attained 30 years of service, 8 employees attained 35 years of service, ten employees attained 40 years of service, and one employee attained 45 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)

Executive Director Bryan Collier recognized Deputy Executive Director Oscar Mendoza for his 45 years of service. Mr. Collier highlighted Mr. Mendoza's career, which began in 1979 as a Correctional Officer at the Wainwright Unit. He stated Mr. Mendoza consistently invests in other agency leaders and has developed multiple training initiatives, including Deputy Division Director Leadership programs, and has also worked on the agency's suicide reduction efforts and the staff wellness initiatives. Over the last five years, Mr. Mendoza has attended training to become a certified personal executive coach. He has used those skills to assist the Training and Leader Development Division (TLDD) in developing coaching components for leadership programs. Mr. Mendoza continues to strive to improve the agency's culture through his interactions with other divisions. His experience combined with his passion for the agency and its employees continues to be an example for others. Mr. Collier thanked Mr. Mendoza's family for their sacrifice in allowing Mr. Mendoza to serve the agency. Mr. Mendoza received a standing ovation in recognition of his service. Chairman Nichols thanked Mr. Mendoza for his selfless dedication to the state and the agency.

Mr. Mendoza thanked the board and Mr. Collier for the recognition and expressed his honor at serving the men and women of the agency. He specifically thanked Mr. Collier for the highlight of his career serving as the Deputy Executive Director. He thanked his family for their support and continuing to stand behind him on this journey. Judge Johnson asked Mr. Mendoza's family to stand and be recognized.

CJAD Director Carey Green recognized Sheral Johnson for her recent promotion to Deputy Division Director. Ms. Green stated Ms. Johnson brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the position. Ms. Johnson believes in embracing opportunities for growth and has been a committed employee of this agency for more than twenty years. Ms. Green highlighted Ms. Johnson's career, which began as a Correctional Officer at the Ferguson and Ramsey units. Her courage to challenge processes and her perseverance has improved CJAD and the agency. She has a bachelor's degree in Sociology and Criminal Justice and a Master of Science degree in Administration of Justice and Security. She is a valuable member of CJAD and will continue to be a source of strength and positivity. Her experience within four different divisions will bring a diverse perspective to CJAD. Chairman Nichols congratulated her on her new position and expressed his appreciation for her contributions.

Ms. Johnson expressed her gratitude for the recognition. She considers it an honor to serve in this role and stated the work is a reflection of her individual efforts and also the collective dedication of the agency. She stated this recognition affirms the importance of collaboration, vision, and a shared commitment for

excellence. She thanked God, Ms. Green, her TDCJ family, and her family and friends who have invested in her development both professionally and personally.

Parole Division Director Rene Hinojosa recognized recently promoted Parole Region IV Director Kristina Ramirez. Mr. Hinojosa stated she will oversee the central and south region of the state, which includes fifteen parole offices and approximately 17,000 parole clients. Region IV is the second largest region in the Parole Division, based on the parole client population and the geographic area. It is also one of the most critically understaffed regions currently. Mr. Hinojosa highlighted her career, which began as a Parole Officer at the Corpus Christ Parole Office. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology with a minor in Criminal Justice from the Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi. Mr. Hinojosa described her as a focused leader who cares passionately about her staff. Ms. Ramirez expressed her honor for the opportunity and thanked her leadership for the continued support. She stated it is a privilege to serve the agency and will continue to uphold the agency’s mission.

Consideration of Approval of Consent Items

- 1. Hazardous Duty Pay Authorization Requests**
- 2. Personal Property Donations**
- 3. 236th 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.

Report from the Presiding Officer, Judicial Advisory Council

Jasper County Community Supervision Corrections Department (CSCD) Director Christopher Thomas presented a report on behalf of the Judicial Advisory Council (JAC) and chairwoman District Court Judge Rose Reyna. On behalf of the JAC, he expressed its sincere gratitude for the support of the board and for approving the exceptional item request, which was outlined in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026—2027 Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR) submitted to the Legislative Budget Board (LBB). He stated the JAC is deeply appreciative of the LAR and funding allocated for CSCD staff salary increases and operational needs. These are critical to maintaining the high level of supervision and services that the community expects. The most recent JAC meeting was October 1st in conjunction with the 52nd Annual Chiefs Leadership Conference in Galveston. This gathering provided an excellent opportunity to engage closely with the probation field and hear the current challenges facing local departments. Additionally, the Correctional Management Institute of Texas hosted a breakfast for the JAC as well as members of the Probation Advisory Committee. This event facilitated and opened dialogue between the two bodies, offering a unique insight from both perspectives. During the formal JAC meeting, CJAD Director Carey Green presented on the Sunset Review Report, and the JAC commended Ms. Green and CJAD for the continued support and efforts provided to the 122 CSCDs, highlighting the division’s success in overseeing the decentralized system. The JAC agenda included an overview of substance use continuum of care. Speakers included CJAD Deputy Division Director Sheral Johnson, who introduced an overview of the Probation DWI Intervention Pilot Program, and Directors Debbie Rowland from Taylor County CSCD and Kelly Doyal from Harris County CSCD, who presented updates on the local community corrections facilities. Lastly, Manager Andrea Canul from the TDCJ Rehabilitation and Programs Division presented information on the state’s intermediate sanction facilities and Substance Abuse Felony

Punishment Facilities. The goal remains to keep the system in balance. The JAC stands ready to assist the board in any way necessary. Chairman Nichols thanked Mr. Thomas for his report and stated the partnership between the board and the JAC is extremely important. He also stated the board would continue to support efforts to increase salaries for the hardworking men and women in the field.

**Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding
Proposed Readoption of Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code
Section 161.21, “Role of the Judicial Advisory Council”**

General Counsel Stephanie Greger presented Board Rule 161.21, “Role of the Judicial Advisory Council,” for readoption with no changes. Notice of this rule review was published in the August 16, 2024, issue of the *Texas Register*. 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.

Judge Faith Johnson moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice readopt Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 161.21, “Role of the Judicial Advisory Council,” 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.

**Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed
Amendments to GR-106, “Disciplinary Rules and Procedures for Inmates”**

General Counsel Stephanie Greger presented GR-106, “Disciplinary Rules and Procedures for Inmates,” for proposed amendments. BP-01.01, “Texas Board of Criminal Justice Responsibilities,” requires board review for amendments to this item. The proposed amendments revise offender to inmate throughout; add respite as a reason inmates on cell restriction may be permitted to leave the cell; remove time earning class and custody classification from elements required to be included on the Disciplinary Report and add the inmate’s unit of assignment to the report; remove language stating disciplinary hearings for offenders sentenced to a prison but assigned in transfer status to a state jail shall be conducted in accordance with the grade assigned and under applicable hearing procedures; section I.E is relocated to I.A.4 for clarity; revised language in section VIII for the broader phrase of “refuse to comply with grooming standards”; removed an inmate escape as an example in section XII; added offense 6.1, “Concealment of a Weapon,” to level one offenses; revised offense 8.0, “Riot,” to include seven or more inmates; revised title of offense 33.0 to “Providing false or misleading information”; revised title of offense 41.0 to “Creating excessive or disruptive noise; added language to offense 14.0, “Use or possession of any intoxicating inhalants,” to include unknown substances and tobacco products; added offense 24.5, “Refusing to submit to a scan via body scanning technology,” as a level two offense; added language to offense 30.0 to specify communicating in code utilizing the inmate telephone system, a tablet, or any other form of correspondence; added language to offense 37.0 stating this can include requesting money be sent to mobile payment services, such as Cash App or Venmo; and made grammatical and formatting updates.

Chairman Nichols asked if Ms. Greger had been coordinating on these changes with the appropriate divisions, including the Correctional Institutions Division (CID). Ms. Greger confirmed, stating the Office of the General Counsel coordinated closely with the CID over the last few months. Mr. Nichols asked if the proposed amendments are needed to adjust for ever-changing technologies. Ms. Greger confirmed. 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 amendments to GR-106, "Disciplinary Rules and Procedures for Inmates," as presented.

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

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Annual Review of Board Policy BP-14.01, "Investment Policy," and Resolution Adopting the Investment Policy

General Counsel Stephanie Greger presented proposed amendments to BP-14.01 (rev. 21), "Investment Policy," and resolution to adopt. She stated the policy was reviewed and minor revisions to the date and revision number were made to reflect the annual review required by BP-01.01, "Texas Board of Criminal Justice Responsibilities."

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 Annual Review of Board Policy, BP-14.01 (rev. 21), "Investment Policy," and Resolution Adopting the Investment Policy, as presented, and that the Chairman sign the Resolution Adopting the Investment Policy.

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

Report from the Chairman, TBCJ

Chairman Nichols recognized the Peer Support Recovery Program at the Hamilton Unit, a facility located in Bryan, Texas. One important objective of TDCJ is providing inmates the tools necessary to succeed in sobriety, both while incarcerated and when returning to their communities. Chairman Nichols recognized two outstanding TDCJ employees and supervisors who are actively working in a peer support recovery structure to help members of the population at the Hamilton Unit in their recovery journeys and prepare inmates for release.

Mr. Nichols introduced Winston Wynne, Peer Support Supervisor. Mr. Wynne is a native of Huntsville and has been dedicated to serving TDCJ since 2010. With a wealth of experience in the field, he currently holds the dual roles of Peer Support Supervisor and Substance Abuse Counselor III. A cornerstone of the Peer Support Recovery Program for the past three years, his leadership style, as characterized by others

in TDCJ, is based on empowerment and teamwork. Mr. Wynne is passionate about guiding and supporting inmate coaches to help their peers overcome challenges. By breaking down barriers and fostering a collaborative environment, he plays a pivotal role in facilitating group sessions, providing resources, and developing comprehensive plans to aid individuals both within and outside of prison.

Mr. Nichols recognized Dalores Riley, Program Supervisor VII, for her profound impact on the individuals suffering from addiction, as a Substance Use Counselor and dedicated program supervisor for the Peer Support Recovery Program. Her professional path led her to the TDCJ in 1994, where she initially worked at the Eastham Unit (now the Wainwright Unit). Over the years, her commitment to helping others grew, culminating in her current role as a Peer Support Coach Program Supervisor VII. With over fifteen years of experience as a substance use counselor, she brings a wealth of knowledge and passion to her work. As described by her colleagues, her leadership style is characterized by self-empowerment, collaboration, and a strong belief in the potential of every individual, and it is clear that rehabilitation and recovery have to be done on an individual basis. Every individual has a unique journey through recovery from addiction. Ms. Riley fosters a supportive and encouraging environment where individuals can learn, grow, and achieve their goals. In her work, she is brave enough to share her own life experiences and understands how powerful it is to share those life experiences. As a Program Supervisor for the Peer Support Coach program, she is instrumental in creating a community of recovery within TDCJ.

Mr. Wynne stated the Peer Support Recovery Program is an innovative program that educates and trains qualified inmates to serve as role models and support for inmates who want to maintain a healthy drug- and alcohol-free lifestyle. Once trained, those inmates travel to different units to either establish a Recovery Housing Opportunity Program, also known as RHOP, or join an existing RHOP as a coach. Currently, there are twelve RHOPs across the state. There are currently eleven peer support coaches at the Hamilton Unit. Four will soon leave to establish the 13th RHOP at the Bartlett Unit upon reopening. To become a Peer Support Coach, inmates must apply to the program, and then eligible inmates are selected to attend the training. This course teaches trainees about recovery issues and how to help other inmates achieve recovery through sharing lived experience. After the initial 46-hour class, trainees undergo 500 hours of staff-supervised work experience, followed by an exam and a 25-hour practicum to demonstrate proficiency. Upon successful completion, the trainee will receive peer support credentials through the Texas Certification Board. Once credentials are received, the trainee will become a full-time Peer Support Coach and use the skills gained during training to inspire their peers. In addition to helping others, this opportunity serves as a steppingstone for inmates who are interested in continuing education for a future career in the field of recovery following release. After completing the six-month program internship, Peer Support Coaches are assigned to specific units to serve their peers through RHOP.

Ms. Riley stated the RHOP program is a year-long, structured environment that offers curriculum designed to increase participants' awareness of self-defeating behaviors, promote healthy habits, and equip individuals with the necessary tools for positive behavioral change. Peer support coaches work with inmates to offer necessary education, resources, and support to maintain recovery. Peer coaches deliver curriculum in Anger Management, Staying Sober, Drugs & Alcohol in the Brain, Relapse Prevention, Personal Growth, Responsible Thinking, and Victim Impact. RHOP operates under a zero-tolerance policy, but not just for substance use. Fighting, stealing, and gambling are also not tolerated. Participants in the program also undergo random and frequent drug testing as a major component of the zero-tolerance policy. One of the most significant benefits of RHOP is that it provides participants with a clean and sober living environment, but also the resources and support to maintain sobriety long-term. The program fosters a community where individuals can learn from one another, hold each other accountable, and experience the transformation necessary for lasting recovery. She expressed her love and belief in the work and thanked the board for their support.

Chairman Nichols thanked them for sharing about the impressive work done at the Hamilton Unit, which is reflective of similar peer recovery programs being carried out across the agency. Chairman Nichols then introduced, via Teams, Scott Michael Flynn, an inmate participant of the Peer Recovery Support Program.

Mr. Flynn thanked the board and stated he had the appearance of regular guy despite the unusual circumstances. He stated it is impossible to see the childhood trauma, dysfunctional family system, or the addiction. From 1997 to 2010, he was in and out of prison and stayed intoxicated and sick. In 2011, he was in court again while on probation and parole at the time. His attorney explained that if he could not tell the judge why he relapsed then he would be going to prison for three years. Mr. Flynn stated he did not know why he relapsed, and three years in prison sounded like hope. After detoxing in jail, he signed up for the Alcoholics Anonymous pod. He acquired a sponsor, worked the program, and stayed out of trouble. Upon release, his sponsor picked him up instead of old friends. Instead of his old neighborhood, he chose a faith-based recovery house. He became a volunteer in the Dallas County Jail and a TDCJ volunteer. During the holidays of 2014, he suffered complications from a routine dental procedure and oral surgery was needed. He was prescribed opiates for the pain and he lost control. On January 11, 2015, he was intoxicated and ran a red light, causing the death of an innocent person. He was sentenced to 25 years in prison and has currently served nine years. He stated he wished he could say he was a model inmate from day one, but that would not be the truth. Even though he was on the Dean's List in college, he continued to make poor choices in prison. In 2019, he drank a gallon of homemade alcohol and blacked out. He spoke about the shame he felt when another inmate stood over him and reminded him that he killed someone while drinking. He stated he prayed that day and has not touched a drink or drug since then. In 2021, he was training at the Hamilton Unit to become a Texas Board Certified Peer Support Coach. He was assigned to the Michael Unit and assisted in establishing the first RHOP. He described RHOP as a simple concept, creating a safe and drug-free environment where people with real issues can get better. RHOP graduates are doing better. The first graduating class cultivated ten mentors, three self-harm prevention inmates, one field minister accepted into the seminary at the Memorial Unit, one Peer Support Coach who serves at the Estes Unit, and one is training at the Hamilton Unit. He stated a new culture is being created in the prison system by offering rehabilitation on the front-end of incarceration and realistic reform. He stated serving as a Peer Support Coach has changed the way he serves time but also his life. It has given him hope and empowered him to empower other inmates. Currently, the program is in 12 prisons across the state, and RHOPs are available at both male and female facilities. He stated, with the support of the board and the agency, there is no limit to how far the participants can go and will make rehabilitation the next big thing for the TDCJ.

Mr. Flynn received a standing ovation for his story. Chairman Nichols described Mr. Flynn as courageous for sharing his experience and commented on the powerful nature of the Peer Support Recovery Program. Mr. Nichols thanked Mr. Flynn for his testimony and thanked Mr. Wynne and Ms. Riley for their presentation.

Report from the Executive Director,
Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Executive Director Bryan Collier provided an update on the Tuition Reimbursement program and the Sunset Review Process.

Tuition Reimbursement

Mr. Collier thanked the board for the Tuition Reimbursement program, which was adopted into policy last October. Since the agency initiated the program last year, tuition reimbursement has been provided to 37 employees, with four employees receiving assistance for more than one semester. A total of \$125,528 dollars has been disbursed for tuition reimbursement, which was halfway to the agency's goal. The agency will begin reviewing applications for the Spring 2025 semester later this month. As the agency enters year two of the program, criteria will be modified to allow employees with as little as one year of service to qualify, and the application process will be simplified. These changes will make the process more efficient yet also increase the number of employees the agency can serve with this benefit. The agency's communications team will be including a new social media campaign to help ensure staff are aware of the program changes to increase interest. Mr. Collier thanked the board again for passing the policy and allowing the agency to offer this unique benefit to its employees.

Sunset Review Process

Next, Mr. Collier updated the board on the Sunset Review Process. He stated the agency recently received the Sunset Commission Staff Review Report which outlines the findings and recommendations from the Sunset Staff. The agency has thoroughly reviewed the findings and recommendations and have provided a written response to the Sunset Commission Staff. The agency will appear before the Sunset Commission on November 14th in Austin to address the findings in the report. Following that hearing, the Sunset Commission will approve final decisions in a hearing in December. The agency largely agrees with the findings and recommendations in the Sunset Report and are taking steps to implement the items which do not require legislation.

Mr. Collier stated the board will hear about recommended changes today to the agency's organizational structure which will help to implement the findings in the Sunset Report. He stated the changes will bring about efficiencies and focus on areas of the agency which will help it achieve the recommended changes. Mr. Collier thanked the board for assisting during the Sunset Review process and thanked agency staff who have worked throughout the year to provide Sunset staff the information needed to complete the review.

Overview of Sunset Review

Chief of Staff Jason Clark presented an overview of the Sunset Review. In 1977, the Texas Legislature established the Sunset Process as an effective way to look at state government in a structured and strategic way. This process begins with the fundamental question of is the state agency still needed. Depending on the answer, then the state agency could be abolished or will undergo a thorough review to ensure it is fulfilling its mission. The Sunset Advisory Committee is made up of an executive director, as well as thirty staff, who conduct the independent reviews. It is part of the Legislative Branch, so the committee itself has twelve members—five state senators, five house members, and two members of the public. The committee chair rotates every other session, and House Representative Keith Bell currently has the chair. The vice chair is Senator Tan Parker.

The Sunset Review process starts with an agency self-evaluation, which is a large report created by the TDCJ essentially telling the Sunset Advisory Committee about the agency and highlighting some of the issues the agency would recommend for review. The agency's report was 337 pages, and it was submitted September 1, 2023. The next step in the process is the Sunset Staff review and report. Sunset requests data, visits facilities, and conducts interviews with staff. The next step is public hearings, which will occur

in November where members of the public will be able to provide comments. In December, there will be a decision day where the committee will make decisions on recommendations. The last step is legislative action where a TDCJ-specific bill is produced and sent through the House and the Senate with the ultimate goal of arriving on the Governor's desk for signature. The possible Sunset outcomes are to continue the agency as is; abolish the agency, which has happened 42 times since 1977; merge the agency with another agency, which happens occasionally; or propose significant reforms and continue the agency with improvements. The Sunset Staff report had 55 total recommendations with 29 changes to statute, 25 management actions, and one change to the General Appropriations Act. Management actions are not required by law but are moved forward by management.

Mr. Clark discussed the key recommendations from Sunset staff. The first issue states a changing workforce and inmate population make multiple TDCJ facilities almost impossible to adequately staff. The TDCJ created a hotel and uber model to address staffing challenges, which are sometimes impacted by geography. Sunset recommended a ten-year strategic plan, which would look at the cost to operate, geography, capacity, and what type of inmate population the agency may have in the future. That report would be completed by September 2026 and would go to the Legislature every four years. The second part involves a plan to phase out facilities that have persistent staffing challenges, which would be contingent on the agency having the ability to do so. A number of factors would be considered including vacancy rates, maintenance costs, county level employment, and other factors. This report would be brought to the board by September 2026 and then every four years after that.

The second issue focuses on staffing. The agency has vacancies in key areas including the correctional officer series and the parole officer series. Sunset highlighted correctly that this is not just a Texas issue, as it is nationwide. Sunset recommended creating an office within the Human Resources (HR) division whose sole focus would be workforce retention and support. This department would oversee existing initiatives as well as new initiatives, such as mentorship, peer support, and an employee coaching program. The next recommendation calls for studying job tasks, such as correctional officers, parole officers, HR staff, and Information Technology Division (ITD) staff to ensure the responsibilities line up with an accurate reflection of what is actually occurring. The next recommendation deals with disciplinary action. PD-22, "General Rules of Conduct and Disciplinary Action Guidelines for Employees," is in revision and will emphasize behavior correction rather than rigid disciplinary action. It also calls for revamping the agency's performance evaluations and removing criteria that does not meaningfully assess what that job does. Lastly, Sunset recommends the agency clearly link advancements on training and other opportunities for employees and to also create a tool to track those training opportunities, which can be addressed in the request for a new learning management system.

Issue three focuses on technology and modernization. Sunset highlighted the agency's real need for technology-focused solutions and for the agency to be deliberate and thoughtful about these projects. Sunset recommends establishing a new office of strategic initiatives as well as modernization. That office will look at impactful types of projects that need to happen and collaborate with other divisions to complete those projects. Sunset also pointed out that the agency has a significant amount of data, which can be difficult for people to digest and see. Sunset recommends creating dashboards for internal use and public use to see that data more clearly. The agency has some of those dashboards in beta version currently. Another recommendation is the prioritization to phase out paper-based processes by looking at ways to digitize processes, such as the intake process. Lastly, Sunset recommends creating governing bodies within the TDCJ to handle that data and establishing rules to ensure the agency is effectively storing and using the data. The ITD recently approved a Data Governance Plan, so workgroups for this will be established soon.

The fourth issue reviewed the agency's programs and how those programs are delivered to the inmate population. Sunset concluded that rehabilitation planning and evaluation needs to be enhanced. This includes fully accounting for all programs and activities at the facilities and evaluating certain programs to make changes as needed. This would be captured in a report which would go to the Legislature each biennium. Sunset also highlighted the need for the TDCJ and WSD to work closely together and develop a strategic plan to increase program efficiency, reduce redundancies, and look for technological improvements. Sunset noted that the agency's data does not always communicate with one another, which is true concerning tier tracking or board-voted programs. Sunset recommended enhancements for capturing data related to board-voted programs because Sunset has a metric to reduce the program placement time for board-voted programs by 50% by 2027. The Sunset Report also recommends combining the Rehabilitation and Programs Division (RPD) and the Reentry and Integration Division (RID) to better align the agency with its mission. Lastly, Sunset recommends transferring post-secondary management from the TDCJ to WSD.

Issue five is parole focused. Parole Officers have a difficult job supervising individuals out in the community. Parole Officers, like Correctional Officers, have vacancies within the parole system. Parole Division Director Rene Hinojosa has devised some creative ways to supervise individuals while retaining Parole Officers. Sunset recommends removing the Parole Officer career ladder from statute. The statute has limits on how quickly a Parole Officer can move through that which impacts pay. Sunset identified that this handicaps the agency in evaluating Parole Officer salaries. The next recommendation calls for eliminating the maximum parole officer caseload ratios in statute. Those caseloads were established in 2007 before a risk assessment tool was created. Sunset believes that the changing environment as well as new approaches to supervision mean the board is better suited to make decisions related to caseloads. Another item for this issue is about special conditions. The agency is going to work with the BPP when it comes to special conditions before and after release, which will include a report the agency produces that will go to the board annually. Issue six was not included in Mr. Clark's update, as it focuses on the BPP.

Issue seven finds the State has continuing need for the TDCJ and should continue until 2037 which will be the next time the agency is reviewed by the Sunset Commission. Sunset recommends eliminating the Private Facility Contract Monitoring and Oversight Division and transferring those responsibilities back to the divisions who had them prior to 2007.

For the last issue, Sunset reviews standard across-the-board recommendations, which are reviewed for all agencies under review. Sunset recommends the Correctional Managed Healthcare Committee update a process in statute related to the removal of board members. The next recommendation is for all members, including the BPP and the agency, regarding board member training. This training happens each year and each board member attests to that training. Finally, Sunset recommends removing the Advisory Committee on Agriculture from statute and continuing with the Judicial Advisory Council and Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairment Advisory Committee for another twelve years.

Mr. Clark discussed the next steps in the process including the Sunset Advisory Commission Hearings, which will occur on November 14th, and decision day, which will occur on December 11th. The 89th Legislative Session will begin on January 14, 2025. Mr. Clark thanked the Sunset staff for their professionalism and thoroughness. He stated the agency will continue to work with Sunset staff to complete the process.

Chairman Nichols thanked Mr. Clark for the report and echoed Mr. Clark's comments on the professionalism and thoroughness of Sunset staff. Mr. Nichols commended all those involved in this

process, including the agency, Correctional Managed Healthcare, the BPP, and other parts of the criminal justice family who responded to the Sunset process from gathering data to one-on-one interviews with Sunset staff. From the board's perspective, the Sunset process is a healthy process to provide feedback and opportunities for continuous improvement.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action **Regarding TDCJ Organizational Structure and Renaming of Divisions**

Executive Director Bryan Collier presented the board with a recommendation for the reorganization of the agency's structure. He stated the organizational restructure will help the agency put in place many of the Sunset recommendations and enhance the oversight and communication between divisions. The new structure eliminates the Deputy Executive Director position and creates three agency deputy directors—the Chief Financial Officer, which is Ron Steffa; Chief Programs Officer; and a Chief Operating Officer. The two vacant positions will be posted and filled. As per the Sunset recommendation, the new organizational chart includes the creation of the Office of Strategic Initiatives and Modernization, which would be led by Andrew Barbee. The Sunset Report recommends the merger of the Rehabilitation and Programs Division with the Reentry and Integration Division to create the new Rehabilitation and Reentry Division, which will be led by April Zamora. The new structure also includes the deletion of the Private Facility Contract Monitoring and Oversight Division with the duties of that division to be divided among the Correctional Institutions Division, the Rehabilitation and Reentry Division, and the Parole Division. The new Chaplaincy and Volunteer Services Division will be created and led by Chris Carter. The Business and Finance Division will be created along with a new Classification and Inmate Transportation Division, with both positions posted. In this new structure, division directors will continue to report to the executive director and will work closely with the respective chief. If approved, the agency will begin the implementation process next week to include posting the first round of positions.

Chairman Nichols noted that this revised organizational structure, as described by Mr. Collier, has been presented to the board and is subject to board action in the open meeting, and he asked if this would be posted for the public to view soon after. Mr. Collier confirmed. 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 TDCJ organizational structure and renaming of divisions, as presented.

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

Internal Audit Status Report

Chris Cirrito, Internal Audit Director, presented updates to the Internal Audit Status Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 and noted that this report is a snapshot in time and will include updates that have changed since submission to the board office:

- **2302 – Parole Division Culture:** Project is an initial draft report.
- **2309 – Investigation of Sexual Assault Allegations:** Project is complete.

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

- One consultation is a final report.
 - **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 have been issued as draft reports.
 - **2402** – *Mental Health Assessments*
 - **2404** – *Travel Services*
 - **2406** – *Office of Independent Ombudsman Investigations*
 - One is ongoing.
 - **2409** – *Incident Reporting*
 - One has been postponed.
 - **2408** – *Inmate Identification Documents*
- **2411 – Emerging Risks: Classification and Records State Ready** is an initial draft report. Also, currently assisting the Office of the Inspector General on two investigation projects.
- **2412 – Walkthroughs: Artificial Intelligence Readiness** is complete.
- **2413 – Follow-Up and Action Plan Taking: Pre-release Placement Investigations** is a proposed final report.

Mr. Cirrito continued with updates to the Internal Audit Status Report for FY 2025:

- One consultation is ongoing.
 - **2502** – *Inmate Custody*
- Ten full scope projects:
 - Two are ongoing.
 - **2507** – *Career and Technical Education Tool Control*
 - **2508** – *Purchasing*
 - Eight are not yet assigned.
- **2514 – Walkthroughs: Digital Mail System** is ongoing.
- **2515 – Follow-Up and Action Plan Taking: Investigation of Allegations of Improper Vendor Payments**

Mr. Cirrito recognized his staff for their work and contributions to his success. Chairman 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 Renaming of the Internal Audit Division**

Internal Audit Director Chris Cirrito presented the recommendation to rename the Internal Audit Division. Mr. Cirrito stated this item originated from the revisions to incorporate the Global Internal Audit Standards

into the Board Policy BP-14.02, “Internal Audit Division Policy Statement.” Mr. Cirrito described Chief of Staff Jason Clark as a trusted advisor, who discussed the confusion the public may have with the word “division,” which is typically reserved for those who report directly to the TDCJ. Mr. Cirrito stated the name Office of the Independent Auditor would make his office consistent with the other offices who report directly to the board.

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 renaming of the Internal Audit Division to the Office of the Independent Auditor, as presented.

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

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

Ron Steffa, Chief Financial Officer, reviewed the purchases and contracts over \$1 million. Mr. Steffa stated there will be three items brought for the board’s consideration and approval. Item one is an increase to the FY 2024—2025 contract for X-ray security scanners due to increased quantity. With approval, this will purchase three additional scanners to be used at the Clements, Lewis, and Smith units. Item two is the FY 2025 contract for the purchase and installation of video surveillance systems in security transport vehicles. Item three is a FY 2025 contract for the replacement of vehicles for agency transportation needs.

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.

Judge Faith Johnson seconded the motion, which unanimously passed 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 stated the OIG reports directly to the TBCJ, and the Inspector General oversees OIG criminal investigations, ensures enforcement of various laws and regulations, as well as monitors compliance with established laws, agency policies, and regulations to make recommendations for appropriate action to the TBCJ.

Mr. Love gave an overview of the organizational structure of the OIG Criminal Investigative Operations (CIO) and recognized the staff in attendance. He stated the mission statement of the OIG CIO is to investigate allegations of criminal activity and misconduct that impact TDCJ programs, personnel, and resources including waste, fraud, and abuse.

Mr. Love stated there are two areas of operations, northern and southern, that include regions A, B, C, and D with over 100 investigators who conduct administrative and criminal investigations. He presented a map showcasing the different areas. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, the OIG initiated over 12,000 criminal investigations, which was approximately the same amount in FY 2023. These offenses ranged from possession of a prohibited item in a correctional facility to crimes involving homicide, sexual assault, and assault. He stated the role of the criminal investigator is paramount to a successful operation. The criminal investigator is a fact finder. Each piece of information and evidence is vital to the outcome of the investigation. The OIG CIO is supported by OIG Special Operations, Support Services Operations, the Strikeforce, and the TDCJ Fusion Center. Some examples of investigative support include crime scene investigation, evidence collection, physical and electronic surveillance, interviewing and interrogation, cell phone forensics, and analytics.

Mr. Love stated the OIG continues to work with the Special Prosecutors Unit (SPU) to enhance investigative resources and techniques through training provided by SPU prosecutors. Current advancement is focused on investigation techniques, filing criminal charges, and prosecution of sexual assaults. Training scheduled for November 12, 2024, will be provided by SPU Prosecutor Natalie McKinnon, and begins with the southern area investigative staff. Through enhanced methods of operations and training, the OIG CIO is committed to conducting the most accurate and thorough investigations. The OIG is dedicated to promoting public safety inside and outside of the prison system and ensuring the integrity of the TDCJ.

Report from the Office of the Independent Ombudsman

Independent Ombudsman Brian Patrick presented a report on the Office of the Independent Ombudsman (OIO), encompassing July 16th through September 15th of 2024. The OIO received 945 inquiries during this period that required substantive work.

The OIO responded to 899 inquiries from the public or an inmate and 46 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.

Chairman Nichols commended the OIO staff for maintaining a professional and efficient workplace and traveling across the state to engage in work. He also stated the OIO processes a large volume of inquiries with care and thoughtfulness, which is a positive reflection of the OIO staff.

Report from the State Counsel for Offenders

State Counsel for Offenders (SCFO) Director Wyvonne Long presented a report on the SCFO and stated, during the third quarter, the SCFO opened 567 cases, closed 331 cases, and has 1,540 active cases. The SCFO conducted 402 interviews and managed more than 6,000 pieces of correspondence in the last three months. Two new criminal attorneys have been hired for the Criminal Section, and an interview will be held today for a position in the Civil Section. The SCFO continues outreach to law schools, hoping to draw in more attorneys. Next week, the SCFO will have the first virtual attorney/client visit while maintaining the attorney/client privilege. She stated this has been a challenge, but Administrative Review

and Risk Management Division Director Marvin Dunbar and his staff have been incredibly helpful in obtaining the necessary space for privacy. This will save the agency money and save the attorneys time. She thanked Judge Francis for being a catalyst in making this process happen.

Recently, Legal Services secured the release of a client who had been civilly committed in 2014. In August of last year, this client had moved to tier five in the Texas Civil Commitment Office (TCCO) at the Littlefield facility. In April of this year, the state's expert determined the client no longer suffered from a behavioral abnormality. The SCFO filed an authorized petition for the client's release, and he was released from civil commitment in August of this year. The Civil Section received a no verdict in Gregg County. The gentleman involved came to the TDCJ 20 years ago with sexual assault charges and was going to be civilly committed. When the no verdict was returned, she had a conversation with him, and he stated he needed to get his life together. He availed himself of the opportunities for religious interactions, such as church and choir, earned his GED, and became certified in mechanics. When he received a positive parole vote, he was able to take Sex Offender Treatment Program training and did well. The trial in Gregg County determined he did not suffer from a behavioral abnormality, and he will be returning home in six months.

Chairman Nichols thanked Ms. Long for her report and thanked her staff for representing the population on many issues in a professional manner.

Report from the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Ombudsman

PREA Ombudsman Cassandra McGilbra presented a report from the PREA Ombudsman office. From July through September 2024, the PREA Ombudsman office responded to 528 PREA inquiries, with 263 from the general public, 264 from the inmate population, and one from a legislative office. The PREA Ombudsman office attended the PREA Coordinator's Conference in Buffalo, New York in July 2024, and the ACA Conference in Nashville, Tennessee in August 2024. The focus of the PREA Coordinator's Conference was administrative investigation techniques, sexual assault exams, and self-care for the investigators. Coordinators from across the United States attended the conference, and the PREA Resource Center will initiate the PREA Academy Investigative Training (PAIT) with two investigators from each program involved with PREA attending the 14-week virtual training. Two nominated staff will be attending this training in December. PREA Ombudsman staff attended the Regional PREA Training for CJAD in Austin in August 2024 and the Statewide Safe Prisons/PREA Unit Managers Training in Huntsville in September 2024. Ms. McGilbra recognized PREA staff members, to include Manager James Booker, Administrative Assistant Ro'Kieshi Grigsby, Administrative Assistant Briara James, PREA Ombudsman John Kmiecik, and PREA Ombudsman Donna Vasquez. She described her staff as hardworking, especially considering the sensitive topics and large volume of work involved.

Chairman Nichols thanked Ms. McGilbra and her staff for working to reduce the number of these types of incidents in the prison system. General Bill Welch asked for clarification on the inquiries received, asking if each one represented a unique incident or if some were duplications. Ms. McGilbra stated each one represented a unique, individual incident.

TDCJ Parole Division Spotlight

Parole Division Director Rene Hinojosa introduced Parole Officer Marie Masabni who has been a Parole Officer since November 2022. She works at the Bryan/College Station District Parole Office and has supervised regular caseload, administrative caseload, and substance use caseload clients. She currently supervises clients that are receiving treatment at one of the local transitional treatment centers. Supervising the substance use caseload is challenging.

Ms. Masabni thanked the board for the opportunity to highlight parole and its clients. As an immigrant from Lebanon who witnessed the Civil War, she values life and getting a second chance. Because of this belief, she joined an internship in chemical dependency, where she met many parole officers who inspired her to join the Parole Division. She chose a career in parole because it offered her the opportunity to help individuals get another chance and to make a positive change in someone's life. In order to do so, she took anger management courses and other trainings, which equipped her to provide the support her clients need. Her career has challenged her to grow both personally and professionally while making a difference in a client's life. She currently supervises substance use clients who have been identified with the risk of relapse into substance abuse behavior. As a parole officer, her role is to assist and guide clients to stay sober to become law-abiding citizens. She introduced Teresa Mondragon as a good example. She stated Ms. Mondragon has an intensive history of substance abuse since the age of 15 and was amazingly willing to change her life. She completed the In-Prison Therapeutic Community program while she was incarcerated and has been released since 2022. She successfully completed a 60-day inpatient residential program and a seven-month outpatient supported program. Currently, she is in the peer support phase which she will complete next week.

Ms. Mondragon expressed gratefulness at the opportunity to share her testimony. She defined success and stated this was an accurate definition of her current life. She stated she started life with a significant amount of criminal activity and grew up with drugs and violence. She began to sell drugs and became addicted to the money and lifestyle. She stated she was a hustler by nature and that her work ethic is her strongest attribute. She has immersed herself into every job she had held and drug dealing was no different. This came with consequences and she stated she lost everything she cared about. She was in a violent relationship and had already been incarcerated once before. On her last arrest, she accepted her fate and asked God for guidance. During her incarceration, she had plenty of time to think about what she wanted. After being granted parole, she was expected to complete the Substance Abuse Felony Punishment program. She has successfully completed phases one and two. When she was released in 2022, she prioritized her family and happiness when making decisions. She obtained a job at Sonic as a car hop and was promoted to assistant manager four months later and then co-manager five months after that, a position she has maintained for more than a year. She stated this establishment is one of the few to hire residents from the halfway house, so there is a plethora of individuals who share her experience. She shares her story with those individuals hoping to make a positive impact. She stated she lives in a nice house and owns a car now and can afford what she likes while also supporting others. She has a healthy relationship with her family, which grows stronger as time passes. She stated she is genuinely happy and has maintained her goals by thinking of her priorities first before making decisions.

Chairman Nichols stated the theme for the meeting is courage, especially with the recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness month. He stated Ms. Mondragon is the latest example for sharing her testimony, which is important for the board to hear the impact that the programs have on participants. Mr. Nichols thanked Ms. Masabni for her dedication to the mission of the Parole Division and stated the rehabilitation journey has to be done one person at a time.

Engaging the Field Presentation

Research and Development Director Andrew Barbee presented information on engaging the field through the TDCJ's new approach to surveying correctional officers. Mr. Barbee thanked Executive Director Bryan Collier for creating the opportunity for the agency to do this and stated it takes a courageous leader to invite criticism. Mr. Barbee also recognized Deputy Executive Director Oscar Mendoza's advice to listen to the men and women working in the field.

The current workforce challenge is a 25% correctional officer vacancy rate, which was above 33% in Winter of 2022 and lower than 8% in August of 2016. Staff shortages are not unique to Texas. Pay raises have been positive and effective for the workforce, and pay is critical but not the ultimate factor. He stated the agency needed to learn what was attractive and unattractive about the work environment. Fundamentally, people leave or stay because of people and leadership. Prior to recent emphasis, all state agencies surveyed staff every other year via university partnership. The surveys were not specific to corrections, much less the TDCJ, and had a less than 10% response rate by correctional officers. Many did not trust the survey was anonymous, as it was paper-based and asked for identifying information. The new approach to surveying is proving valuable. Contracting with a vendor to create a cell phone-based survey that takes less than ten minutes to take creates a better sense of anonymity. He stated the Communications Department was asked to explain the survey to the field. This new survey has had a less than 25% response rate thus far. The responses help identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement.

Mr. Barbee discussed the basic structure of the survey, which has four quantitative sections about organizational culture, working style, employment satisfaction, and organizational alignment. The survey also has four qualitative (open-ended) questions as well. Invites to approximately 1,000 officers are based on monthly random sampling of cell phone numbers provided by officers. The responses have essentially been a mirror of the field, whether it be rank, gender, race, or tenure. 93 units were represented with maximum security units accounting for 35% of respondents.

Mr. Barbee presented charts rating the responses on a scale of 1 to 100 and stated organizational culture is rated at a 51. Staff generally agree that there is not enough respect for one another and there are strong perceptions of a lack of professionalism by supervisors but that men and women are treated the same at the unit. Working style is rated at a 72 and officers broadly agree the role of an officer is critical to rehabilitation and that most inmates can be rehabilitated. Most officers do not believe the primary purpose of prison is to punish inmates. Employment satisfaction is rated at 57 with more than half of respondents indicating a desire to retire with the TDCJ but two-thirds indicating it would be easy to find a better job. More than half have thought of quitting in the past six months. Organizational alignment is rated at 65 with three quarters of officers caring about the fate of the TDCJ and over half expressing pride to work for the TDCJ. Half of the respondents do not feel the TDCJ inspires the best performance.

The top three areas of concern highlighted in the open-ended questions are compensation, leadership effectiveness and accountability, and training and standards for hire. Moving forward, the agency will be reviewing strategies to address concerns. For example, clarification of the agency's policies would be a simple goal to achieve. One example is some officers were not aware that retaliation from a supervisor is addressed in the disciplinary policy. New surveys to focus on correctional officer training have been deployed. Communication back to the field will be prioritized, such as videos reflecting back to the field the results of the surveys. Eventually, the surveys will expand to the rest of the agency.

Chairman Nichols thanked Mr. Barbee for his thought-provoking presentation and asked if he would be willing to come back and report to the board with an update on the topics outlined in the moving forward section. Mr. Barbee agreed. Mr. Nichols asked if this is reflective of the types of initiatives the Office of Strategic Initiatives and Modernization will be conducting. Mr. Barbee confirmed. Judge Johnson asked if the expansion of the survey would include support staff and non-correctional staff. Mr. Barbee confirmed and stated every individual of the agency will be asked to participate in the surveys in the future. Ambassador Siv asked if there was a way to look at how long the respondents stayed with the agency after answering these questions. Mr. Barbee stated the way the survey is administered allows the agency to track a respondent's answers over a length of time, which will allow the agency to determine if individual perceptions are changing over time. Ambassador Siv asked if there was a follow-up question as to why officers did not feel the agency inspires the best performance. Mr. Barbee stated the respondent could use the open-ended questions to elaborate.

Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Logistics Production Overview

Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Logistics (MAL) Division Director Bill Lewis provided an overview for production levels for products and services offered by the MAL division, starting before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 until the current output produced. The production is not possible without the job skills training for the men and women assigned to work in the agency's facilities. The MAL has the responsibility of assisting individuals to reach their fullest potential through employment readiness, opportunities, and any products made or services rendered. The MAL is comprised of six functional areas—Agribusiness, Land and Minerals (ALM); Financial Operations; Inmate Transportation; Inmate Programs; Texas Correctional Industries (TCI); and Transportation and Supply. It is the mission of the MAL division to provide inmates with job skills in its industry, agriculture, and logistics operations to enhance reentry success while producing quality products and services for the agency and governmental entities. The division also safely and securely transports incarcerated individuals through its inmate transportation operations.

Mr. Lewis discussed the ALM departments including its business management operations, crops and equipment enterprises, and livestock enterprises. The Business Management Operations department maintains agency records relevant to TDCJ land issues including abstracts, deeds, easements, seismic permits, and land, oil, and gas leases. It also provides financial management and cost accounting for agricultural operations across the state. The TDCJ manages 133,757 acres across the state with the vast majority being used for agricultural purposes. The Crops and Equipment Enterprise department manages the production of field and edible crops for agency use, processes edible crops for the Terrell Cannery and fresh vegetables to be used by agency food service departments, and provides support services such as farm shops, a combine repair center, and cotton gins. Cotton grown by the TDCJ is harvested, processed, and used to produce inmate clothing. The agency depends on these items to offset the cost of feeding and clothing the inmate population. The Livestock Enterprise department manages the beef cattle program; heifer, broodmare and horse development programs; poultry/laying hen operations; farrow-to-finish swine operations; feed production facilities; and meat processing plants. It also provides unit correctional staff with horses for canine programs and field force operations. Mr. Lewis presented pictures of the board members and others visiting the Buffalo Ranch and stated the horse sale was held at the Buffalo Ranch on Labor Day with 50 horses sold for \$662,000.

Mr. Lewis discussed production trends relating to feed with approximately one million pounds of feed used each week. It takes the MAL approximately 52 million pounds of feed annually to feed the swine,

beef cattle, and poultry programs. Approximately 40 million pounds of corn and 12 million pounds of milo feed is needed per year. During 2023, the crops and equipment department provided over 86.5% of the agency's corn and milo feeds with 39.1 million pounds of corn and five million pounds of milo grown. In 2019, the MAL produced 22.6 million pounds of corn and 661,000 pounds of milo. Production increases and decreases of crops have not been impacted by COVID-19 alone. Production can vary greatly from year to year from droughts to excessive rain to hurricanes. Corn production has diminished due to excessive rain this year. The Ellis Unit encountered over 31 inches in one month. For the last two years, the droughts have devastated most of the field crop markets. While the pandemic impacted the MAL in several areas, the MAL has recovered since COVID-19 and returned to pre-pandemic production numbers. The ALM department was able to maintain levels of production for pork and beef and are above pre-COVID levels. During 2019, the MAL produced 255,783 cases of vegetables, and in 2023, a total of 244,168 cases were produced. In addition, funding has been approved for an updated retort system at the cannery. Once implemented, the new system will be capable of running double the current production goal of 300,000, which will allow more product for the inmate population. This helps with cost-avoidance but also provides an opportunity to mitigate supply chain issues.

Mr. Lewis stated the Crops and Equipment Enterprise department has two notable areas that have not returned to pre-pandemic levels due largely to drought conditions and recent flooding. For the first time, the levee behind the Ellis Unit breached after receiving 37 inches of rain, and one thousand acres of cotton was lost. During 2019, almost three million pounds of cotton lint was produced, and during 2023, approximately 1.1 million pounds was grown and harvested. 7.8 million pounds of fresh produce was harvested in 2019, and almost 4 million pounds was produced in 2023. The Field Crops Division aims to produce 6,000 bales of cotton annually and has been able to do so with assistance from leased operations in west Texas. The MAL typically plants approximately 6,000 acres of cotton, 13,000 acres of corn, and 5,000 acres of milo. Egg production is one of the more prominent areas of production, which has been restricted due to poultry capacity. During 2019, ALM managed over 232,000 chickens and collected over four million eggs, and during 2023, managed over 210,000 chickens and collected approximately 3.3 million eggs. To bolster egg production, Mr. Lewis stated the board approved two new poultry houses with a goal of 1.5 eggs per inmate, which would be approximately 186,000 eggs daily. Currently, approximately 131,000 eggs are collected daily. The new poultry houses will have a capacity of 50-60 thousand chickens, which will enhance egg production.

Mr. Lewis discussed livestock production trends. Livestock Enterprises manages approximately 13,000 head of cattle. Of those 13,000 cattle, 8,000 are female reproduction cattle used to have calves. Production numbers are relatively the same as 2019 with 13,000 total cattle, including 2,000 head of heifers for heifer development. Calve production in 2019 was slightly higher than current numbers, but the focus is on quality now as opposed to quantity, which resulted in \$2 million more in improvements. Livestock Enterprises went from \$2 million in 2019 to \$8 million in 2023 because of those improvements. Livestock Enterprises is focused on increasing the herd with better breeding and better body condition scores. Additionally, the number of sows and piglets has increased since 2019 from approximately 2,500 sows and 28,000 piglets to 2,700 sows and 35,000 piglets in 2023. Equine operation numbers have remained the same with 123 broodmares in 2023, and 93 foals have been born in 2023. In 2019, 85 foals were born.

Mr. Lewis discussed the logistics sections of the MAL. The Transportation and Supply department maintains nine Fleet and Freight Transportation facilities and eight Warehousing and Supply facilities. The department also procures, maintains, and monitors all TDCJ vehicles and related equipment and maintains appropriate inventory levels while also transporting goods and provisions for the TDCJ. During FY 2024, the Fleet and Freight Division delivered a total of 26,306 trailer truck loads of supplies to units, which is less than FY 2019 but can be attributed to unit closures and a decrease in the inmate population.

From 2019 to 2023, the number of vehicles in the agency's fleet grew by 250 vehicles to 2,508. The number of vehicle and equipment work orders decreased due to funding received for newer vehicles for a total of 13,590 work orders completed. There are 171 tractor trailer trucks used throughout eight warehouses. Warehousing and Supply is responsible for maintaining the inventory and the distribution of necessity items. During FY 2024, over \$169 million in inventory passed through those eight warehouses with inventory turned over 7.34 times. In FY 2019, it was only \$140 million in inventory with inventory turned over 6.1 times. The increase was attributed to the rising cost of goods due to inflation. Supply chain delays and workforce shortages have not resulted in any back orders.

Mr. Lewis discussed the Texas Correctional Industries (TCI) which manufactures products for sale to government entities, public schools, public and private institutions, and public hospitals. TCI statutory objectives are to provide marketable job skills and training to help reduce recidivism and department costs by providing needed services to the TDCJ. TCI is comprised of five divisions, including the Furniture Division with four facilities, the Garment Division with fourteen facilities, the Graphics Division with seven facilities, the Marketing and Distribution Division with two facilities, and the Metal Division with six facilities. TCI provides all of the inmate clothing, including pants, shirts, shorts, socks, and shoes. During the pandemic, factories transitioned to producing personal protective equipment items. Many of the raw material issues experienced during the pandemic have since been resolved and production numbers have returned to pre-pandemic levels. Inmate shirts have been increased from 393,000 in 2019 to 428,000 in 2023. Clothing orders increase or decrease based on the inmate population. Not all production numbers have recuperated due to the modernization of equipment, which is addressed in the Legislative Appropriations Request for next legislative session. Sheets and shower towels have remained at or near the same levels as 2019. Products such as yarn have not returned to normal while cloth produced has exceeded levels of production in history. TCI remains vigilant in seeking funding to replace outdated equipment. TCI has maintained revenue from sales with total retail sales of \$73,775,843 in FY 2019 and \$84,276,037 in FY 2023. In FY 2019, 69% of sales came from outside of the agency, and in FY 2023, 71% of sales came from outside of the agency.

Mr. Lewis discussed programs and certifications for the inmate population in FY 2024. Almost 3,000 on-the-job and job skills training certificates were awarded. Approximately 100 apprenticeships were completed and almost 500 forklift operator certifications earned. Job skills training includes soft skills, such as responsibility and discipline. In the upcoming year, the MAL will be working with Coastal Bend College on a pilot program for the inmates working in agriculture to earn the occupational skills award. The MAL is also working with Texas A&M University to find a process for inmates to earn a vet tech certificate. During 2023, the MAL hosted the first in-person braille conference for women assigned to the Billman Braille Center and the success made it an annual event. During the second conference, incarcerated transcribers collaborated with industry professionals and technical workshops. The Billman Braille Center has four incarcerated transcribers that serve on the National Braille Association Committee. Mr. Lewis discussed the Office of Post-Release Employment Coordination which is responsible for assisting MAL job-assigned inmates with obtaining meaningful and sustainable employment directly prior to release; completing job applications and résumés; and facilitating interviews with employers. The office is also responsible for employer outreach by educating employers pertaining to the skill sets inmates acquire while job-assigned within MAL facilities and coordinating with the Reentry and Integration Division (RID) and WSD to improve reentry success.

Mr. Lewis concluded with data stating individuals that work for at least three years with the MAL had a recidivism rate of 6.28%. MAL staff continue to work diligently to provide for individuals working with the MAL. He recognized MAL staff for their contributions to the success of the division.

Chairman Nichols thanked Mr. Lewis and his staff and asked for confirmation about the recidivism rate presented. Mr. Lewis confirmed. Judge Johnson asked what the agency is saving yearly because of the MAL. Mr. Lewis stated approximately \$60 million.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action
Regarding Proposed Land Transaction – Request to Renew a Natural Gas Pipeline Easement, Ramsey Unit, Brazoria County, Rosharon, Texas

Chairman Nichols abstained from taking action on this agenda item due to his firm representing entities listed. Sydney Zuiker abstained from taking action on this agenda item due to entities being donors at her workplace.

Bill Lewis, Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Logistics Division Director, presented the request of Phillips 66 Pipeline, LLC to renew an expiring pipeline easement at the Ramsey Unit for one eighteen-inch pipeline with no temporary workspace being requested. The easement includes an area of approximately 21.56 acres or 31,300.38 feet long (1,896.99 rods) by 30 feet wide to transport natural gas liquids. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area. Phillips 66 Pipeline, LLC has agreed to pay \$1,517,592 for the renewal of this easement 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 the current geographical appraisal value.

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 renew a natural gas pipeline easement at the Ramsey Unit, Brazoria County, Rosharon, Texas, as presented.

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

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action
Regarding Facilities Division Construction Projects – Request to Install HVAC – Inmate Housing (Design Only), McConnell Unit, Bee County, Beeville, Texas

Facilities Division Director Ron Hudson stated there will be a vendor show at the Huntsville Prison Museum for future HVAC projects on November 6th. He then presented a new project for consideration which includes the engineering design for installation of an air conditioning system at the McConnell Unit as briefed during the Business and Financial Operations Committee Meeting. The total estimated program cost is \$2,422,700.

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 to install HVAC – inmate housing (design only) at the McConnell Unit, Bee County, Beeville, Texas, as presented.

Sydney Zuiker 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, December 13, 2024, in Huntsville, Texas, and adjourned the 237th meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice at 1:53 p.m.

Chairman*

Secretary*

* Signature on File