

Texas Board of Criminal Justice 245th Meeting



Minutes

**February 20, 2026
Austin, Texas**

TEXAS BOARD OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

**Cambria Hotel Austin Uptown
13205 Burnet Road
Austin, Texas 78727**

**Thursday, February 19, 2026
Executive Session
3:00 PM**

**Friday, February 20, 2026
Regular Session
9:00 AM – 12:30 PM**

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Call to Order – Thursday, February 19, 2026

Convene Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ) Meeting

Recess to TBCJ Executive Session

I. Executive Session – ATX 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 Office of the Independent Auditor, the Director of the Independent Office of Inmate Counsel, 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 TBCJ Meeting Regular Session – Friday, February 20, 2026

Call to Order

II. Regular Session – Uptown Ballroom

- A. Recognitions
- B. Consideration of Approval of Consent Items
 - 1. Hazardous Duty Pay Authorization Requests
 - 2. Personal Property Donations
 - 3. 244th TBCJ Meeting Minutes
 - 4. Excused Absences
- C. Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Parole Division Spotlight
- D. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Purchases and Contracts Over \$1 Million
- E. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Revision to Board Policy BP-03.91, “Uniform Inmate Correspondence Rules”
- F. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Amendments to Board Rules Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Sections
 - 1. 151.3, “Texas Board of Criminal Justice Operating Procedures”
 - 2. 151.55, “Disposal of Surplus Agricultural Goods and Agricultural Personal Property”
- G. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed New Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 152.81, “Housing of Inmates”
- H. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Adoption of Amendments to Board Rules Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Sections
 - 1. 152.3, “Admissions”
 - 2. 159.19, “Continuity of Care and Services Program for Offenders who are Elderly, Terminally Ill, Significantly Ill, or with a Physical Disability or Having a Mental Illness”
- I. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Adoption of Repeal of Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 152.5, “Designation of State Jail Regions”
- J. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Renaming of Units
- K. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Adoption of New Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 151.58, “Legislative Leave Pool”
- L. Report from the Chairman, TBCJ
- M. Report from the Executive Director, TDCJ
- N. Status Report on Information Technology Initiatives
- O. Sunset Implementation Overview Presentation

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

- P. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Facilities Division Construction Projects – Status of Board Approved Projects
- Q. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Land Transactions
 - 1. Request to Amend an Existing Facilities Site and Road Access Easements, Halbert Unit, Burnet, Texas
 - 2. Request to Renew an Expiring Natural Gas Pipeline, Boyd Unit, Teague, Texas
- R. Report from the Office of the Independent Ombudsman
- S. Report from the Independent Office of Inmate Counsel
- T. Report from the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Ombudsman
- U. Report from the Office of the Independent Auditor
- V. Report from the Office of Inspector General
- W. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Selection of Chief Audit Executive

Adjourn TBCJ 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. 245**

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice convened into executive session at 4:18 p.m. on Thursday, February 19, 2026, recessed at 5:15 p.m., reconvened into regular session on Friday, February 20, 2026, at 9:33 a.m. at the Cambria Hotel Austin Uptown in Austin, Texas, and adjourned at 12:26 p.m.

**TEXAS BOARD OF CRIMINAL
JUSTICE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Eric J.R. Nichols, Chairman
Hon. Faith Johnson, Vice-Chair
Rodney Burrow, M.D., Secretary
Thomas Fordyce
Ambassador Sichan Siv
Pastor Nate Sprinkle
Sydney Zuiker

**TEXAS BOARD OF CRIMINAL
JUSTICE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

General Bill Welch

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

Bobby Lumpkin, Executive Director	
Jason Clark, Chief Programs Officer	
Ron Hudson, Chief Operations Officer	
Ron Steffa, Chief Financial Officer	
Damon Andrews	Stephanie Greger
Mary Babcock	Eric Guerrero
Richard Babcock	Amanda Hernandez
Andrew Barbee	Rene Hinojosa
Kate Blifford	Bill Lewis
Chris Carter	Angie McCown
Tina Clark	Monica Ruiz de Velasco
Jennifer Gonzales	April Zamora
Carey Green	

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

Chris Cirrito	Wyvonne Long
Lance Coleman	Cassandra McGilbra
Jill Durst	Brian Patrick

OTHERS PRESENT:

Marsha Moberley, Board of Pardons and Paroles
Megan Molleur, Office of the Lieutenant Governor
Haylee Plumley, Senate Criminal Justice Committee
Mike Ward, Senate Criminal Justice Committee

Executive Session

Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols convened the 245th meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ or board) into executive session on Thursday, February 19, 2026, at 4:18 p.m., and recessed at 5:15 p.m.

Reconvene the Texas Board of Criminal Justice

Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols reconvened the 245th meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ or board) on Friday, February 20, 2026, at 9:33 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*. 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 did not hear public presentations on posted agenda topics.

Recognitions

Chairman Nichols recognized the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (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 Executive Director Bobby Lumpkin, he expressed deep gratitude for the continued service of these employees. During the months of January and February 2026, 52 employees attained 25 years of service, 46 employees attained 30 years of service, 13 employees attained 35 years of service, eight employees attained 40 years of service, and two employees attained 45 years of service. Chairman Nichols stated that the names of these individuals would be submitted as an attachment to 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)

Chief Information Officer Tina Clark recognized Information Technology Division (ITD) Deputy Division Director Bradley Brock for his 25 years of service. She highlighted Mr. Brock's career, which began in 1990 answering the inmate family hotline. She described Mr. Brock as a humble, dedicated leader who sets a high standard for ethical leadership. Chairman Nichols thanked him for his service. Mr. Brock thanked the board for the recognition and thanked his wife and mentors within the agency for their support.

Facilities Division Director Damon Andrews recognized Facilities Deputy Division Director Dale Cox for his recent promotion. He highlighted Mr. Cox's career, which began in 2017 as an engineer. He stated Mr. Cox is a driving force behind many of the division's projects, and his diverse background and skills have been vital in his new role. Chairman Nichols congratulated him on his new role. Mr. Cox expressed his honor at serving the agency and attributed his success to his family.

Inspector General Lance Coleman recognized Melvin Hill for his recent promotion to Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Commander. He highlighted Mr. Hill's career, which began in 2006 as a police officer for the Palestine Police Department. Mr. Hill demonstrates an understanding of the opportunities

and obstacles facing the OIG and is ready to meet those challenges directly. Chairman Nichols congratulated him on his new role and expressed gratitude for the work done by the OIG. Mr. Hill conveyed his appreciation for the agency motivating him in his career and the impact on his personal life.

Consideration of Approval of Consent Items

- 1. Hazardous Duty Pay Authorization Requests**
- 2. Personal Property Donations**
- 3. 244th TBCJ Meeting Minutes**
- 4. Excused Absences**

Chairman Nichols clarified the minutes for the 244th TBCJ Meeting held December 19th correctly reflect that Item 7-13 presented during the agenda item for the discussion, consideration, and possible action regarding purchases and contracts over \$1 million was for the fiscal year (FY) 2026 contracts, not FY 2024, notwithstanding the reference to FY 2024 during the presentation at the 244th TBCJ Meeting. He asked if there were any amendments, abstentions, or objections to the proposed consent items. Hearing none, the consent items were approved.

Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) **Parole Division Spotlight**

Parole Division Director Monica Ruiz de Velasco introduced Parole Officer Ana Perez from the Austin II District Parole Office (DPO). She stated Ms. Perez began her career with the Parole Division in 2024 working on a regular caseload before moving to the District Reentry Center caseload in 2025. She graduated from Texas A&M University–Kingsville with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education. Ms. Perez thanked the board for the recognition and agency executive leadership for allowing her the opportunity to serve as a parole officer. She pursued this career because it was rewarding and contributed to society. She described her leadership as supportive and encouraging, attributing her success to their mentorship. She introduced her client, Isaac White, to share his story. She stated he maintained full-time employment and founded a successful business while on community supervision. He volunteered with the U.S. Department of Labor providing data entry services. He also participated in peer-led health education for inmates in custody.

Mr. White expressed his responsibility and remorse for the death of a friend and stated nothing would ever minimize that loss. He stated the opportunity to live a life beyond that moment is his greatest reminder to stay humble and accountable. He described his life from 35 years ago as lacking boundaries and discipline, which led to poor choices. He turned toward drugs and criminal behavior, which led to 26 years of incarceration. He stated the environment was harsh and isolating but allowed him the opportunity for real change. Long-term structure through substance abuse counseling, education, vocational training, and faith-based mentorship created real change in him. He stated a turning point for him was during a conversation with the owner of eTech Network Solutions, Robert Storm, who discussed branching out his company with an opportunity for Mr. White to work as an account manager. This opportunity motivated him to change his behavior. He served as a certified peer health educator, focusing on substance use prevention, communicable disease awareness, and mental health literacy. He also served as a deacon for the chapel at the Ferguson Unit. These roles required consistency and modeling socially acceptable behavior and further deepened his understanding of responsibility and empathy. Since his release seven

years ago, he has lived under parole supervision without incident. He currently works as an operations manager and has completed specialized training for his career. He recognized his wife for creating stability in his personal life. Mr. White stated he strives to live for accountability, service, and respect for the value of every human life.

Chairman Nichols thanked him for his participation and stated the reconstruction of lives happens one person at time.

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.

Chief Financial Officer Ron Steffa reviewed the purchases and contracts over \$1 million and stated there will be 13 items brought for the board's consideration and approval. Item 1 is an increase to the fiscal year (FY) 2025 contract for grease trap waste removal and disposal services due to increased utilization. Item 2 is an increase to the FY 2026 contract for aluminum coils due to an increase in the number of orders received for license plates. Items 3 through 10 are increases to the FY 2026 contracts for residential and outpatient substance abuse treatment and aftercare services for clients released from substance abuse felony punishment facilities, in-prison therapeutic communities, or referred to the substance abuse counseling program due to exercising a 153-day extension to allow for completion of the procurement process. Item 11 is an increase to the FY 2026 procurement for the career navigation platform, which connects inmates to community resources, workforce boards, and employers and educators to support reentry readiness through the inmates' tablets. Item 12 is an increase to the FY 2026–27 contracts for outpatient substance abuse treatment services with Dallas County due to an increase in the number of treatment slots and per diem rates. Item 13 is an increase to the FY 2026-27 Southeast Texas Residential Reentry Center in Houston contract for adding additional staff.

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 purchases and contracts over \$1 million as presented.

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

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action **Regarding Proposed Revision to Board Policy BP-03.91,** **“Uniform Inmate Correspondence Rules”**

Chief Programs Officer Jason Clark presented information on the issues that initiated the revisions proposed for Board Policy BP-03.91, “Uniform Inmate Correspondence Rules.” He stated one of the emerging issues and growing threats facing TDCJ units is the introduction of dangerous contraband

through books sent in the mail. In calendar year (CY) 2025, 385 books tested positive for illegal substances, and 16 books contained physical contraband, excluding soaked book pages. Mr. Clark stated the speed and sophistication of the attempts to introduce contraband are increasing. Office of the Inspector General (OIG) investigations have uncovered three different drug labs whose sole purpose were to lace books with illegal drugs and send those books through the mailroom. Criminal organizations are making large sums of money for these actions. Hardback books make it more difficult to detect contraband, as criminals are using the spine and the covers to hide drugs. Due to the thickness of a hardback book, contraband can be more difficult to detect with the agency's current contraband interdiction technology. Used books are also a challenge, as the pages are often stained, frayed, or faded. Mailroom staff visually inspect books for any stains that may in fact be illegal narcotics.

Mr. Clark stated drugs have played a role in inmate deaths with 78 confirmed overdose deaths in CY 2025; however, this number will grow as the agency continues to receive confirmed autopsy results. The introduction of drugs also increases the danger to staff, as correctional officers have had to subdue inmates who are high on drugs and mailroom staff have required medical attention due to exposure to drugs. Mailroom staff now have immediate access to Narcan for preventative measures.

Mr. Clark discussed the current process for books coming into the TDCJ. Family or friends must order books from a book publisher, publication supplier, or bookstore, and that book is shipped in via a legitimate shipper such as the United States Postal Service. There is no coordination between the family or friends and the mailroom. Criminals are forging mail labels to make it appear as if the book was sent from a legitimate entity. The agency has stringent security measures in place, including parcel scanners, skilled mailroom staff, contraband interdiction canines, and wave millimeter technology, but the drugs continue to come in. Reference books and educational material follow a similar path, but Texas law does allow for a volunteer organization to send those directly to an inmate.

Mr. Clark stated the agency is asking the board to establish communication between the sender and the mailroom and to allow only softback books in new condition. He stated criminal organizations do not act in silos but across state lines and with a similar playbook. He proposed the provision requiring only softback books in new condition be effective April 1st to allow staff to be trained and the public to be informed. He stated the agency is working to create an advanced notification portal, which will look similar to the inmate visitation portal. This portal will allow the agency to verify the sender's identity and receive information about the book being sent. He stated the agency is hopeful the portal will be operational by the end of summer. With the board's approval, the agency will conduct an education campaign to ensure individuals know how to use the portal.

Outside of the mailroom, the agency has worked with the Windham School District (WSD) on a donation process for books being donated to a facility rather than a specific inmate. Criminal organizations have taken advantage of this avenue to introduce contraband in the past. The new process will have the books stored at a central location with the WSD and distributed as needed. Legal mail has specific protections in place to preserve attorney-client privilege; however, agency mailrooms have seen an increase in mass mailing advertisements from law firms. Processing those as legal mail is time consuming, not considered confidential attorney-client mail, and should be handled via the mail center to be scanned and sent to the inmate's tablet. Mr. Clark proposed revising the definition for "Lewd Visual Material" to prohibit images that depict the lewd exhibition of children who are younger than 18 years of age, mirroring the definition provided in statute.

Chairman Nichols asked for further information on how hardback books are used to introduce dangerous contraband. Mr. Clark stated hardback books provide an opportunity for an individual to create a false cover or to insert contraband into the spine. He stated it is impossible to find drugs in the spine without

taking the book apart. Judge Faith Johnson commented that softback books are cheaper than hardback books anyways. She asked if the agency had a percentage of drugs being introduced via books. Mr. Clark stated that would be difficult to estimate, but one of the benefits of establishing the advanced notification portal is the opportunity to collect statistics. Pastor Nate Sprinkle asked if the proposed new process is going to be prohibitive for the individuals sending legitimate reading material through the mail. Mr. Clark stated reading material is important, and the portal will give the mailroom more opportunities to be efficient. An individual would create an account, which is only completed once to verify their identity, and provide information related to the book being sent. Pastor Sprinkle asked if an item that is not registered would be returned. Mr. Clark confirmed. Executive Director Bobby Lumpkin recognized that it is a small sector introducing contraband through books. He also pointed out that it is not only the incarcerated population, but staff have had to receive emergency medical attention for exposure to drugs. Mr. Lumpkin acknowledged there are other interdictions to be implemented; however, this is an approach to continue allowing reading material to be sent, and requiring only softback books in new condition protects both staff and the inmate population.

General Counsel Stephanie Greger presented BP-03.91, "Uniform Inmate Correspondence Rules," with a summary of revisions including replacing references to the deputy executive director with the chief officers; replacing the CID director with the director of Classification; replacing the Rehabilitation Programs Division with the Rehabilitation and Reentry Division; revising the definitions for "Educational Materials," "Legal Correspondence," and "Reference Book"; adding definition for "Lewd Visual Material" as presented by Mr. Clark; adding language to specify softback publications in new condition and to state exceptions may be granted for inmates enrolled in an approved continuing education course to receive hardback books if softback versions are unavailable; adding and revising language to specify that the opening of outgoing special and/or media correspondence requires written permission from the director of Classification or designee; and adding language to include lewd material as a reason for disapproval for mailing or receipt of all outgoing or incoming correspondence. Grammatical and formatting updates were also made.

Chairman Nichols commented that it pains the board to place any restrictions on reading material for the members of the population, but the sight of an individual under the influence of drugs pains them more. These drugs are causing overdoses, including overdose deaths, inside TDCJ facilities. The reality is that people attempting to profit off others are using hardback books and soaked paper to introduce substances that are illicit, illegal, and can kill. He stated TDCJ is making best efforts, which like all best efforts, are subject to continuous improvement, to control the demand for illegal substances within the facilities. He expressed his anticipation that an update will be presented at a later meeting on the efforts to control the demand for illegal and dangerous substances. He stated the board considered the public's concerns on previous revisions to the mail process which were balanced against the concern for members of the TDCJ population. The board again believes these revisions to the mail process are warranted and necessary to protect the population. He stated there are current and effective pathways to get reading materials to members of the population, and the board is committed to working with the WSD and TDCJ to develop programs to provide reading material to the population. Chairman Nichols asked if there were any additional 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 proposed revisions to Board Policy BP-03.91, "Uniform Inmate Correspondence Rules," as presented.

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

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

§ 151.3, “Texas Board of Criminal Justice Operating Procedures”

General Counsel Stephanie Greger presented Board Rule § 151.3, “Texas Board of Criminal Justice Operating Procedures,” with proposed amendments including minor grammatical 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 151.3, “Texas Board of Criminal Justice Operating Procedures,” to receive public comment as presented.

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

§ 151.55, “Disposal of Surplus Agricultural Goods and Agricultural Personal Property”

Ms. Greger presented Board Rule § 151.55, “Disposal of Surplus Agricultural Goods and Agricultural Personal Property,” with proposed amendments including minor grammatical updates for clarity in the definitions section. 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 151.55, “Disposal of Surplus Agricultural Goods and Agricultural Personal Property,” to receive public comment as presented.

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

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed New Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 152.81, “Housing of Inmates”

Ms. Greger presented new Board Rule § 152.81, “Housing of Inmates,” which states inmates shall be housed in compliance with state and federal law in accordance with Senate Bill 8, which was passed during the last legislative session. The new rule will be posted in the *Texas Register* 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 new Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 152.81, "Housing of Inmates," to receive public comment as presented.

Dr. Rodney Burrow 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 Administrative Code Sections

§ 152.3, "Admissions"

General Counsel Stephanie Greger presented Board Rule § 152.3, "Admissions," for the adoption of amendments that add language to include the verification process of a county's request for reimbursement; remove requirements mandated by Board Rule § 152.5, "Designation of State Jail Regions," which is proposed for adoption of repeal; and make grammatical and formatting 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 152.3, "Admissions," 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.

§ 159.19, "Continuity of Care and Services Program for Offenders who are Elderly, Terminally Ill, Significantly Ill, or with a Physical Disability or Having a Mental Illness"

Ms. Greger presented Board Rule § 159.19, "Continuity of Care and Services Program for Offenders who are Elderly, Terminally Ill, Significantly Ill, or with a Physical Disability or Having a Mental Illness," for the adoption of amendments that add the Texas Workforce Commission to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU); revise "mental illness" to "mental impairment" and "terminally ill" to "terminal illness;" and make other edits and grammatical updates for clarity. These amendments were posted in the *Texas Register* for public comment. No public comments were received. The rule is proposed for adoption with a change to the published version of the rule to remove the linked graphic to the MOU. The rule will be reposted to the *Texas Register* to reflect the change, but it will not be subject to public comment. 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 159.19, "Continuity of Care and Services Program for Offenders who are Elderly, Terminally Ill, Significantly Ill, or with a Physical Disability or Having a Mental Illness," 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.

Ms. Greger revisited this action later in the meeting to clarify that the rule would be adopted with a change to remove the linked graphic to the MOU, which was previously published in the *Texas Register* for public comment. The board took further action to clarify the issue.

Judge Faith Johnson moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice adopt amendments to Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 159.19, "Continuity of Care and Services Program for Offenders who are Elderly, Terminally Ill, Significantly Ill, or with a Physical Disability or Having a Mental Illness," with changes to be republished, and that the Chairman sign the order to this effect.

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

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Adoption of Repeal of Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 152.5, "Designation of State Jail Regions"

Ms. Greger presented Board Rule § 152.5, "Designation of State Jail Regions," for adoption of the repeal due to Senate Bill 2405, 89th Regular Legislative Session, which repealed the governing statutes, Texas Government Code §§ 507.003 and 507.004. The repeal was posted in the *Texas Register* for public comment. No public comments were received.

Hearing no additional questions or comments, Chairman Nichols called for a motion and a second.

Judge Faith Johnson moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the adoption of repeal of Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 152.5, "Designation of State Jail Regions," as published in the Texas Register, and that the Chairman sign the order to this effect.

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

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Renaming of Units

Chairman Nichols stated the inventory of facilities maintained by the TDCJ has changed over the course of its history, as well as legislative priorities and programs for the Texas criminal justice system. In the mid-1990s, there was an initiative to establish a fourth category of felony offenses called state jail felonies, and certain TDCJ facilities were named state jails. The TDCJ has also acquired facilities from private operators and local governments, and those facilities were called correctional facilities. The current names of some TDCJ facilities do not reflect the modern operations of the agency today. He stated a facility called a state jail may now also house inmates of other types of felony offenses. Due to facility changes and capacity needs, the names of certain TDCJ facilities may not accurately reflect the population housed there. He stated the board is considering a resolution to rename 20 TDCJ facilities to be referred to as units for public transparency, which will not affect the assignment of the men and women housed in those facilities. He read the resolution aloud, which included renaming the following facilities:

- The Bridgeport Correctional Center shall be renamed the Bridgeport Unit;

- The Diboll Correctional Center shall be renamed the Diboll Unit;
- The Kyle Correctional Center shall be renamed the Kyle Unit;
- The Billy Moore Correctional Center shall be renamed the Billy Moore Unit;
- The James Bradshaw State Jail shall be renamed the James Bradshaw Unit;
- The Buster Cole State Jail shall be renamed the Buster Cole Unit;
- The Fabian Dale Dominguez State Jail shall be renamed the Fabian Dale Dominguez Unit;
- The Formby State Jail shall be renamed the Formby Unit;
- The Larry Gist State Jail shall be renamed the Larry Gist Unit;
- The Dempsie Henley State Jail shall be renamed the Dempsie Henley Unit;
- The Hutchins State Jail shall be renamed the Hutchins Unit;
- The John R. Lindsey State Jail shall be renamed the John R. Lindsey Unit;
- The Reynaldo V. Lopez State Jail shall be renamed the Reynaldo V. Lopez Unit;
- The Pam Lychner State Jail shall be renamed the Pam Lychner Unit;
- The Lucile Plane State Jail shall be renamed the Lucile Plane Unit;
- The Rogelio Sanchez State Jail shall be renamed the Rogelio Sanchez Unit;
- The Travis County State Jail shall be renamed the Travis Unit;
- The J.B. Wheeler State Jail shall be renamed the J.B. Wheeler Unit;
- The Willacy County State Jail shall be renamed the Willacy Unit; and
- The Linda Woodman State Jail shall be renamed the Linda Woodman Unit.

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 recommendation to rename the state jails and correctional centers to units as mentioned in the resolution presented by Chairman Nichols.

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

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Adoption of New Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 151.58, “Legislative Leave Pool”

General Counsel Stephanie Greger presented new Board Rule § 151.58, “Legislative Leave Pool,” for adoption, which establishes a legislative leave pool for correctional employees in compliance with House Bill 1828, 89th Regular Legislative Session. The new rule was 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 Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 151.58, “Legislative Leave Pool,” as published in the Texas Register, and that the Chairman sign the order to this effect.

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

Report from the Chairman, TBCJ

Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols recognized a new partnership between the TDCJ's Rehabilitation and Reentry Division and the City of Austin. He stated this partnership benefits both members of the TDCJ population and the shelter animals those individuals learn to care for and train. The Enduring Service program both improves the adoptability of shelter dogs and provides incarcerated veterans with important life skills. In providing members of the TDCJ population with important life skills, the program serves the TDCJ's mission of public safety and the rehabilitation of members of the TDCJ population, including effective reintegration into society.

Enduring Service is a 12-week program designed to teach shelter dogs basic obedience skills while providing incarcerated handlers with important life skills. In this program, personnel with the City of Austin train selected inmates at the Travis Unit, formerly the Travis County State Jail, on the basics of canine behavior, positive-reinforcement training for dogs, and responsible pet ownership. The inmates then spend the following 12 weeks training shelter dogs on basic obedience and providing human engagement to prepare those shelter dogs for adoption. This program is similar to the partnership between the Bartlett Innovation Unit and the Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter, which has proven to be extremely successful in assisting with the rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals. Other programs, such as Patriot Paws, employ similar training and goals and have similar documented success. Chairman Nichols stated he has seen across multiple TDCJ units the impact that being involved in an organized effort to truly foster dogs through training has on the men and women who are learning and applying that training.

There are obvious benefits to the canine partners of the men and women who step forward to participate in this proven effort. Dogs housed in shelters are more likely to be adopted and to have successful adoptions by forever families if given obedience training. He stated the board is focused on programs that help with rehabilitation and reentry. Through this program and programs like it, members of the TDCJ population gain skills beyond canine training techniques, such as valuable life and soft skills related to contributing positively to the community, learning to take responsibility for their own needs and the needs of others, and what it means to be a responsible member of a broader community. The Enduring Service program is a true partnership between the City of Austin and the TDCJ.

TDCJ personnel are responsible for screening and selecting inmates who step forward to be handlers. Handlers are trained by City staff and are required to follow a daily list to appropriately care for the pets. This list includes the proper ways to feed, exercise, and house the dogs. Weekly behavior logs are completed to document the dog's training and behavior progress. City personnel determine which pets in the care of City shelters would be appropriate candidates for the program. The dogs are fully vaccinated, spayed or neutered, microchipped, and treated for fleas and ticks. In addition, the City provides food, care items, and basic veterinary services, and is responsible for transporting the dogs to the facility, as well as conducting weekly pet health assessments. With its focus on rehabilitation, community engagement, and animal well-being, Enduring Service exemplifies how innovative partnerships can create lasting change. Mr. Nichols presented a video showcasing the program. He introduced City of Austin Convention Center Deputy Director Rolando Fernandez to present information about the program. He thanked Mr. Fernandez for collaborating with the TDCJ to create such a wonderful program that impacts both those incarcerated and dogs in the shelter.

Mr. Fernandez recognized the new Austin Animal Services Director, Monica Dangler. Mr. Fernandez previously served as the interim director, providing services to the animals in the shelter and the incarcerated population of the TDCJ. He thanked the Rehabilitation and Reentry Division leadership and the Travis Unit warden for their collaboration. He stated the name, Enduring Service, stemmed from the idea that a veteran never truly completes their service.

Chairman Nichols stated it is important to spotlight programs, such as Enduring Service, to inform the public and highlight the rehabilitative work being done.

Report from the Executive Director, TDCJ

Executive Director Bobby Lumpkin shared a report on the agency's participation in the State Employee Charitable Campaign and the opening of the Giles W. Dalby Unit.

State Employee Charitable Campaign

With 104 units and approximately 32,000 employees, the TDCJ is embedded in communities across the State of Texas. The agency mission is to keep Texas communities safe, but the men and women of the agency go beyond that call, supporting communities and those in need. Each year, the TDCJ joins other state agencies and higher education institutions in participating in the State Employee Charitable Campaign (SECC) of Texas. Created by the Texas legislature in 1993, SECC is one of the largest state employee campaigns in the country. From September 1st through October 31st, TDCJ units, divisions, and departments hold campaigns to raise money for various charities as part of SECC. From bake sales and silent auctions to "boo-grams" and other events, SECC coordinators host creative fundraisers to engage employees and raise funds for vetted nonprofit organizations. Mr. Lumpkin announced that, in 2025, agency employees contributed more than \$358,000 to charities with over \$238,000 cash donations and approximately \$120,000 in payroll deductions. He thanked all the volunteers who coordinated those events and the employees across the state that donated to great causes. He stated those efforts will significantly impact the lives of Texans. He presented a video showcasing the SECC campaign.

Judge Faith Johnson asked if board members can donate to SECC campaign efforts. Mr. Lumpkin confirmed and stated she could contact his office for more information.

Giles W. Dalby Unit

The TDCJ began operating the Giles W. Dalby Unit in Post, Texas last month. During the 89th legislative session, the TDCJ was allocated funds to purchase the 251,000 square-foot facility from Garza County for \$110 million. The Giles W. Dalby Unit, named after the late Garza County judge, will have a capacity of approximately 1,900 inmates. The facility, built between 1997 and 1998, is fully air conditioned and sits on 72 acres of land. Incarcerated individuals at the unit will have the opportunity to participate in educational courses, substance use treatment, and life skills programs. In addition to academic courses, the Windham School District will offer Introduction to Construction Careers and RV Service Technician programs to equip students with workforce skills as well as the Changing Habits and Achieving New Goals to Empower Success (CHANGES) program and cognitive intervention to assist with life skills.

To help combat substance use and addiction, inmates who arrive at the unit will have an opportunity to enroll in a Recovery Housing Opportunity Program (RHOP). This program helps inmates build character, correct self-defeating behaviors, and practice self-examination and servant leadership to

achieve long-term sobriety. Led by peer recovery specialists, participants learn from a holistic curriculum and live in a zero-tolerance environment that promotes health, accountability, and lasting recovery. After completing RHOP, individuals are moved to a Sober Living dorm, to live in a supportive environment that provides structure, accountability, and a community focused on recovery and maintaining sobriety. The Dalby Unit will have a housing area for the Substance Use Education Program (SUEP). This six-month, parole-voted program uses modified therapeutic community methods to promote positive behavior through education, peer support, and accountability. Placement is determined by a risk-based screening tool; higher-risk inmates enter the full Therapeutic Community program while lower-risk inmates participate in SUEP's focused education track.

The Corrective Intervention Pre-Release Program is a four-month program designed to transition individuals from restrictive housing to general population. The program, built on the principles of motivational interviewing and cognitive behavior therapy, helps participants build self-awareness, make healthier decisions, and learn empathy for others. Additionally, certified mental health peers, life coaches, and field ministers will be assigned to the unit, providing the population with more opportunities to transform their lives. Mr. Lumpkin stated the agency began populating the unit at the beginning of January and expects the unit to be fully populated in March. Next week, the TDCJ will host a dedication ceremony, and he expressed his excitement for the coming event.

Chairman Nichols read aloud the resolution celebrating the establishment of the Giles W. Dalby Unit.

Sydney Zuiker moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the recommendation for the establishment of the Giles W. Dalby Unit, Post, Texas, as mentioned in the resolution presented by Chairman Nichols.

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

Mr. Lumpkin expressed appreciation for the recruiting efforts of the Human Resources Division and special training sessions offered by the Training and Leader Development Division for the Dalby Unit.

Status Report on Information Technology Initiatives

Chief Information Officer Tina Clark presented a report on information technology projects with board oversight.

The first project, the Technology Enhanced Inmate Count, is in the procurement phase and expected to be completed by the end of March with the project on track to be completed in July 2026. Site visits with vendors were conducted at the Estelle Unit on February 17th, and their bids are due on March 3rd.

The second project, Inmate Banking, is in the execution phase and 18% complete with \$340,000 from the allocated budget spent so far. It is on track for completion by November 2026.

The third project, the Centralized Accounting Payroll and Personnel System (CAPPS), is in the execution phase and is 55% complete. This project is recognized as a high-risk project, but it is on track with a go-live date of July 13, 2026.

The fourth project, Broadband Connectivity, remains in the pre-solicitation phase. The completion date of that phase has changed from February 2026 to April 2026. The projected date for the contract to be awarded is December 2026.

The fifth project, Corrections Information Technology System (CITS 2.0), has moved to the procurement evaluation phase. The new completion date for this project is June 2026. Two solicitations are under evaluation. One is for the offender management system, and the second is for program and project management.

The sixth project, Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Crime Management System, remains in the pre-solicitation phase. The completion of that phase has changed from February 2026 to March 2026 with the projected execution date for the contract in September 2026.

The seventh project, Learning Management System (LMS), remains in the pre-solicitation phase, and the completion date for that phase is April 2026. The projected contract execution date has changed from September 2026 to October 2026.

The eighth project, Video Surveillance Analog Conversion, remains in the pre-solicitation phase. The completion date of that phase changed from February 2026 to May 2026. The projected contract execution date has changed from September 2026 to December 2026.

Chairman Nichols asked if the completion date for the first project would be July 2026. Ms. Clark confirmed. Mr. Nichols commented that, as the pilot program for that project begins, the facility will be available for any member of the legislature to see how that modernization effort is working and thanked her for the hard work put into that project. He asked if there were any additional questions or comments. Pastor Nate Sprinkle asked if any of the technology advances in the first project would be involved in the fourth project. Ms. Clark stated the fourth project focuses on getting fiber infrastructure to each building. The Estelle Unit has a fiber presence, and the network will be expanded.

Sunset Implementation Overview Presentation

Office of Strategic Initiatives and Modernization (OSIM) Director Andrew Barbee presented an overview on the agency's Sunset implementation progress. The Sunset staff report and Senate Bill (SB) 2405 laid out action items for the agency. The OSIM is responsible for the oversight and support of agency-wide implementation efforts, including tracking analytics and performance reporting. The implementation topic areas were divided into eight different issues with many overlapping. There were also recommendations provided by the Sunset Committee along with additions made by the TDCJ to SB 2405.

Mr. Barbee stated there are more than 350 subtasks that need to be accomplished to address 73 implementation projects. Critical steps include coordination with all divisions to identify key stakeholders and the creation of a consolidated platform with necessary business processes for communicating and tracking. Mr. Barbee discussed an example project, which involves creating a long-term facilities and staffing plan that identifies future needs and makes recommendations to organize resources and capacity accordingly. This requires an assembly of unit-specific data, including staffing, maintenance, logistics, and modernization. Another example is the project to track program placement and completion for inmates voted for release by the Board of Pardons and Paroles and use this data to inform strategic planning. The creation of an Excel-based tracker will provide insight into multiple areas, including the number of inmates awaiting placement, placement waitlist times, reasons for enrollment delays, revised

votes related to ineligibility, number of inmates unable to complete program prior to target dates, and other factors. He stated the agency has made impressive progress with only approximately 100 inmates not placed in a program. Of the 73 projects, 40 have been completed. Draft compliance reports are being prepared for submission to the Sunset Commission and the State Auditor's Office.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Judge Faith Johnson expressed appreciation for Mr. Barbee and his team's progress. Executive Director Bobby Lumpkin recognized the great progress made and thanked all of the divisions involved.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Facilities Division Construction Projects – Status of Board Approved Projects

Status of Board Approved Projects

Facilities Division Director Damon Andrews reviewed the Status of Board Approved Projects.

- Item 1 is the roof replacement project at the Michael Unit which is complete. The board-approved program cost for this project was \$12,621,300, and the estimated closeout cost of this project is \$10,921,546, which is 13% under program cost.
- Item 2 is the roof replacement project at the Hughes Unit, which is 2% complete. Submittals are ongoing, the schedule is approved, and the contractor is mobilizing.
- Item 3 is the Huntsville Unit project to replace the roof for building No. 1121. The Notice to Proceed is pending.
- Item 4 is the Huntsville Unit project to repair and replace the mechanical department building roof which is 32% complete. The contractor is working on roofing area No. 4 over the vehicle repair area.
- Item 5 is the Stringfellow Unit project to replace the roof and rooftop HVAC equipment for the Bachelor Officer Quarters building No. 1732. The Notice to Proceed is pending.
- Item 6 is the Holliday Unit project to construct a new training facility which is 71% complete. The contractor is installing the ceiling grid in building A, which is the main office building, and electrical and plumbing in building B, which is the barracks. The contractor is also installing range equipment in building C, which is the firing range.
- Item 7 is the Ferguson Unit project to construct a water treatment plant which is 40% complete. Ground storage tanks are being installed, and the contractor is pouring foundation for the chemical control building.
- Item 8 is the Ramsey Unit project to renovate the water tower, which is 30% complete. The containment system has been installed, and sandblasting has begun on the water tower.
- Item 9 is the Connally Unit project to replace plumbing and controls in 3, 4, 7, 10, and 11 buildings for inmate housing which is 62% complete. The contractor has completed 3 building and is mobilizing at 4 building.
- Item 10 is the Connally Unit project to replace plumbing and controls in 8, 12, 18, and 19 buildings for inmate housing which is 21% complete. The electrical is complete in 8 building, and conduit for the electrical is being installed in 12 building.
- Item 11 is the Ellis Unit project to install a fire alarm system which is 65% complete. The contractor is pulling wire and installing fire alarm devices and conduit.
- Item 12 is the Ferguson Unit project to install a fire alarm system which is 80% complete. The contractor is installing underground conduit between the main building, north gym, and contact visitation area.

- Item 13 is the Beto Unit project to renovate the icehouse which is 90% complete. The contractor is finalizing electrical work and preparing for final inspection.
- Item 14 is the Beto Unit project to install a transformer substation. The Notice to Proceed is pending.
- Item 15 is the Hobby Unit project to construct a multi-use facility, which is 8% complete. Temporary power has been installed to the contractor trailer, and the contractor has begun relocating subsurface utilities.
- Item 16 is the Goodman Unit project to install HVAC – ISF which is 98% complete. The generator has arrived and is being installed. The air conditioning is fully operational.
- Item 17 is the Michael Unit project for HVAC system efficiency upgrades to inmate housing 12 building which is complete. The board-approved program cost for this project was \$6,559,500, and the estimated closeout cost of this project is \$4,683,115, which is 24% under program cost.
- Item 18 is the Stiles Unit project for HVAC system efficiency upgrades to inmate housing 12 building which is 25% complete. All air handlers are on site, and all conduit installation work is completed.
- Item 19 is the Boyd Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 6% complete. The laydown yard is complete. Submittals are ongoing, and the equipment has been ordered with an estimated delivery date of September 2026.
- Item 20 is the Gurney Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 8% complete. The laydown yard is complete. Submittals are ongoing, and the equipment has been ordered with an estimated delivery date of July 2026.
- Item 21 is the Hightower Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 6% complete. The laydown yard is complete. Submittals are ongoing, and the equipment has no estimated delivery date.
- Item 22 is the Jester III Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 20% complete. The contractor is installing concrete pads for the main building. Trusty camp installation work is ongoing. All HVAC equipment is on site.
- Item 23 is the Luther Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 20% complete. The installation of equipment in the dayroom and north dorm of the trusty camp is ongoing. HVAC equipment is on site.
- Item 24 is the Polunsky Unit project to install HVAC – 3 building which is 6% complete. Installation of the concrete pads is ongoing. Equipment has been ordered with an estimated delivery date of April 2026.
- Item 25 is the Powledge Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 22% complete. The contractor is installing concrete pads for the main building. Trusty camp installation is ongoing. Equipment has been ordered with an estimated delivery date of March 2026.
- Item 26 is the Stevenson Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 5% complete. The laydown yard is complete. Submittals are ongoing, and the equipment has been ordered with an estimated delivery date of September 2026.
- Item 27 is the Stiles Unit project to install HVAC – 8 building which is 7% complete. The contractor is installing concrete pads for the HVAC equipment. The laydown yard is complete. Submittals are ongoing, and the equipment is being ordered.
- Item 28 is the Terrell Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 25% complete. Installation of electrical and duct work is ongoing. Equipment has been ordered with an estimated delivery date of April 2026.
- Item 29 is the Bell Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 30 is the C. Moore Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 31 is the Estes Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 32 is the Hamilton Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.

- Item 33 is the Hightower Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 34 is the Jester III Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 35 is the Lopez Unit project to construct expansion dorms; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 36 is the Luther Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 37 is the Memorial Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 38 is the Montford Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 39 is the Pack Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 40 is the Sanchez Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 41 is the Travis Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Judge Faith Johnson mentioned Item 17 and asked if that completion time was considered the average for most projects. Mr. Andrews stated it depends on lead times for equipment or any unforeseen issues for installation. He stated the air conditioning projects are a high priority.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action **Regarding Proposed Land Transactions**

Request to Amend an Existing Facilities Site and Road Access Easements, Halbert Unit, Burnet, Texas

Mr. Lewis presented the request of the Atmos Energy Corporation to expand by amendment an existing surface facilities site easement. The easement was originally granted in 2019. The client would like to expand the existing easement of 0.59 acres by an additional 0.287 acres or 12,500 square feet of land. In addition, the client requests 0.147 acres or 6,403.32 square feet of land to use for temporary workspace. The expanded area will be used as an upgrade to their ongoing operations and maintenance of several permanent gas pipeline easements. Atmos Energy Corporation has agreed to pay \$9,765 for the amendment of the existing easement for a ten-year term. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area.

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

Dr. Rodney Burrow moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to amend an existing facilities site and road access easements at the Halbert Unit, Burnet, Texas, as presented.

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

Request to Renew an Expiring Natural Gas Pipeline, Boyd Unit, Teague, Texas

Mr. Lewis presented the request of Energy Transfer Fuel, L.P. to renew an easement at the Boyd Unit consisting of an area of 13.05 acres of land or 9,476.39 feet long (574.33 rods) by 60 feet wide for one natural gas liquid pipeline. Energy Transfer Fuel, L.P. has agreed to pay \$402,031 for the renewal of this

easement for a ten-year term. The initial easement was granted in 2006 with a renewal in 2016. This will be the second renewal. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area.

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

Ambassador Sichan Siv moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to renew an expiring natural gas pipeline at the Boyd Unit, Teague, Texas, as presented.

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

Report from the Office of the Independent Ombudsman

Independent Ombudsman Brian Patrick presented a report on the Office of the Independent Ombudsman (OIO). Mr. Patrick provided information encompassing December 1, 2025, through January 15, 2026. The OIO received 708 inquiries during this period that required substantive work, including two which were sent by a consular general or a legislative office. The current fiscal year 2026 total is 1,986 inquiries. A study into food service quality, quantity, and sanitation of food service areas is ongoing. Mr. Patrick reported receipt of 327 emergency inquiries, which often involve a life and danger allegation; 129 medical inquiries which were forwarded to the Health Services Division for handling; 56 facility inquiries; and 24 inquiries concerning staff issues. Inquiries reach the OIO primarily through email and web forms. Mr. Patrick noted that 75 inquiries required translation services.

Chairman Nichols reiterated that medical inquiries are not handled by the OIO. Mr. Patrick confirmed, stating this was due to privacy laws. Mr. Nichols asked where an individual should send a medical inquiry. Mr. Patrick stated those can be emailed to health.services@tdcj.texas.gov.

Report from the Independent Office of Inmate Counsel

Independent Office of Inmate Counsel (IOIC) Director Wyvonne Long presented a report on the IOIC. She stated the IOIC held their Annual Winter Meeting at Game Show Battle Rooms and discussed matters pertaining to the IOIC at the Conroe office. The IOIC recently lost a valued attorney, Staff Attorney Stephanie Carl. Three new attorneys have been hired: Richmond Agyemang and Alexander Huffman will be working in Criminal Defense, and Hayley O'Brien will be working in Civil Defense. Legal Services hired a new legal assistant, Mya Edwards. Ms. Long stated there are more than 1,400 active cases, and the IOIC has handled more than 3,000 pieces of correspondence. During this timeframe, the IOIC opened 172 cases and closed 137 cases.

Report from the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Ombudsman

PREA Ombudsman Cassandra presented a report from the Office of the PREA Ombudsman. From October 2025 through January 2026, there were 1,015 PREA inquiries received, with 607 from the public and 408 from inmates. She stated 1,013 inquiries were completed, including 599 from the public and 414 from inmates. She stated the PREA Ombudsman Compliance Specialists have assisted with 14 PREA

audits at TDCJ facilities, including eight Correctional Institutions Division (CID) facilities and six community supervision corrections departments. She stated 691 PREA investigations were reviewed, and PREA management attended the Texas Correctional Association event in November 2025. Ms. McGilbra announced her retirement for August 2026. Chairman Nichols thanked her for the report and her contributions to the TDCJ.

Report from the Office of the Independent Auditor

Chris Cirrito, Chief Audit Executive, presented the Office of the Independent Auditor (OIA) Status Report for Fiscal Years (FY) 2024, 2025, and 2026. For FY 2024:

- **2411 – Emerging Risks:**
 - *Time Scan Application* has moved from Office of the Inspector General (OIG) assistance to an audit and is complete.

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

- Two consultations are ongoing.
 - **2502** – *Inmate Custody* is complete.
 - **2508** – *Purchasing* is complete.
- Seven full scope projects:
 - Four are ongoing.
 - **2504** – *Inmate Communication Contracts* is in reporting.
 - **2506** – *Super Intensive Supervision Program and Electronic Monitoring Program* is in fieldwork.
 - **2510** – *Inmate Identification Documents* is in reporting.
 - **2512** – *Internal Audit Self Study* is ongoing. The OIA is in conversations with a peer review team to audit the OIA.
 - One is complete.
 - **2507** – *Windham School District Career and Technical Education Tool Control* is a final report.
 - Two will be completed in FY 2026.

Mr. Cirrito continued with updates to the Internal Audit Status Report for FY 2026:

- **2613** – *A Follow-Up of State Ready* is in the report writing stage.

Mr. Cirrito stated he is retiring March 31st and will be available to assist whoever is selected to replace him. Chairman Nichols recognized Mr. Cirrito for his outstanding contributions and emphasized the importance of the internal auditing role. Mr. Cirrito thanked his wife for her love and support.

(Attachment B – Office of the Independent Auditor Status Report)

Report from the Office of the Inspector General

Inspector General Lance Coleman reported on behalf of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). He discussed a case where the OIG received information from the Fusion Center concerning the possible introduction of contraband into the Allred Unit. It was suspected that a civilian intended to introduce K2 during visitation. The individual went into the restroom, which was searched, and paper laced with K2 was discovered. Chairman Nichols asked if there was a specific formula for the substance labeled as K2. Mr. Coleman stated there was not. Mr. Nichols asked if the OIG could know what substances have been combined to lace those papers. Mr. Coleman stated it is unknown and would need further testing. Mr. Nichols asked if the presence of fentanyl has been found. Mr. Coleman confirmed.

The next case involved a former employee at the Clements Unit attempting to mail in K2 and methamphetamines. OIG seized \$374,669 in cash along with liquid K2, powder K2, and paper K2. Mr. Coleman also presented a case that involved a partnership with the Arizona Police Department concerning a parolee on an interstate compact from Texas attempting to mail in contraband via books and mailing material. Legal mail stamps were used to attempt to circumvent searches, and religious mailers were also used.

Chairman Nichols expressed his appreciation for the OIG's work to combat this issue. Judge Faith Johnson asked if there was any information on how many arrests have been made. Mr. Coleman stated there were 201 arrests last year, 56 were employees, and the remainder were visitors or people visiting the unit. He stated the Contraband Free Zone signs are placed at every unit and at the highway gate to remind individuals of the consequences for attempting to introduce contraband.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Selection of Chief Audit Executive

Chairman Nichols stated the Office of the Independent Auditor reports directly to the board and assists the agency administrator by furnishing independent analyses, appraisals, and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of the agency's system and internal control procedures and the quality of performance in carrying out the assigned responsibilities.

Chairman Nichols stated board composed a selection committee to engage in a broad search process for Mr. Cirrito's successor. Thomas Fordyce, who was part of the selection committee, stated the committee was entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring a competitive and transparent process. The position was posted on January 5th and remained open for one month, closing on February 4, 2026. The vacancy was advertised on the TDCJ website, Work in Texas website, and LinkedIn. Following the close of the application period, applicants were reviewed to ensure that the minimum qualifications of the position were met. The selection committee conducted interviews with qualified applicants regarding their respective experience, qualifications, and overall ability to lead the OIA. After careful consideration of the interview process and each candidate's professional background, the process was conducted with careful evaluation of each candidate's qualifications and experience to ensure the board is presented with a well-considered recommendation for this important leadership role.

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 selection of Renee Russell effective March 1, 2026.

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

Newly appointed Chief Audit Executive Renee Russell stated serving the OIA has been a privilege and expressed her commitment to furthering the collaboration between the OIA and the TDCJ.

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 April 16-17, 2026, in Georgetown, Texas, and adjourned the 245th meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice at 12:26 p.m.

Chairman*

Secretary*