

Texas Board of Criminal Justice 246th Meeting



Minutes

**April 16-17, 2026
Georgetown, Texas**

TEXAS BOARD OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

**Sheraton Austin-Georgetown Hotel & Conference Center
1101 Woodlawn Avenue
Georgetown, Texas 78628**

Thursday, April 16, 2026

Executive Session

8:00 – 8:45 AM

Regular Session

8:45 AM – 1:00 PM

Friday, April 17, 2026

Regular Session

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Call to Order – Thursday, April 16, 2026

Convene Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ) Meeting

Recess to TBCJ Executive Session

I. Executive Session – Ames Meeting Room

- A. The TBCJ may convene into Executive Session.
- B. Discussion of personnel matters relating to the Board of Criminal Justice, the Executive Director, the Inspector General, the Director of the 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 TBCJ Executive Session

Reconvene TBCJ Meeting – Regular Session

Call to Order

II. Regular Session – San Gabriel A-E

- A. Recognitions
- B. Public Comments
- C. Consideration of Approval of Consent Items
 - 1. Hazardous Duty Pay Authorization Requests
 - 2. Personal Property Donations
 - 3. 245th TBCJ Meeting Minutes
 - 4. Excused Absences
- D. Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Parole Division Spotlight
- E. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Amendments to Board Rules Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Sections
 - 1. 163.38, “Sex Offender Supervision”
 - 2. 195.81, “Temporary Housing Assistance Program”
- F. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Adoption of Amendments to Board Rules Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Sections
 - 1. 151.52, “Sick Leave Pool”
 - 2. 151.53, “Family Leave Pool”
- G. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Purchases and Contracts Over \$1 Million
- H. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Capital Authority Transfer Requests
- I. Report from the Chairman, TBCJ
- J. Report from the Executive Director, TDCJ
- K. Status Report on Information Technology Initiatives
- L. Chaplaincy Presentation
- M. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Facilities Division Construction Projects
 - 1. Status of Board Approved Projects
 - 2. Request to Install Efficiency Upgrades to Mechanical Electrical Plumbing System – Regional Medical Facility, Estelle Unit, Huntsville, Texas
 - 3. Request to Install HVAC – Inmate Housing, Dominguez Unit, San Antonio, Texas
 - 4. Request to Install HVAC – Inmate Housing, Gist Unit, Beaumont, Texas
 - 5. Request to Install HVAC – Inmate Housing, Hutchins Unit, Dallas, Texas
 - 6. Request to Install HVAC – Inmate Housing, Segovia Unit, Edinburg, Texas

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

- N. Report from the Independent Office of Inmate Counsel
- O. Report from the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Ombudsman
- P. Report from the Office of the Independent Auditor
- Q. Report from the Office of Inspector General
- R. Report from the Office of the Independent Ombudsman
- S. Election of Officers

Recess TBCJ Meeting

Reconvene TBCJ Meeting – Regular Session, Friday, April 17, 2026

Call to Order

III. (Continued) Regular Session – San Gabriel A-E

- T. 31st Annual Governor’s Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Awards Ceremony

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. 246**

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ or board) convened into executive session at 8:07 a.m. at the Sheraton Austin-Georgetown Hotel & Conference Center in Georgetown, Texas, on Thursday, April 16, 2026, recessed at 8:55 a.m., reconvened into regular session at 9:03 a.m., and recessed at 2:20 p.m. The TBCJ reconvened into regular session on Friday, April 17, 2026, at 10:16 a.m. at the Sheraton Austin-Georgetown Hotel & Conference Center in Georgetown, Texas, and adjourned at 12:06 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
Martin Garza
Ambassador Sichan Siv
Pastor Nate Sprinkle
General Bill Welch
Sydney Zuiker

**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 Bill Lewis
Kate Blifford Angie McCown
Chris Carter Monica Ruiz de Velasco
Tina Clark Rachelle White
Jennifer Gonzales April Zamora
Carey Green

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

Lance Coleman Brian Patrick
Jill Durst Renee Russell
Wyvonne Long

OTHERS PRESENT:

Cecilia Abbott, First Lady of Texas
Tim McDonnell, Board of Pardons and Paroles
Marsha Moberley, Board of Pardons and Paroles
Megan Molleur, Office of the Lieutenant Governor
Patrick O'Daniel, Former TBCJ Chairman
Shakira Pumphrey, Texas House of Representatives
Mike Ward, Senate Criminal Justice Committee

Executive Session

Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols convened the 246th meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice into executive session on Thursday, April 16, 2026, at 8:07 a.m., and recessed at 8:55 a.m.

Reconvene the Texas Board of Criminal Justice

Chairman Nichols reconvened the 246th meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ) on Thursday, April 16, 2026, at 9:03 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." Registration cards for public comment were received from 19 attendees prior to the deadline, and the board heard public presentations later in the meeting.

Recognitions

Chairman Nichols recognized recently appointed board member Martin Garza who brings a wealth of public service experience, as he previously served as Chief of Police and City Manager for the City of Mission, City Manager for the City of Weslaco, and as Chief of Staff for Hidalgo County Precinct 3. He also serves as chairman of the Mission Redevelopment Authority Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone No. 1. Mr. Garza earned an associate's degree in law enforcement from Laredo College, formerly Laredo Junior College, and a bachelor's degree in Police Administration from the University of Texas (UT) Rio Grande Valley, formerly UT Pan American. On his first visit to a Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) facility, Mr. Garza demonstrated he would be an active member of the board. Mr. Nichols stated the board is grateful for his willingness to continue serving the people of Texas. Mr. Garza thanked Governor Greg Abbott for the opportunity and expressed his enthusiasm to work with the other board members.

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 Executive Director Bobby Lumpkin, he expressed deep gratitude for the continued service of these employees. During the months of March and April 2026, 42 employees attained 25 years of service, 41 employees attained 30 years of service, 10 employees attained 35 years of service, nine 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 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 Audit Executive Renee Russell recognized Deputy Chief Audit Executive Cheryl Foreman for her recent promotion. She highlighted Ms. Foreman's career, which includes more than 13 years of auditing experience. She described Ms. Foreman as a thoughtful and deliberate team member who approaches

complex issues with sound judgment and a steady perspective. Chairman Nichols congratulated her on her new role. Ms. Foreman noted her gratitude and honor in assuming this new role.

Parole Division Director Monica Ruiz de Velasco recognized Section Director Bridgette Hadnott for her recent promotion. She highlighted Ms. Hadnott's career, which began as a parole officer over ten years ago in the Houston area. Ms. Hadnott played an instrumental role in establishing a second command center in the Houston area and has developed and maintained collaboration with the Texas Department of Public Safety. Ms. Hadnott expressed her passion for parole work and thanked the board for the opportunity. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her leadership.

Public Comments

Chairman Nichols stated that 19 registration cards for public comment, regarding matters within the jurisdiction of the TBCJ but not items posted on the agenda, were received prior to the established deadline. The time limit set was three minutes per individual for each topic, and he outlined the requirements for speaker registration in accordance with the *Open Meetings Act*.

Dani Allen registered to speak on prison conditions. She stated inmate Rex Alexander TDCJ #648577 has been denied parole due to the nature of his offense and stated there is a broader issue concerning fairness and transparency in decision making related to parole. She discussed nutrition issues within TDCJ facilities and asked the board to make unannounced visits at TDCJ facilities to experience the meals provided to inmates. She asked why fruit or vegetable pouches are not available like in other states. She stated photos are not being taken and described an incident with an officer at the Stiles Unit concerning the photo process. She claimed that a captain at the Polunsky Unit stated she should not visit because she is handicapped. Judge Faith Johnson asked for further information about the photo process. Ms. Allen stated the units are supposed to provide photos every first full weekend of the month, which is not happening at the Stiles Unit due to multiple camera issues. Chairman Nichols stated that while parole-eligibility issues fall under the authority of the Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP), representatives of the BPP were present.

Angie Agapetus registered to speak on solitary confinement. She described it as inhumane and asked for it to be abolished. She also discussed the importance of air conditioning and asked if half of the TDCJ prisons are supposed to be air-conditioned by 2027. Chairman Nichols stated he would ask this question during the agenda item addressing air-conditioning projects.

Jessica Barrow registered to speak on nutrition. She stated that nearly 45% of the incarcerated population lives with a diagnosed mental health condition and noted that research indicates inadequate nutrition can worsen mental health and negatively affect other aspects of life. She asked the board to consider having the agency buy food rather than growing it, noting that the food currently grown results in a lower-quality product. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comments.

Tina Barrow registered to speak on intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). She shared that she has an adult child with a similar disability and stated the agency has failed to adequately identify, support, and protect these individuals. She asked for standardized clinical screening to identify individuals with IDD, training for staff to identify and respond to these individuals, and specialized housing and programming for individuals with IDD. She asked to ensure continuity of care in restrictive housing and to ensure policies are enforced appropriately.

Gloria Rubac registered to speak on medical release forms and call and visitation lists. She said death row inmates only have one list, which reduces the amount of people who can contact those inmates. She discussed medical releases for family members, which she suggested should be electronic for convenience. She asked if inmates could be notified a month before the medical release form expires, so family members do not lose access to an inmate's health information. She stated short staffing negatively impacts restrictive housing and asked to increase pay for correctional officers. She stated photos should be offered another time besides at night to allow for people who have difficulty driving at night to participate.

David Rumyon registered to speak on the grievance process. He stated grievances are not handled properly and are denied for irrelevant reasons. He discussed personal experiences with the process, and expressed his concern related to both timeliness and suitability of responses. He recommended an outside auditor review the process.

Goldie Villanueva registered to speak on mail delivery and a disciplinary case given to her husband who is incarcerated and herself for a three-way phone call that she stated did not occur. She stated evidence was provided to prove the call did not occur, and no response has been given to her husband's grievances regarding the issue. She also discussed mail issues, stating her husband is not receiving his paper mail. Chairman Nichols asked that she leave information identifying her husband prior to her departure to allow for a review of the matter.

Marci Simmons registered to speak on extreme heat and stated the agency's plans do not seem to be concrete, stating it could take decades to air-condition all units at the current rate. She discussed an incident where an inmate received a disciplinary case and her heat sensitivity score was removed at the same time. She criticized the way the agency presented the percentage of heat-related deaths related to heat, emphasizing that any death should be regarded as significant. She stated the agency has never asked for full funding to air-condition all units and asked the board to formally pursue this request. She requested that the agency collect core body temperatures for medical emergencies. Chairman Nichols stated the topic of air conditioning will be discussed on another agenda item later in the meeting and commented that the public can access a snapshot of cool beds for the agency on the agency's website.

Melissa Chapman-Bell registered to speak on extreme heat, restrictive housing, and mental health. She asked for an emergency declaration for temporary air conditioning for all facilities. She stated the Safe Outdoor Dogs Act protects dogs from direct sunlight and excessive heat and questioned why inmates are not given the same consideration. She also stated the non-standardized phone schedules create issues for family members who must balance work and school commitments. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comments.

Gaye Weintraub registered to speak on policy and procedure as the secretary of the Texas Prison Transparency Project. She explained that after recently identifying her biological parents, she learned that Bruce Wayne Walker, who is incarcerated, is her relative. She stated that she had been approved for contact visits as his niece until she emailed concerns about the facility's 15-day lockdown policy and the conduct of a sergeant who, she noted, later died of a drug overdose. Following her email, Ms. Weintraub stated she was reclassified as a friend and placed under investigation, and the documentation proving her relationship to Mr. Walker could not be located. She stated Mr. Walker was transferred to a medical unit, and he has still not been granted access to the craft shop despite having an active craft shop card. She asked for transparency and accountability concerning her situation and for consistent and fair enforcement of policy and procedure. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her respectful and thoughtful advocacy.

Jennifer Toon registered to speak on behalf of the Lioness Justice Impacted Women's Alliance regarding disability accommodation and conditions at Hospital Galveston. She discussed the women with disabilities at the Lane Murray Unit who cannot access showers and restrooms with safety and dignity. She discussed sexual assault allegations at the Hospital Galveston Unit and conditions of confinement during medical transports. She asked for preventative action to be taken to create safer conditions of confinement. Chairman Nichols thanked her for being a positive contributor to the discussion.

Celandria Foster registered to speak on classification in her capacity as the wife of an incarcerated individual. She requested clarification on the use of a high-profile designation in classification, stating that the term is not clearly defined in policy. She explained that individuals labeled as high-profile are subjected to repeated cell moves, frequent shakedowns, and other restrictions. She further stated that her efforts to obtain clarification on the designation have been met with hostility from classification staff and that no defined process exists for removal of the high-profile status. She added that agency staff feel pressured to carry out unnecessary cell moves due to fear of internal repercussions. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her thoughtful advocacy and asked her to leave information regarding her loved one.

Brittany Robertson registered to speak on restrictive housing on behalf of Texas Prison Reform. She provided data regarding security threat group members obtained through public information requests along with data regarding parole and suicides. She stated many gang members in restrictive housing asked to be released to general population. She asked that restrictive housing inmates be allowed to obtain a general educational development (GED) certificate. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comments.

Shelly Danner registered to speak on leadership. She discussed the importance of leadership roles, asking for those leaders to know what is happening on their facility and to show up consistently. She urged the board to visit facilities unannounced to see the truth. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comments.

Tona Southards Naranjo registered to speak on transparency, accountability, and rehabilitation. She discussed her son who passed away while incarcerated. She stated the TDCJ is continuing to see issues with substance abuse, lack of education, and declining mental health. She stated individuals are being released without rehabilitation. She requested clarity on the re-creation of documents discussed during testimony in a recent trial. She asked what safeguards are in place to ensure documents are trustworthy. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comments.

Wolf Sittler registered to speak on correctional officers, prison conditions, and the Inmate Management, Partnership for Accountability, Collaboration, and Transparency (IMPACT) Consortium. He stated he is a member of the new IMPACT Consortium with the TDCJ, which allows people outside of the system to offer their perspective. He stated the average lifespan of correctional officers is 59 years old, and officers experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at higher rates than the military. He stated issues of substance abuse and divorce impact officers as well, which contributes to the vacancy rate. He asked for inmate advisory councils to be created to give the incarcerated population a voice. Chairman Nichols thanked him for his comments and willingness to participate.

Beth Bell registered to speak on reentry progress. She spoke about her concerns presented last year at a previous board meeting, which were heard and resolved. She was transferred to the Georgetown Parole Office and assigned a new parole officer. She was approved for minimal supervision within three weeks and has been treated with consistent respect and professionalism. She shared her experience after attempting suicide, which resulted in hospitalization and the loss of her job. She was supported by her parole team who helped her find another job to remain compliant with her conditions of parole. She has since stepped into a management role at this company and has prioritized taking care of herself.

Chairman Nichols invited the audience to acknowledge her with applause and thanked her for her bravery in sharing her experience.

Scott Odierno registered to speak on the book ban as a representative of the Inside Books Project. He stated the used book ban is too restrictive for projects such as the Inside Books Project. He stated contraband is not coming through organizations like theirs, and such organizations should be allowed to send used books. He asked to be allowed to send non-fiction hardbacks and library books with marks or labels, along with good-condition paperbacks that may contain highlighting or other markings. He stated the portal would place an overwhelming strain on the organization and requested an exception so that entering every publication would not be required. Chairman Nichols thanked him for his participation.

Yancy Escobar Balderis registered to speak on harassment at the Polunsky Unit. She discussed the dress code and stated she was wearing a jacket to visit her loved one when an officer told her she would have to wear a blue gown over her outfit. She asked to speak to the duty warden due to the officer's demeanor, but a duty warden is often not present or available. She asked for the dress code to be visible and clear for all visitors because it is not being enforced consistently. She also requested that the body scanner be repaired and that the vending machines be properly serviced. She added that the full two-hour visit is not being provided. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comment and stated the dress code could be added to the agency's website for clarity. She concluded by requesting that umbrellas also be permitted.

Consideration of Approval of Consent Items

- 1. Hazardous Duty Pay Authorization Requests**
- 2. Personal Property Donations**
- 3. 245th TBCJ Meeting Minutes**
- 4. Excused Absences**

Chairman Nichols 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 Victoria Rodriguez who is currently assigned to the Georgetown District Parole Office. Ms. Rodriguez began her career with the Parole Division in 2023 and has set a standard for creating pathways for successful supervision. Her passion for helping others was shaped by guidance from family members in law enforcement and through her pursuit of a degree in criminal justice. She currently supervises the electronic monitoring and super intensive supervision caseloads. She demonstrates commitment to her clients and dedication to public safety. Ms. Rodriguez stated working with a specialized population brings unique challenges but also the greatest opportunities to witness personal growth and positive change. She stated the work involves guidance, accountability, and helping clients move forward with the tools to succeed. Working with the Parole Division has strengthened her empathy and deepened her perspective. She introduced her client Marlina Adams who has overcome many obstacles to become successful.

Ms. Adams shared the profound impact of the agency's rehabilitation programs and reentry initiatives. She was sentenced on October 13, 2016, and spent seven years incarcerated at the Mountain View Unit (now known as the O'Daniel Unit). She held a tenth-grade education level at the time, but she earned her GED in 2019 and committed herself to personal development. She worked as a proofreader and pursued vocational training in graphic design and braille typing. She completed on-the-job training in media systems, literacy, and tactile media programs. She was released on parole on November 6, 2023, and completed phase one and two of the substance abuse caseload. Additionally, she fulfilled the electronic monitoring requirements ahead of schedule. She maintained full-time employment and transitioned into the healthcare field, even earning her certified nurse aide license in the state of Texas. She has maintained her sobriety and attends Narcotics Anonymous monthly, and her efforts have allowed her to reconnect with her three children. She is focused on rebuilding trust and restoring relationships. All the educational and vocational programs offered allowed her to successfully complete the initial phases of supervision and allowed her to return to her community with dignity and purpose. She thanked her family for their collaborative guidance and assistance in shaping her path and stated her journey is a testament to the power of rehabilitation and the positive impact of programming.

Chairman Nichols thanked her for sharing her journey and recognized that programming increases public safety as she mentioned. Pastor Nate Sprinkle emphasized that the will and the work must be put in by the individual and stated Ms. Adams' progress is encouraging.

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

§ 163.38, "Sex Offender Supervision"

General Counsel Stephanie Greger presented Board Rule § 163.38, "Sex Offender Supervision," with proposed amendments including updating statutory references, adding language to include applicable grant conditions in subsection (g), and making grammatical and formatting updates. The rule will be posted in the *Texas Register* and available for public comment.

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

Judge Faith Johnson moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve for publication in the Texas Register the proposed amendments to Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 163.38, "Sex Offender Supervision," to receive public comment as presented.

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

§ 195.81, "Temporary Housing Assistance Program"

Ms. Greger presented Board Rule § 195.81, "Temporary Housing Assistance Program," with proposed amendments including replacing "offender" with "parole client" throughout and "gender" with "sex" as necessary, updating address information, and making grammatical and formatting updates. The rule will be posted in the *Texas Register* and available for public comment.

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

Dr. Rodney Burrow moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve for publication in the Texas Register the proposed amendments to Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 195.81, "Temporary Housing Assistance Program," to receive public comment as presented.

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

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

§ 151.52, "Sick Leave Pool"

General Counsel Stephanie Greger presented Board Rule § 151.52, "Sick Leave Pool," for the adoption of amendments that make minor grammatical updates. These amendments were posted in the *Texas Register* for public comment. No public comments were received.

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

Ambassador Sichan Siv moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice adopt amendments to Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 151.52, "Sick Leave Pool," 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.

§ 151.53, "Family Leave Pool"

Ms. Greger presented Board Rule § 151.53, "Family Leave Pool," for the adoption of amendments that make minor grammatical updates. These amendments were posted in the *Texas Register* for public comment. No public comments were received.

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

Sydney Zuiker moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice adopt amendments to Board Rule Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Section 151.53, "Family Leave Pool," 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 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 presented 20 items for the board's consideration and approval. Item 1 is an increase to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025 contract for Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments (TCOOMMI) for case management and continuity of care with Tarrant County. Item 2 is an increase to the FY 2024-2025 contract for TCOOMMI for case management and continuity of care with Liberty, Montgomery, and Walker counties. Item 3 is an increase to the Calendar Year (CY) 2026-2030 contract for electricity to add CY 2031 as an additional year of service. Item 4 is an increase to the FY 2026 contract for greige sheeting used to produce inmate sheets and clothing. Item 5 is an increase to the FY 2026 procurement for aluminum sign blanks due to increased utilization. Item 6 is the FY 2027 contract for aluminum sign blanks for the manufacturing of highway signs. Item 7 is the FY 2027 contract for soap base tallow to be used in the production of soap. Item 8 is the FY 2027 contract for license plate materials for the manufacturing of license plates. Item 9 is the FY 2027 contract for reflective sheeting for the manufacturing of highway signs. Item 10 is the FY 2027 contract for sodium tripolyphosphate to be used in the production of janitorial and laundry products. Item 11 is the FY 2027 contract for corrugated cardboard sheets for the manufacturing of boxes at the Polunsky Box Factory. Item 12 is the FY 2027 contract renewal for bulk fuel for agency use. Item 13 is the FY 2027 contract for isolated soy protein to produce meat products for inmate consumption. Item 14 is the FY 2027 contract for pork trimmings to produce meat products for inmate consumption. Item 15 is the FY 2027 contract for beef trimmings to produce meat products for inmate consumption. Item 16 is the FY 2027 contract for cans and lids for the Terrell Unit Cannery. Item 17 is the FY 2027-2031 contract for copier equipment. Item 18 is the FY 2027 contract renewal for modular office furniture parts and components. Item 19 is the FY 2027 contract renewal for John Deere tractor parts to provide maintenance and repair of agency farm equipment. Item 20 is the FY 2027 contract renewal for the rental of tractors for agricultural use.

Chairman Nichols asked about item 12 and asked for further clarification on the term open market blanket. Mr. Steffa stated this is a contract in which there is a set quantity that can be ordered throughout the year as needed. It provides an estimated quantity and sets up a blanket to allow the agency to order as needed. Mr. Nichols asked if that is from multiple vendors. Mr. Steffa confirmed. Ms. Zuiker asked about item 17 and asked for further clarification of what AIS means. Mr. Steffa stated this stands for Automated Information System and copier machines are included in this category. Chairman Nichols asked if there were any additional 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 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 Capital Authority Transfer Requests

Chief Financial Officer Ron Steffa presented three capital authority transfer requests for the board's consideration and approval, per the General Appropriations Act, Article IX, Section 14.03. The first request will transfer funds from the Data Center capital budget to the capital budget for Acquisition of Information Resource Technologies, as an application will no longer fall within the scope of the Data Center contract. The second request will transfer funds from the capital budget to the agency's regular appropriation. The capital budget authority was provided through the appropriations process but not the

funding. Given this would have been a new application, the agency is requesting to return the funds to Strategy C.1.1., from which they were taken, to fund correctional salaries and overtime. The third request will transfer capital funding remaining in FY 2024-2025 to agency base appropriations and provide additional capital authority for the FY 2026-2027 biennium.

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 capital authority transfer requests as presented.

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

Report from the Chairman, TBCJ

Chairman Nichols recognized National Crime Victims' Rights Week, designated as April 19-25, 2026, recognizing the impact of crime, honoring survivors, and renewing commitment to victims' rights and services. This year's theme for the week is "Listen. Act. Advocate. Protect victims. Serve communities." There will be services and ceremonies held throughout the country during National Crime Victims' Rights Week. For example, on April 23rd, the TDCJ Victim Services Division will host the fourth annual commemorative ceremony at the Texas Prison Museum in Huntsville. Board members will attend the ceremony to recognize victims of crime and those who support victims of crime, as well as to raise awareness of resources available to victims of crime in the state. Chairman Nichols recognized that assisting victims of crime is one of the mandates under law for the TDCJ, and the board members have and will continue to do everything possible to help TDCJ meet that mission. He encouraged members of the public to support victims of crime and their families at all times, and especially during the upcoming week of reflection, recognition, and support. He asked Sydney Zuiker, who works closely with victims of crime, for her thoughts.

Ms. Zuiker stated this is an incredible week to recognize individuals who have lost loved ones or experienced tremendous hardship and expressed pride at how Texas observes this week. She encouraged everyone to attend the ceremony and stated it is a great representation of the mission of the TDCJ, which includes promoting public safety and reducing victimization.

Chairman Nichols stated that April is also National Second Chance Month and is a time to recognize the importance, as a matter of public safety, of providing formerly incarcerated individuals with opportunities to successfully reintegrate into society. He stated TDCJ management emphasizes that 95% of the population committed to TDCJ for incarceration will one day be engaged in reintegration into society. Staff and volunteers with the TDCJ and the Windham School District (WSD) support those incarcerated and formerly incarcerated on their reentry journey by providing essential education, workforce training, life skills programs, and treatment opportunities. He introduced TDCJ's Rehabilitation and Reentry Division (RRD) Director April Zamora to provide an update on National Second Chance Month.

Ms. Zamora stated, for National Second Chance Month, the agency chose the theme "Building Blocks of Life." Successful reentry is built on nine pillars that, when combined, create a foundation for lasting change. The nine pillars are identification; health and mental health care; substance use and rehabilitation; veteran services; peer support and family reunification; employment and workforce; food, clothing, and

housing; transportation; and educational and vocational. This year, the agency incorporated a new statewide creative project to engage facilities and departments from across the state. The project, titled “Block by Block: From Pieces to Purposes,” challenges each TDCJ unit and support division to create at least one 12” x 12” quilt block that reflects their contributions to reentry success. Each quilt block was designed to incorporate one or more of the nine pillars of reentry success that best align with the specific unit or division. Additionally, participants were asked to include a written statement pledging to strengthen the pillar and reentry success. The blocks will be sewn together into a tapestry symbolizing the agency’s unity, commitment, and shared purpose to providing public safety through successful rehabilitation and reintegration. To encourage creativity and friendly competition, a panel of judges will select a winner for the best quilt block. Ms. Zamora showcased some of the completed quilt blocks.

The RRD also collaborated with units, transitional centers, and external partners across the state to host events and bring the building blocks of reentry to life. Reentry Expos are being held at the Lopez, Plane, Bartlett, Sanchez, Clements, O’Daniel, and Dominguez units as well as the Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Beaumont, and Southeast Texas transitional centers. These expos offer resources tied to employment, housing, treatment and community reintegration. Built to Rise events included multiple interactive stations focused on planning, decision making, and essential reentry skills. Hosted at two of the female units, the program targeted women within six months of release, with the goal of increasing participant awareness, engagement, and practical readiness for reintegration into the community. Building to Success events challenged the inmate population to build structures, using donated material that represent what their community and reentry mean to them. In support of the agency’s partnership with the Texas Restaurant Foundation, multiple days at the beginning of the month were dedicated to filming content for their second chance curriculum. The Daddy-Daughter Dance has been a true collaboration between multiple agency divisions, the WSD, and Prison Fellowship. The next dance was scheduled for Saturday, April 25, 2026, at the Wainwright Unit, and the event highlighted one of the most important elements of reentry success—family reunification. Often, those incarcerated miss important milestones in their children’s lives, such as school dances. This event provides both the incarcerated dad and his daughter with a chance to build their relationship. This year’s theme reinforces the idea that transformation happens intentionally, gradually, and through a collaborative effort. She stated there are currently 1,900 employers involved in hiring events, which would not be possible without the collaborative efforts of the different agency divisions as well as external partners. Ms. Zamora concluded with the words of Vincent Van Gogh, “Great things are done by a series of small things.” She discussed support for the Bartlett Innovation Unit, and Master Builder certificates were provided to the board, echoing the LEGO® theme of building together.

Chairman Nichols asked for confirmation that the agency has 1,900 employers across the state of Texas who are willing to give members of the population who are transitioning back into society a second chance. Ms. Zamora confirmed. Executive Director Bobby Lumpkin thanked Ms. Zuiker for her involvement in the Daddy-Daughter Dance. She thanked Communications Director, Dr. Amanda Hernandez, for her support of the event and expressed her excitement about it.

Report from the Executive Director, TDCJ

Executive Director Bobby Lumpkin shared a report on the agency’s IMPACT Consortium, the 250th anniversary celebration of American independence, and National Correctional Officers and Employees Week.

IMPACT Consortium

Mr. Lumpkin reported the TDCJ is the largest state correctional department in the country and supervises more than 140,000 incarcerated individuals and 75,000 individuals on parole. Combined, that's more than 215,000 individuals plus their loved ones directly impacted by the policies established by the TDCJ. He stated that every single individual in the room, including board members, agency staff, advocates or loved ones, wants the best for those in the agency's care. Mr. Lumpkin stated the different sides may not always agree on the method, but all are on the side of safety and rehabilitation. He expressed excitement for the pilot of a new advisory board that brings together individuals from the TDCJ and advocacy organizations to develop recommendations and feedback for agency leadership to consider. The IMPACT Consortium consists of seven members: one representative each from the Office of Family Services, the Office of the Independent Ombudsman, the Chief of Staff, and the Correctional Institutions Division, as well as one at-large member and two members from advocate organizations, who were voted on by their peers. The selected representatives will serve for six months.

Members of the first group consist of TDCJ staff including Chief of Staff, Rachelle White; Communications Director, Dr. Amanda Hernandez; Correctional Institutions Deputy Division Director, L.E. Townsend; and Office of Family Services Manager, Britteny Skains. The TBCJ Office of the Independent Ombudsman is represented by Deputy Division Director Susan Gunnels. Additionally, the two advocate members are Justin Martinez with Latino Justice and Wolf Sittler with Social Purpose Corrections. During the first meeting, the consortium reviewed and prioritized public suggestions. Members are currently gathering stakeholder feedback to finalize a selection of topics for in-depth development and recommendations. Mr. Lumpkin asked all IMPACT Consortium members to stand and be recognized. He thanked them for taking the time to serve on the advisory committee and expressed anticipation for future meetings and the final recommendations, which will greatly improve the agency and those within its system.

250th Anniversary Celebration

The TDCJ joins the state of Texas and the country in celebrating 250 years of American independence. Texas is celebrating throughout 2026 with a wide array of statewide events, exhibitions, and educational activities. These initiatives focus on Texas' unique role in American history. The TDCJ has partnered with the WSD to recognize the anniversary through educational opportunities, events, and awareness campaigns. Each unit has painted the "America 250" logo at the facility and staff are allowed to paint their insignia in red, white, and blue. Other initiatives include weekly messaging, digital signage, unit events, and content published to inmate tablets.

National Correctional Officers Week

Mr. Lumpkin acknowledged May 3-9, 2026, as National Correctional Officers and Employees Week. During this week, the agency recognizes the thousands of men and women across the state who work tirelessly to ensure the safety and security of the facilities and the public. Units across the state will host events to recognize the agency's dedicated corrections professionals. These individuals are the unsung heroes of their communities and the backbone of the agency. National Correctional Officers Week is also a time to remember those lost in the line of duty. The agency will host its annual Fallen Officer Memorial in Huntsville at the Texas Prison Museum on May 8th at 10:30 a.m. He stated the agency will never forget their sacrifice and will carry their legacy forward.

Chairman Nichols asked who paints the murals on the interior of the units celebrating the 250th anniversary. Mr. Lumpkin stated those are done by the unit artist at each facility. Ambassador Siv stated this represents the enormous talent that the agency has within its population, including incredible artwork.

Status Report on Information Technology Initiatives

Chief Information Officer Tina Clark reported on the highest-priority information technology projects.

The first project, the Technology Enhanced Inmate Count, is in the execution phase. Site visits with potential vendors were conducted at the Estelle Unit, and offers were due on March 4th. The contract was awarded on March 18th to NWN Corporation for \$258,729.90 for the wireless network component. Additional procurements for handheld scanners and tablets are in progress. The projected project completion date is July 2026.

The second project, Inmate Banking, is in the execution phase and 43% complete with \$364,000 from the allocated budget spent so far. The go-live date has been rescheduled for September 2026.

The third project, the Centralized Accounting Payroll and Personnel System (CAPPS), is in the execution phase and is 71% complete. The team is in the sixth week of user acceptance testing with payroll processing currently being tested. 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, has been combined with the Video Surveillance project driven by similarities in vendors and technologies. The pre-solicitation phase remains underway. The completion date of that phase has changed from April 2026 to May 2026. The projected date for the contract to be awarded is December 2026. The projected contract completion date is August 2028.

The fifth 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 to October 2026.

Chairman Nichols asked whether the first project is under budget; if the modernized counting process will be operational throughout the entirety of the Estelle Unit; and if stakeholders will be able to see that process in action. Ms. Clark confirmed the answer to each question was yes.

Chaplaincy Presentation

Chaplaincy and Volunteer Services Division (CVSD) Director Chris Carter presented an overview of chaplaincy activities and shared the mission statement of the CVSD. He introduced the CVSD administration team, including Deputy Division Director Ruby Davis, Deputy Director of Programs Coordination Shayne Roberts, and Deputy Director of Religious and Volunteer Services C.F. Hazlewood. He stated the administrative support team provides services for more than 140,000 incarcerated individuals and their loved ones, and approximately 29,000 volunteers. The agency has more than 135 chaplains who provide faith-based services throughout the agency. Mr. Carter reported the 2025 Chaplain of the Year was Alfredo Salvatore of the Hutchins Unit.

The CVSD serves inmates of approximately 465 different religious backgrounds, which are categorized into 10 primary groups. The Religious Practices Committee consists of the CVSD director, the Correctional Institutions Division director, the Office of the General Counsel, and religious authorities. The majority of the population is Christian with 51.7% identified members, 16% are Catholic, and 7.9% are Muslim.

Mr. Carter discussed the Faith-Based Dorm Program, which includes over 157 faith-based dorms operating a 12 to 18-month program. The program consists of three phases which include Phase I, Voyager; Phase II, Overcomers; Phase III, Quest for Authentic Manhood (for males only); and Phase III, Breaking Free (for females only). Since 2020, chaplains have facilitated more than 6,000 virtual funeral services for inmate family members. The Michael, O'Daniel, and Polunsky units operate radio stations with the help of the CVSD, which allows for motivational and encouraging messages to be shared with the inmate population through podcast interviews available on the tablets.

Staff chaplaincy was implemented in July 2025 and have provided more than 2,330 pastoral interactions with staff through phone calls, emails, prayer and counseling sessions, hospital visits, unit visits, weddings, funerals, and graduations. A marriage retreat for unit administration and a spiritual wellness conference for TDCJ staff were conducted with over 160 attendees. Staff chaplains host a daily prayer call Monday–Friday where an individual can call in to receive a positive message or prayer.

Mr. Carter described several crusades and events, including volunteer organizations such as Kairos, Kolbe, and Mike Barber Ministries hosting church services, performing praise and worship music, providing cell-to-cell ministry, and conducting baptisms.

The Annual Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Awards recognizes volunteers for outstanding service since its inception in 1995. Peer-to-Peer services include Cognitive Life Skills coaches, No One Dies Alone coaches for hospice individuals, Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART) Sobriety coaches, field ministry, spiritual support coaches, and Mentorship, Education, Rehabilitation Integrated Training (MERIT) coordinators. Mr. Carter reported there are 317 field ministers at 53 facilities. The spiritual support coach initiative began in January 2026 as a pilot program to allow individuals with shorter sentences to serve on smaller facilities. It is currently being piloted at the Luther and Gurney units. There are 37 MERIT coordinators on 18 facilities who provide Muslim services throughout the agency. The Mind, Body, and Soul program is available to every incarcerated individual, including the G4 and G5 custody inmates. It is a 12-month program with a curriculum that includes cognitive life skills, faith-based classes, and physical fitness. Mr. Carter thanked the wardens for assisting with implementing this program, as it is particularly impactful.

The Capital Improvements Review Committee outlines the process for donating buildings for facilities to use as a chapel. Mr. Carter reported there are currently 21 facilities with agency-built chapels and 20 donated chapels. The groundbreaking ceremony for the Polunsky Chapel was held in June 2025 along with the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Halbert Chapel. Donor groups continue to raise funds for additional facilities.

The Individualized Treatment Plan includes 53 CVSD programs, including faith-based programs which play a key role in rehabilitation. Programs include Quest for Authentic Manhood, Voyager, Bridges to Life, Celebrate Recovery, and Overcomers.

Staff development initiatives include the Leadership Enhancement and Development (LEAD) program, a six-month program designed to equip staff with important leadership skills. Topics include public speaking, effective communication, team building, the art of the tour, and a research project. The annual chaplaincy training provides newly hired chaplains with the tools necessary to serve in their role and understand the impact of their work. Topics include staff and volunteer engagement, programs and services, and professional ethics. In the future, the Chaplaincy Intern Program will involve the CVSD partnering with accredited theological schools to recruit students to serve as a chaplain intern to gain experience in the prison ministry environment.

In July 2025, the CVSD implemented Stop the Drugs rallies to promote faith-based and recovery initiatives. The rallies include testimonies from formerly incarcerated individuals; motivational speakers; inmate peers, such as field ministers, life coaches, peer recovery coaches, peer educators, MERIT coordinators, and SMART sobriety coaches; a joint effort from numerous divisions and departments; and an opportunity to enroll in faith-based and substance use support groups, such as Narcotics Anonymous or Celebrate Recovery. Mr. Carter presented a video of one of the rallies.

Chairman Nichols asked to confirm that the agency has 29,000 volunteers. Mr. Carter confirmed and stated the online application and training session has created a 43% increase in volunteers over the past few years. Ambassador Siv asked if the annual chaplaincy training was a part of the annual conference. Mr. Carter confirmed and stated the next conference is planned for September. Judge Johnson thanked Mr. Carter and the CVSD staff for their efforts in this area.

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Facilities Division Construction 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 Hughes Unit, which is 6% complete. The contractor is constructing the laydown yard, sallyport, and dumpster areas. Electrical and mechanical surveys are ongoing. Materials are arriving and being stored properly.
- Item 2 is the Huntsville Unit project to replace the roof for building No. 1121, which is 2% complete. The project schedule has been received, and submittals are ongoing.
- Item 3 is the Huntsville Unit project to repair and replace the mechanical department building roof which is 65% complete. Removal of the old roof is ongoing along with installation of new roof on areas 2–5, which are over the mechanical shop and vehicle repair.
- Item 4 is the Stringfellow Unit project to replace the roof and rooftop HVAC equipment for the Bachelor Officer Quarters (BOQ) building No. 1732, which is 2% complete. The preconstruction meeting was held on March 13th, and the contractor is drafting schedules and submittals.
- Item 5 is the Holliday Unit project to construct a new training facility which is 85% complete. Ceiling grid installation for building A is complete. Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing for building b, which is the BOQ, is ongoing. Equipment installation is complete and commissioning is scheduled for building C, which is the range.
- Item 6 is the Ferguson Unit project to construct a water treatment plant which is 53% complete. Chemical control building pad is poured, and the ground storage tank installation is complete. Aboveground piping work is ongoing.
- Item 7 is the Ramsey Unit project to renovate the water tower, which is 90% complete. Water tower refurbishment has been completed, and electrical controls are being installed. The contractor is working through a punch list.
- Item 8 is the Connally Unit project to replace plumbing and controls in 3, 4, 7, 10, and 11 buildings for inmate housing which is 88% complete. The work at 4 building is complete; demolition is complete in 11 building, and installation of equipment is ongoing.
- Item 9 is the Connally Unit project to replace plumbing and controls in 8, 12, 18, and 19 buildings for inmate housing which is 39% complete. The 12 building controls are complete; control installation in the showers for 19 building is ongoing.

- Item 10 is the Ellis Unit project to install a fire alarm system which is 71% complete. Running conduit and fire alarm devices installation are ongoing in the chair factory.
- Item 11 is the Ferguson Unit project to install a fire alarm system which is 82% complete. Conduit installation for vocation in the mop and broom factory in the main hallway is ongoing.
- Item 12 is the Beto Unit project to renovate the icehouse which is complete. The board-approved program cost for this project was \$3,042,000, and the estimated closeout cost of this project is \$2,835,817, which is \$206,182 under program cost.
- Item 13 is the Beto Unit project to install a transformer substation. The Notice to Proceed is pending.
- Item 14 is the Hobby Unit project to construct a multi-use facility, which is 19% complete. Subgrade footing excavation and trenchwork for electrical and plumbing are complete. Forms and vapor barriers are currently being installed in preparation for the slab being poured.
- Item 15 is the Goodman Unit project to install HVAC – ISF which is 99% complete. Customization for the concrete pad is being finalized for the installation of the generator.
- Item 16 is the Stiles Unit project for HVAC system efficiency upgrades to inmate housing 12 building which is 26% complete. All equipment and materials are onsite with new equipment being installed on E wing.
- Item 17 is the Boyd Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 7% complete. The installation of ductwork and insulation is complete for J1.
- Item 18 is the Gurney Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 9% complete. The contractor is onsite locating underground utilities.
- Item 19 is the Hightower Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 7% complete. Equipment is arriving, and trenching is ongoing.
- Item 20 is the Jester III Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 25% complete. Installation of refrigerant lines and electrical work in the trusty camp are ongoing.
- Item 21 is the Luther Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 29% complete. The contractor is working on concrete pads for dorms A–E in the main building.
- Item 22 is the Polunsky Unit project to install HVAC – 3 building which is 8% complete. The contractor is building access roads. Air handlers, pipe, and additional material have been delivered.
- Item 23 is the Powledge Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 35% complete. Equipment is onsite, and the contractor is setting air rotational units for the main building.
- Item 24 is the Stevenson Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 7% complete. The contractor is working on the installation of J5 building air rotational unit. Central utility plant concrete pad is being constructed.
- Item 25 is the Stiles Unit project to install HVAC – 8 building which is 8% complete. Submittals for rebar and concrete work are being finalized.
- Item 26 is the Terrell Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing which is 26% complete. The contractor is installing conduit, pulling wire in multiple areas within the unit. HVAC equipment is arriving.
- Item 27 is the Bell Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 28 is the C. Moore Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award has been issued.
- Item 29 is the Estes Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 30 is the Hamilton Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 31 is the Hightower Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 32 is the Jester III Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 33 is the Lopez Unit project to construct expansion dorms; the Notice of Award has been issued.
- Item 34 is the Luther Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.

- Item 35 is the Memorial Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 36 is the Montford Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award has been issued.
- Item 37 is the Pack Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 38 is the Sanchez Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 39 is the Travis Unit project to construct an expansion dorm; the Notice of Award has been issued.

Chairman Nichols commented that 12 of the projects install air conditioning into areas previously without air conditioning with another 13 projects that will create expansion dorms that will add to the air-conditioned housing capacity. Mr. Andrews agreed. Mr. Nichols asked how many cool beds the agency will have by the end of 2027, considering these projects and the funding received for such projects. Mr. Andrews stated there are currently 52,438 cool beds with an estimated 63,000 total cool beds by the end of the year. By next summer, there should be approximately 70,000 cool beds, and approximately 90,000 cool beds by the end of 2028. Mr. Nichols asked if it is possible to see the bulk of those 90,000 in effect for the first part of 2028. Mr. Andrews stated it would be throughout the year, but it is part of the agency's strategy to complete these projects as quickly as possible. Judge Johnson asked what percentage of cool beds the agency would be at once the 90,000 total is completed. Mr. Andrews stated it is approximately 71%. Judge Johnson asked if the funds left over from project 12, which was completed, could be diverted toward other HVAC projects. Mr. Andrews stated those funds would go back to the agency's general funds. General Welch asked for further clarification on the complexities of installing HVAC into existing facilities. Mr. Andrews stated the design and bidding process has been streamlined, including bundling projects to attract vendors.

Request to Install Efficiency Upgrades to Mechanical Electrical Plumbing System—Regional Medical Facility, Estelle Unit, Huntsville, Texas

Mr. Andrews presented a new project for consideration, which will consist of removing and replacing existing equipment with new, more efficient equipment in the regional medical facility (RMF) and the central plant (CP). Four air handling units with 26 air terminal units will be installed at the RMF. Two 300-ton water-cooled chillers, two chilled water pumps, chilled water valves, new refrigerant purge system, outside air intake louver, exhaust system, two emergency generators, four automatic transfer switches, and 1,000-amp distribution panel will be installed at the CP. The main service medium voltage transformer and overhead feeder will be replaced as well. The new equipment will provide a safer environment and meet building codes as well as energy efficiency requirements. Three proposals were received in 2025. If approved, the work will be performed by Gowan/Garret, Inc., of Houston, Texas. This is the sixth project for Gowan/Garret, Inc., and the design was created by Smith Seckman Reid, Inc. The construction duration is 645 days. The total estimated program cost is \$9,926,300.

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

Pastor Nate Sprinkle moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to install efficiency upgrades to the mechanical electrical plumbing system for the regional medical facility at the Estelle Unit, Huntsville, Texas, as presented.

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

Request to Install HVAC—Inmate Housing, Dominguez Unit, San Antonio, Texas

Mr. Andrews presented a new project for consideration, which will consist of installation of an HVAC system for inmate housing areas at the Dominguez Unit. The work will consist of demolition of existing heating/ventilation units and installation of concrete pads, HVAC units, and exterior ductwork. The new system will meet all applicable requirements and standards for comfort, indoor air quality, efficiency, and will be connected to emergency backup power. Six proposals were received in December 2025. If approved, the work will be performed by Path Company, LLC, out of Memphis, Tennessee. This is the first project for Path Company, LLC, and the design was created by Terry Stinson, a TDCJ engineer. The construction duration is 240 days. The total estimated program cost is \$6,675,400.

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

Judge Faith Johnson moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to install HVAC for inmate housing at the Dominguez Unit, San Antonio, Texas, as presented.

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

Request to Install HVAC—Inmate Housing, Gist Unit, Beaumont, Texas

Mr. Andrews presented a new project for consideration, which will consist of installation of an HVAC system for inmate housing areas at the Gist Unit. The work will consist of demolition of existing heating/ventilation units and installation of concrete pads, HVAC units, and exterior ductwork. The new system will meet all applicable requirements and standards for comfort, indoor air quality, efficiency, and will be connected to emergency backup power. Eight proposals were received in January 2026. If approved, the work will be performed by Path Company, LLC, of Memphis, Tennessee. This is the second project for Path Company, LLC, and the design was created by Terry Stinson, a TDCJ engineer. The construction duration is 240 days. The total estimated program cost is \$6,941,800.

Chairman Nichols asked how long the agency has had the in-house engineers as a resource. Mr. Andrews stated the agency has had engineers in-house for some time. General Welch asked for further clarification that the ability to use in-house engineers allows the agency to work ahead of schedule. Mr. Andrews credited his predecessor for tasking those in-house engineers with creating designs ahead of receiving funding to be able to initiate projects much sooner. Mr. Nichols asked if there were any additional 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 install HVAC for inmate housing at the Gist Unit, Beaumont, Texas, as presented.

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

Request to Install HVAC—Inmate Housing, Hutchins Unit, Dallas, Texas

Mr. Andrews presented a new project for consideration, which will consist of installation of an HVAC system for inmate housing areas at the Hutchins Unit. The work will consist of demolition of existing heating/ventilation units and installation of concrete pads, HVAC units, and exterior ductwork. The new system will meet all applicable requirements and standards for comfort, indoor air quality, efficiency, and

will be connected to emergency backup power. Five proposals were received in December 2025. If approved, the work will be performed by Path Company, LLC, of Memphis, Tennessee. This is the third project for Path Company, LLC, and the design was created by Terry Stinson, a TDCJ engineer. The construction duration is 240 days. The total estimated program cost is \$8,692,000.

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 install HVAC for inmate housing at the Hutchins Unit, Dallas, Texas, as presented.

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

Request to Install HVAC—Inmate Housing, Segovia Unit, Edinburg, Texas

Mr. Andrews presented a new project for consideration, which will consist of installation of an HVAC system for all inmate housing areas at the Segovia Unit. The work will consist of demolition of existing heating/ventilation units and installation of concrete pads for new air handling units, HVAC units, chilled water piping, and ductwork. Air-cooled chillers and pumps will be installed outside the perimeter fence for ease of maintenance. The new system will meet all applicable requirements and standards for comfort, indoor air quality, efficiency, and will be connected to emergency backup power. Four proposals were received in December 2025. If approved, the work will be performed by Path Company, LLC, of Memphis, Tennessee. This is the fourth project for Path Company, LLC, and the design was created by Johnston, LLC. The construction duration is 477 days. The total estimated program cost is \$15,612,100.

Chairman Nichols asked if the incremental higher cost on this project is due to the fact that this project will be a larger project. Mr. Andrews stated this project will be a chilled water system, which requires additional trenching and a chilled water loop. The plant will be located outside of the unit, so vendors will be able to conduct repairs without entering the unit. Chairman Nichols asked if there were any additional questions or comments. Hearing none, Chairman Nichols called for a motion and a second.

Sydney Zuiker moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to install HVAC for inmate housing at the Segovia Unit, Edinburg, Texas, as presented.

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

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 averaged more than 1,300 active cases, opened 311 new cases, and closed 382 cases. The IOIC has handled more than 5,500 pieces of correspondence and is currently in the process of obtaining an artificial intelligence program that works with Westlaw.

Chairman Nichols asked about the civil commitment process and the role the IOIC plays in this process. Ms. Long stated the board is charged with providing representation to individuals who are targeted for civil commitment. The IOIC has attorneys to represent indigent individuals, and the proceedings involve a hybrid trial that includes criminal aspects. Those individuals are either given a “yes” or “no” verdict,

with a “yes” indicating the individual has a behavior abnormality that indicates reoffending may be likely. Those individuals are civilly committed to the Littlefield facility. The IOIC also handles the appeals for those cases and advises those individuals during the required biennial review process. The initial outcomes had limited success; results have improved recently with some individuals completing therapy programs and ultimately being released. General Welch asked for a staffing update, and Ms. Long stated three attorneys left recently, and three have been hired and are receiving training. He asked if there were any strategies to cover the vastness of Texas, such as remote work. Ms. Long stated remote work is offered, but most of the attorneys are based in Conroe or Huntsville.

Report from the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Ombudsman

Chairman Nichols stated PREA Ombudsman Cassandra McGilbra would not be presenting a report on the Office of the PREA Ombudsman due to unforeseen circumstances.

Report from the Office of the Independent Auditor

Renee Russell, Chief Audit Executive, presented updates for the Office of the Independent Auditor (OIA) Status Report for Fiscal Years (FY) 2025 and 2026.

For FY 2025:

- **2504** – *Inmate Communication Contracts* is a revised draft report. Ms. Russell expanded on the reporting process, which includes the OIA’s internal writing and editing process as well as quality assurance. During that time, a draft report is issued to the agency for review and discussion and then a revised draft report is created for management responses. This will then move to a proposed final report before a final report is created. Management is typically aware of the findings and recommendations, and the agency is already implementing corrective action.
- **2512** – *Internal Audit Self Study* will involve a peer review team auditing the OIA. The OIA is currently securing a peer review team.

Ms. Russell continued with updates to the Internal Audit Status Report for FY 2026:

- **2602** – *Inmate Behavior Management* is in the planning stage but will not progress to fieldwork. It will move directly into report writing in the next week.
- **2612** – *A Follow-Up of Recommendations Related to Correctional Institutions Division (CID) Culture* is a draft report and has gone out to agency management.
- **2607** – *A Follow-Up of Criminal Case Disposition* has been assigned and is in the planning phase.
- **Walkthrough of Correctional Managed Healthcare – Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center.** A walkthrough does not constitute an audit and is used to learn and update the OIA’s risk assessment to share any identified risks with the agency and the board.

Ms. Russell stated the OIA issues recommendations continuously, which the agency is implementing in a timely manner. General Welch asked if the OIA is adequately staffed. Ms. Russell stated the OIA is consistently staffed, currently with two staff vacancies and one management vacancy.

(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 in Fort Worth where the OIG assisted during an evidentiary search warrant, seizing \$55,400, two gallons of liquid K2, several weapons, and a mask used to conceal the suspect's identity. The individual had been mailing contraband from the U.S. Post Office while wearing the mask, which was ultimately confiscated. He was apprehended after a vehicle pursuit and identified as a former inmate.

The next case involved a tablet, which had been tampered with to act as a cell tower, found at the Smith Unit, which led to an evidentiary search warrant where packages containing two cellphones, loose tobacco, tablet motherboards and components, and 39 Securus tablets, three laptops, one tower computer, and twelve cellphones were seized. The inmate was working with a partner in Houston, where the contraband was found and seized. The altered tablets could act as a cell tower and allow the user to access the internet without restrictions. Chairman Nichols asked if the tablets were imitations of the authorized tablets utilized by the units. Mr. Lumpkin stated the altered tablets were from a generation of tablets never used by the agency, so the altered tablets appeared similar to the agency's authorized tablets. Mr. Fordyce asked if the color of the tablets could be changed. Mr. Coleman stated the agency is reviewing possibilities.

The third case involved evidence seized at the Bradshaw Unit, which included 80 cigarettes and 30 tobacco pouches smuggled inside of homemade burritos by a former employee.

General Welch thanked him for the collaborative efforts to address contraband. Dr. Burrow expressed his appreciation for the OIG using outside agencies and following investigations all the way. He stated those efforts make TDCJ employees feel safer at work. Judge Johnson asked to see the consequences for the arrests conducted during these cases. She asked if there was a possibility of restricting staff from bringing in food to alleviate contraband being introduced in this way. Mr. Coleman stated the OIG would evaluate that issue with Mr. Lumpkin. He stated he would update the board on convictions when possible. Mr. Lumpkin stated the agency has millimeter technology to inspect food coming in and having staff from another unit assist with the searches.

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 January 16, 2026, through March 27, 2026. The OIO received 1,559 inquiries during this period that required substantive work. The current Fiscal Year 2026 total is 3,545 inquiries. Mr. Patrick reported receipt of 436 emergency inquiries, which often involve a life and danger allegation; 187 medical inquiries which were forwarded to the Health Services Division for handling; 154 facility inquiries; and 112 inquiries concerning staff issues. Inquiries reach the OIO primarily through email and web forms.

Chairman Nichols asked for a staffing update. Mr. Patrick stated the OIO is fully staffed with under 5% staffing turnover for the last year, which has been positively impacted by the career ladder positions. Ms. Zuiker asked about the OIO's retention rate. Mr. Patrick stated organizational culture is important. Pastor Sprinkle asked if the amount of emergency inquiries is an abnormally large amount. Mr. Patrick stated this period's amount was a little reserved compared to what the OIO typically receives. These inquiries usually involve a loved one reporting an inmate's life in danger due to owing money or something similar. The OIO contacts the unit to ensure the complaint is received, and an Inmate Protection Investigation (IPI) is initiated by the unit. The OIO reviews the IPI and may decide to conduct interviews

for further investigation. The OIO will then report the findings to the loved one. Mr. Garza asked what the timeframe for completing an investigation typically is. Mr. Patrick stated public complaints typically take around 30 days but can be longer if necessary. Mr. Garza asked how the OIO relates to the grievance process. Mr. Patrick stated the individual must exhaust the grievance process before the OIO initiates an investigation to avoid duplicating efforts.

Election of Officers

Chairman Nichols stated the board has been blessed to have Judge Faith Johnson serve as Vice-Chair and Dr. Rodney Burrow serve as Secretary. The board intends to rotate those responsibilities and will elect new board members to serve as Vice-Chair and Secretary.

Chairman Nichols nominated General Bill Welch as the Vice-Chairman of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice and Sydney Zuiker as the Secretary of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice.

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

Recess and Reconvene

Chairman Nichols announced that the meeting would recess for the day and reconvene on Friday, April 17, 2026, for the 31st Annual Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Awards Ceremony. The 246th meeting of the TBCJ recessed at 2:20 p.m.

Chairman Nichols reconvened the 246th meeting of the TBCJ on Friday, April 17, 2026, at 10:16 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 continue conducting business from the agenda posted in the *Texas Register*.

31st Annual Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Awards Ceremony

Chairman Nichols welcomed all honored guests joining the TBCJ for the 31st Annual Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Awards Ceremony. He extended a heartfelt welcome to all in attendance and recognized former TBCJ Chairman Patrick O'Daniel, Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP) Chair Marsha Moberly, BPP Chief Operating Officer Tim McDonald, and BPP Deputy Chief Operating Officer Kelsey Stratton. Since its creation in 1995 through a partnership between the Office of the Governor and the TBCJ, this awards ceremony has recognized individuals and organizations who go above and beyond in their service to others. These awards honor individuals and organizations every year but also the Texas women and men who have stepped forward with their positive actions and contributions to make a difference in the criminal justice system. He stated it is much easier to tear down than build up and discussed the importance of dialogue amongst those involved in the criminal justice system. The recognition of the volunteers that the Governor and the board sponsor each year celebrates the builders who contribute to changing others' lives, including those who enter the criminal justice system and the TDCJ in particular. The builders strengthen public safety by changing lives, assist in the rehabilitation of

their fellow passengers in this life, help with concrete action to ensure the best possible results and transitions for the members of the TDCJ population reentering society, and support and safeguard the dignity of victims of crime. On behalf of the board, he stated the ceremony has become one of the most meaningful events for the board, the TDCJ, and the WSD. The board is proud to continue this tradition and celebrate the impact and commitment of volunteer service across the state. He expressed the board's appreciation for not only the individuals and organizations recognized but for the thousands of volunteers across the state.

Chaplaincy and Volunteer Services Division (CVSD) Director Chris Carter thanked Governor Abbott and the First Lady for continuing the tradition of recognizing volunteers. He congratulated the award recipients and thanked all those who volunteered for their service. He thanked the Board Office staff and the Volunteer Coordination Committee. He recognized Sydney Zuiker for providing the centerpieces for the event and WSD Superintendent Kristina Hartman for providing cookies for the event. He thanked CVSD staff for their work and contributions and concluded with a bible verse.

Chairman Nichols introduced Chief Programs Officer Jason Clark to lead the pledge of allegiance and the posting of the colors. Mr. Clark thanked everyone who traveled a long distance and expressed that this event inspires hope each year. Chairman Nichols recognized the women and men of the TDCJ Honor Guard and introduced Pastor Nate Sprinkle to lead a prayer and invocation. Chairman Nichols then introduced Executive Director Bobby Lumpkin who provides leadership to the largest correctional system in the nation. He stated Mr. Lumpkin's commitment to service, accountability, and positive change continues to guide the agency forward.

Mr. Lumpkin stated it takes teamwork to protect the state of Texas but also to impact the men and women in the agency's care. He thanked everyone involved for celebrating the spirit of service which strengthens communities and makes a profound impact on the men and women incarcerated, those reentering society, and their families. Volunteers are an absolute lifeline to the agency's facilities and go beyond teaching classes and ministering as role models, a support system, and a ray of hope on someone's darkest days. Volunteers enhance the lives of those individuals in the agency's care. On behalf of all TDCJ employees, Mr. Lumpkin thanked the volunteers for believing in second chances and inspiring others to follow suit. Those efforts are not only changing lives but also communities and the great state of Texas. Chairman Nichols introduced WSD Superintendent Kristina Hartman who is a nationally recognized leader of education in corrections. He stated Ms. Hartman and her team continuously seek to improve education, academics, life skills, career and technical programming, and other programming to the population.

Ms. Hartman stated she began her career as a volunteer in a county jail and understands how taxing volunteering can be but remembers how invigorating it felt to contribute. She stated the students consistently speak about the impact of volunteer programs and thanked the volunteers for their kindness, compassion, and appropriate boundaries for the people served. Ms. Hartman stated the students from the Bartlett Unit were happy to provide the cookies for the event.

Chairman Nichols thanked Ms. Hartman and welcomed Judge Faith Johnson as the master of ceremonies. Judge Johnson announced the awards to the following individuals and organizations:

Simpson Family, *Chaplaincy Department*

Dina Verhaalen, *Correctional Institutions Division*

Jeffrey Lane, *Nancy Hees Award – Parole Division*

Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter, *Reentry Services*

Ronnie Tally, *Religious Services*

Corbert J. Gomez IV with Antioch Prison Ministry, *Chaplaincy and Volunteer Services Division*

Shawn Wright, *Rehabilitation Treatment*
Phillip Kiser, *Health Services Division*
Shannon Bledsoe-Hawthorne, *Pathfinder Award – Victim Services Division*
John Harrell, *Judy Burd Award – Windham School District*
Families in Crisis, Inc., *People's Choice*
KMP Leadership Academy, *Restorative Justice*
Katrina Harris, *Susan Cranford Award – Female Inmate Program*
The Grief Support Group, *Most Innovative Program*
The Salvation Army of Dallas, *Community Service*
Jeffrey and Sheilla Smith, *Best Family Program*
Everett Rutherford, *Leonard Davis Award for Most Hours Served*
Jeffrey Felts, *Extensive Travel Award*
Eric Broughton Sr., *TDCJ Employee Volunteer*
Warden Kevin Smith, *Criminal Justice Administrator*
Eugeniu Valcu, *Judge Carroll Wilborn, Jr. Award*
Grove Norwood, *Lifetime Service*
Paul Micheli, *Carol S. Vance Volunteer of the Year*

Chairman Nichols, Mr. Lumpkin, and Mr. Carter presented awards to the recipients.

Chairman Nichols expressed his appreciation to Judge Johnson, congratulated all award recipients, and called for a final round of applause for all the recipients. He also recognized Williamson County Commissioner Valerie Covey for her leadership and partnership with the Bartlett Innovation Unit along with First Lady Cecilia Abbott for her dedication to lifting up others. Both were in attendance for the ceremony. He stated First Lady Abbott has been a dedicated advocate for literacy, education, citizen protection, and other initiatives that strengthen families and communities. Her contributions toward uplifting and protecting others are far more than words alone and through her commitment, she has made a tangible difference in the lives of others throughout the state. Chairman Nichols then called for the retirement of the colors.

(Attachment C – Program for 31st Annual Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Awards)

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Nichols thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He adjourned the 246th meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice at 12:06 p.m.

Chairman*

Secretary*

*Signature on File