

TEXAS BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

MINUTES

Board Workshop No. 25-0723



July 23, 2025

Austin, Texas

TEXAS BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

WORKSHOP

Wednesday, July 23, 2025

Cambria Hotel Austin Uptown
(uptown AB Room)
13205 Burnet Road
Austin, Texas

1:00 PM

Order of Business

1. Call Workshop to Order
2. Victim/Survivor Training and Other Program News – Libby Hamilton, Director of Victim Liaison Program
3. Victim Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Training – Kelsey McKay
4. The Lead Voter Interviews “Victim, Family, Attorney” – Marsha Moberley, Chair and Timothy McDonnell, Chief Operating Officer
5. Cornerstone Assistance Network Visit – Paul Kiel and Michael Hardges, Parole Commissioners
6. Legislative Update - Timothy McDonnell, Chief Operating Officer
7. Adjourn



**MINUTES OF THE
TEXAS BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES
BOARD WORKSHOP
WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2025**

REGULAR SESSION

The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles (Board) met in open session on Wednesday, July 23, 2025 at 1:00 p.m., Cambria Hotel Austin Uptown, 13205 Burnet Road, Austin, Texas.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Marsha Moberley
Elodia Brito
Sandra Fletcher
Carmella Jones
Brian Long
Linda Molina
Ed Robertson

PAROLE COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Michael Adams
Richard Aiello
Jacqueline Bishop
Joel Butler
Edward Davila
Mary Farley
Troy Fox
Raymond Gonzalez
Jimmy (JP) Guyton
Michael Hardges
James Kiel
Jeffrey Marton
Julie Phillips
Roel Tejada

BOARD STAFF PRESENT

Bettie Wells, General Counsel
Timothy McDonnell, Chief Operating Officer
Jessica Dillard, Board Administrator
Rachel Alderete, Director, Support Operations
Kyle Britt, Director, Budget
Wadella Murphy, Director, Hearing Operations
Erica Montalvan, Director, Institutional Parole Operations
Clint Adams, Deputy Director, Institutional Parole Operations
Libby Hamilton, Director, Victim Liaison Program
Kesley Stratton, Director, Human Resources
Fernando Fernandez-Rodriguez, Director, Clemency
Pamela Pacher, Director, Special Projects
Terence Hall, Director, Information Technology
Heather Penick, Manager, Business Operations
Jessica Guerrero, Manager, Administration
Heather Clark, Regional Operations Supervisor
Robert Detjen, Systems Analyst
Richard Gamboa, Technical Writer
Pamela Meador, Program Specialist, Victim Liaison Program
Estela DeHoyos, Program Supervisor, Board Support
Jennifer Nieves, Executive Assistant
Mayra Arellano, Executive Assistant
Elizeth Willaker, Executive Assistant
Matthew Schlosser, Multimedia Technician

TDCJ STAFF PRESENT

Jenny Brantley, Manager, Victim Services
Emily Eisenman, Deputy Director, TCOOMMI
Cheryl Foreman, Project Manager, Internal Audit
Chris James, OIG

CONVENED – TEXAS BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

Presiding Officer (Chair) Marsha Moberley convened the workshop of July 23, 2025 at 1:00 p.m. in accordance with Chapter 551, Texas Government Code, Open Meetings Act. After roll call, the Chair stated a quorum was present and declared the meeting open.

VICTIM /SURVIVOR TRAINING AND OTHER PROGRAM NEWS (*ATTACHMENT A*)

Chair Moberley introduced Libby Hamilton, Director of Victim Liaison Program to present on victim survivor matters and other program news related to the Victim Services Department, agenda item #2.

Ms. Hamilton provided a quick overview of the BPP Victim Liaison Program, which was established in 2017 using Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant funds. The primary preferences were to provide more trauma informed training to all Board employees who interact with victims and provide direct services

to victims and survivors who are going through the parole review process. Since then, they have also expanded on education and outreach to prosecutors and victim assistance coordinators around the state.

In 2017, staffing consisted of two employees, and currently they have six with a 7th joining the program in the next couple of months. She introduced her team, including Christine Wall, Austin Program Supervisor, Karen Meza, Amarillo Program Specialist, Jessie Odoy, Austin Administrative Assistant, Pam Meador, Gatesville Program Specialist, and Tyra McCloud, Huntsville Program Specialist.

Ms. Hamilton discussed the current program activities, which include focusing on helping victims through parole review process, accompaniments, training all new BPP employees, responding to requests for assistance from the Board offices, and volunteering for Project Beloved. Activities that are coming soon include changes for all meetings, revamping the BPP website video and resuming training to prosecutors and the VAC's. She provided Statistics & Performance Measures and discussed the Texas Government Code (Section 508.153 Statements of Victim), Important Reminders, Before Each Victim Meeting, Phone Meetings, Virtual Meetings, In-Office Meetings, How to Gracefully Wrap Up, Challenges in Post-Conviction Victim Services, BPP website (Information for Victims, Frequently Asked Questions, and 10 Minute Video Explaining Process).

Timothy McDonnell noted that one of the first things Chair Moberley pressed was for the agency to seek general funding for the Victim Liaison Program, as opposed to the grant funding, and the agency was successful in getting that funding for the program.

Ms. Moberley thanked Libby Hamilton for her presentation and proceeded with the order of business.

VICTIM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING TRAINING

Chair Moberley introduced Kelsey McKay, a former prosecutor and highly recognized expert on criminal asphyxiation, domestic violence, sexual abuse and other forms of power-based crimes, and Erica Olson, a consultant and subject matter expert specializing in gender-based violence and trauma-informed care and management, to present agenda item #3.

Ms. McKay stated that as a former prosecutor, working cases, she saw everything through the lens of the criminal legal system, and it was really a one direction journey. The defendant was not necessarily the forefront of her decision-making. She was very victim centered, victim based. She's had the opportunity over the last five to six years to represent survivors who are charged with murder for killing their abuser, which is really what has informed her since she previously provided training to the Board.

Experiencing abuse is a pipeline to incarceration. Having had to walk with survivors through the family court system against an abuser, the family court system is used as a weapon and a tool on an abuser. She discussed the topic of strangulation and asphyxiation related crimes, in addition to human trafficking and domestic violence and the issues and challenges that surround this type of violence. In working with both survivors and those charged with crimes, Ms. McKay learned that the criminal legal system is broken. The system was designed in a very incident-based way with no contest, resulting in victims who struggle to live through their situation are often criminalized for surviving. The criminal legal system was never designed with the patterned nature of battering in mind. In her discussion, she noted most strangulation assaults lack obvious signs of external injury. In many cases, victims who are strangled are arrested and charged as the offender. She also discussed the difference in gender, the "power" dynamic and how that plays a role. Women as opposed to men, must have survival strategies, to domestic violence

and human trafficking, as there is the broad gender aspect. With regards to strangulation, she gave insight into the impact of survivors when they are strangled because it leads to such fear, and so they do whatever they want. Ms. McKay also noted most law enforcements don't ask the right questions, don't understand trauma, couldn't identify strangulation, didn't understand counter intuitive behavior. Law enforcement investigates crime not justification. So, we don't get all the valuable information that we would gain if we knew what questions to ask. Reliance on the criminal legal system as a primary response to violence against women has left many victims of battery overpoliced and under protected. You have women who are arrested for crimes directly from their victimization or as a result because it's a domino effect. Ms. McKay stated we must learn how to protect differently.

Erica Olson discussed the tactics, tools, and the way perpetrators abuse so that the Board could have some direction. She noted that three out of four packets that come across your desk, somebody has a history of abuse. That's just the data whether they say it or not, whether it's in their packet or not, that's a different story. If the offender is female, they are going to have a history of abuse or trafficking. She discussed the tactics that traffickers and abusers use, including force, fraud, and coercion. Perpetrators purposely look at people, see that they have vulnerabilities and know they can exploit these. What you get is forced criminality. You now have situations where the crime, someone committing a crime, theft, check fraud, drugs, part of that is part of their criminality, particularly in human trafficking. Understanding that by forcing, coercing or using fraud to get someone to commit a crime, that is part of what binds, entraps them.

Regarding domestic violence, we are talking about threats, coercive control, isolating them from churches, their families, their support, their friends, and we are talking about financial abuse, and indecency. Last thing to know, particularly when victims do commit crimes, is that they are calculating against lethality. The thing about domestic violence, as it pertains to trafficking, is that these women, these victims are making calculated survival decisions. So, we shouldn't be asking, "why did she stay or what if she doesn't." What we should be asking is, "what are the consequences for her if she doesn't make a calculated survival?" Some victims of crime commit crimes because there might be a direct threat to this person, actual coercion. Fear leads to compliance. There is also the trauma compelled behavior. There is the "fight", "flight", "freeze", and "fawn" responses, types of trauma responses and stress responses that occur when the brain perceives a threat. We need to understand there is neurobiological science underneath choice or action. Understanding that even after an act of violence, or psychological trauma, it still impacts the brain. There is cognitive impairment.

In terms of memory and remembrance, Ms. Olson stated memory is encoded frequently in the state you are at the time. When someone is in fear the Hypothalamic Pituitary Adrenal access goes to your adrenal glands. It releases a lot of different hormones and neuro chemicals that impact how memories are stored. The point is that the brain will encode things and file them. You can't access them if you are in a different state. It might be why a survivor can't fill a packet very well without the right kinds of prompts for them. For brain injuries, every time you are strangled, the repeated exposure to strangulation is going to continue to deprive the brain of oxygen. So, when you kill your brain cells through asphyxiation they die. They don't regenerate.

Ms. Olson noted not all traffickers and abusers are horrible and violent 24/7. They engage in tactics like love bonding and rescuing. There is some trauma bonding.

In closing, Ms. McKay stated anyone can tell you, I was trafficked. Anyone can tell you, I was the victim. It's understanding the things that underline, that change their behavior, that modify their choice to ultimately commit a crime.

Chair Moberley thanked them for their presentation and proceeded with the order of business.

THE LEAD VOTER INTERVIEWS “VICTIM, FAMILY, ATTORNEY” (*ATTACHMENT B*)

Chair Moberley yielded the floor to Timothy McDonnell, Chief Operating Officer, to present agenda item #4.

Mr. McDonnell provided a history of victim interviews, attorney interviews and family interviews, noting that over that past 4-5 years the number of interviews being conducted has gone up. A question arose from an administrative standpoint, “is there anything we can do as a Board to become more efficient in conducting interviews, both with victims, and attorneys?” Libby Hamilton, who works with Association of Paroling Authorities (APAI) and is Chair of the Victims Committee on APAI was asked to gather information on what other states do in terms of victim interviews. Ms. Hamilton looked at sixteen states. As a result, she reported 75% have a time limit for interviews well under 20 minutes. Additionally, regarding the legislative session, people that testified in the committee hearings were often given limits of three and five minutes; victims were given longer time frames. However, the common fact was that within approximately five to fifteen minutes, most people were able to convey their point. That provided information in terms of where the Board should go.

Mr. McDonnell discussed the proposed changes to Board Directive 145.310 Personal Appearance on Victim's Behalf. The changes include revisions to page three to indicate that the lead voter will obtain input from the interviewee for the time, date and location of the interview. Additionally, the interview should be no longer than 20 minutes per victim, and no longer than 45 minutes if there is more than one victim. The same revisions were done to Board Directive 141.353 Visitors on Behalf of an Offender, on page two, limiting the interview to 20 minutes. Changes will be effective September 1st. Also, Libby Hamilton will be working on updating the frequently asked questions on the BPP website and getting the information out to any victims so that they will be aware of the process when the video on the website is updated. This should give more formality to the length of the interview that is to be conducted. Mr. McDonnell stressed it's not limiting their voice and what they must say, but it is simply bringing quality information into the interview that is to take place.

CORNERSTONE ASSISTANCE NETWORK VISIT

Chair Moberley yielded the floor to Parole Commissioners Paul Kiel and Michael Hardges to present agenda item #5.

Mr. Kiel provided a summary of his involvement with the Prison Ministry Project. The Ministry is a group of pastors that have a small congregation, consisting of many offenders. The pastors attend board meetings from time to time and provide a short presentation. Occasionally, they call to seek information to general questions or questions about a particular person.

Mr. Kiel stated that after attending one of their meetings in January, the Director of First Step Center for Tarrant County invited him to go back and speak about parole at Cornerstone Assistance Network in Ft. Worth. He stated he and Michael Hardges were approved to attend and speak.

He discussed his experience visiting Cornerstone Assistance Network, stating he was super impressed with the facility. There were many services available to help guys be successful. In touring the facility there were somewhere between 40 and 50 organizations that were represented, from Veteran Affairs to housing to medical care, education, substance abuse, and mental health. It was exciting to see that all the people at Cornerstone were gathered with a sole purpose of helping people reintegrate into society when they get out or when they get placed under some type of supervision.

Michael Hardges stated he too was impressed with the resources available. Additionally, something else that impressed him was their thrift store and their talk about a population that is often forgotten, pertaining to the kids aging out of foster homes. They put an emphasis on reaching out to that population and trying to get them before they come into the prison population.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE (*ATTACHMENT C*)

Chair Moberley yielded the floor to Timothy McDonnell, Chief Operating Officer, to present agenda item #6.

Mr. McDonnell provided an overview of the 89th Legislative Session, stating the session commenced January 14th and ended June 2nd. The special session began on July 14th but at this point, we don't anticipate the Board will have to be a part of this process. He indicated Chair Moberley put together a well-rounded team of seasoned people to prepare for the legislative session, including Ed Robertson, Bettie Wells, Jessica Dillard, Rachel Alderte, Pam Pacher, Kelsey Stratton, Oliver Cui, Kyle Britt, Gene Stroud and Timothy McDonnell.

Mr. McDonnell reported out of this past session, 11,500 bills were filed, 3,562 bills passed, and 26 bills were vetoed by the governor. He discussed the bills most important to the Board, which include:

- **Senate Bill 1: General Appropriations Act** - The bill is related to approval of the agency's base budget and the seven exceptional items. The Board received the total funding requested for the base budget, and all the exceptional items were approved, including 10 additional institutional parole officers, a 15% pay raise for parole officers, institutional parole officers, hearing officers, analyst and targeted pay raises.
- **Senate Bill 2405: Sunset Bill** - The bill requires additional training for board members and parole commissioners, distribution of Board Training/Resource Manual annually, MRIS process changes, evaluation of parole panel data regarding release decisions, MRIS voting, the use of graduated sanctions and special conditions and work with TDCJ and Windham regarding parole voted programs, evaluation and list of approved programs. Mr. McDonnell noted the deadline for training is December 1st.
- **Senate Bill 1506: Frequency With Which BPP Reconsiders Inmates For Release** – The bill authored by Senator Parker reduced the trauma on victims appearing repeatedly in front of the lead voter, allows the Board to become more efficient in voting, provides for up to a 5-year setoff for all offenses that do not currently allow for a multi-year setoff, with the exception of most possession cases. During the Board's Self-evaluation Report for Sunset, the Board asked for a multi-year setoff.

- **House Bill 2854: Parole Condition Requiring PO Approval for Certain Hospital Visits** – This bill authored by Representative Anchia involved the Nester Hernandez incident that took place in the Dallas Methodist Hospital is going to require the Board to impose a condition of release on certain offenders to obtain permission from the parole officer prior to visiting a hospital, except for those seeking medical treatment.
- **House Bill 1522: Posting of Budget Prior to Discussion at a Board Meeting** – The bill requires the Board to post a proposed budget of the Board prior to review and potential approval of the legislative appropriations request.

Bills of interest that didn't require action by the Board, but pertained to parole included:

- **House Bill 1024 by Representative Shaheen** – The bill requires law enforcement agencies to execute a warrant that was issued for an individual on SISF when it's practical.
- **Senate Bill 9 by Representative Huffman** – This bill restricts a magistrate from releasing an individual on bail if charged with a felony and they are on parole. Mr. McDonnell noted the impact of the bill, stating that those being held on blue warrants that were perhaps eligible for bond before, are going to no longer be eligible for bond. This could potentially increase the number of people that are in county jails on parole. Hearings and waivers conducted will need to be processed expeditiously.

ADJOURNMENT

Having completed all posted items on the agenda, Chair Moberley adjourned the Board Workshop at 4:34 p.m.

ADOPTED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT OF THE BOARD ON THE 30th DAY OF OCTOBER 2025.



MARSHA MOBERLEY, PRESIDING OFFICER (CHAIR)