

**Texas Board of Criminal Justice
240th Meeting**



Minutes

**April 24-25, 2025
Austin, Texas**

TEXAS BOARD OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

**Renaissance Austin Hotel
9721 Arboretum Boulevard
Austin, Texas 78759**

**April 24, 2025
11:45 AM – 5:00 PM
April 25, 2025
11:00 AM – 1:00 PM**

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Call to Order

Convene Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ) Meeting – Thursday, April 24, 2025

Recess TBCJ Meeting

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

Reconvene TBCJ Meeting – Regular Session

Call to Order

II. Regular Session – Glass Oaks Ballroom

- A. Recognitions
- B. Consideration of Approval of Consent Items
 - 1. Hazardous Duty Pay Authorization Requests
 - 2. Personal Property Donations
 - 3. 239th TBCJ Meeting Minutes
- C. TDCJ Parole Division Spotlight
- D. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Amendments to Board Rules Title 37 Texas Administrative Code Sections
 - 1. 151.51, “Custodial Officer Certification and Hazardous Duty Pay Eligibility Guidelines”
 - 2. 152.25, “Maximum Rated Capacity of Individual Units”
- E. Discussion, Consideration and Possible Action Regarding Proposed New Board Policy BP-11.75, “Telework”
- F. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Revisions to Board Policies
 - 1. BP-02.09, “Prison Rape Elimination Act Ombudsman Policy Statement”
 - 2. BP-03.85, “Inmate Visitation”
- G. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Revisions to the “TDCJ Inmate Visitation Plan”
- H. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Revisions to Personnel Directives
 - 1. PD-21, “Diversity and Anti-Discrimination in the Workplace”
 - 2. PD-22, “General Rules of Conduct and Disciplinary Action Guidelines for Employees”
- I. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Deletion of Personnel Directives
 - 1. PD-13, “Sexual Harassment and Discourteous Conduct of a Sexual Nature”
 - 2. PD-31, “Discrimination in the Workplace”
- J. Public Comments
- K. Report from the Chairman, TBCJ
- L. Report from the Executive Director, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)
- M. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Purchases and Contracts Over \$1 Million

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

- N. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Facilities Division Construction Projects
 - 1. Request to Repair/Replace Roof – Mechanical Department Building, Huntsville Unit, Walker County, Huntsville, Texas
 - 2. Request to Install HVAC Systems Efficiency Upgrades – 12 Building, Inmate Housing, Stiles Unit, Jefferson County, Beaumont, Texas

- O. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Land Transactions
 - 1. Request to Renew a Natural Gas Pipeline Easement, Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas
 - 2. Request to Renew a Natural Gas Pipeline Easement, Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas
 - 3. Request to Renew a Natural Gas Pipeline Easement, Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas
 - 4. Request to Renew a Natural Gas Pipeline Easement, Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas
 - 5. Request to Renew a Natural Gas Pipeline Easement, Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas
 - 6. Request to Renew a Natural Gas Pipeline Easement, Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas
 - 7. Request for Right-of-Way Easement, Holliday Unit, Walker County, Huntsville, Texas
 - 8. Request for Right-of-Way Easement, Wynne Unit, Walker County, Huntsville, Texas

- P. Report from the Office of the Independent Auditor

- Q. Report from the Office of the Inspector General

- R. Report from the Office of the Independent Ombudsman

- S. Report from the State Counsel for Offenders

- T. Report from the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Ombudsman

Recess TBCJ Meeting

Reconvene TBCJ Meeting – Regular Session, Friday, April 25, 2025

II. (continued) Regular Session – Glass Oaks Ballroom

- U. 30th 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. 240**

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice convened on Thursday, April 24, 2025, in regular session at 11:46 a.m. at the Renaissance Austin Hotel in Austin, Texas, recessed in executive session at 11:46 a.m., reconvened in regular session at 1:03 p.m., recessed at 5:32 p.m., reconvened in regular session on Friday, April 25, 2025, at 11:00 a.m., and adjourned at 1:03 p.m.

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

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

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

General Bill Welch

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

Bryan Collier, Executive Director
Jason Clark, Chief Programs Officer
Bobby Lumpkin, Chief Operations Officer
Ron Steffa, Chief Financial Officer
Mary Babcock Eric Guerrero
Richard Babcock Rene Hinojosa
Andrew Barbee Ron Hudson
Kate Blifford Bill Lewis
Chris Carter Rebecca Waltz
Marvin Dunbar Rachelle White
Jennifer Gonzales David Yebra
Carey Green April Zamora
Stephanie Greger

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

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

James Lavin, Legislative Budget Board

Convene the Texas Board of Criminal Justice

Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols convened the 240th meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ or board) on Thursday, April 24, 2025, at 11:46 a.m., noted that a quorum was present, and declared the meeting open in accordance with Texas Government Code Chapter 551, the *Open Meetings Act*. He stated

the TBCJ would be conducting business from the agenda posted in the *Texas Register*. Chairman Nichols recessed to executive session at 11:46 a.m. and reconvened in regular session at 1:03 p.m.

Chairman Nichols stated that the TBCJ is committed to providing the opportunity for public presentations on posted agenda topics and public comments on issues within its jurisdiction in accordance with Board Rule 151.4, "Public Presentations and Comments to the Texas Board of Criminal Justice." Chairman Nichols reported that 18 registration cards were received for public comment prior to the deadline and would be heard later in the meeting.

Recognitions

Chairman Nichols recognized the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) employees who have dedicated 25, 30, 35, 40, and 45 years of service to the state of Texas. He stated these individuals represent the strong commitment of this agency's staff systemwide. On behalf of the TBCJ and Executive Director Bryan Collier, he expressed deepest gratitude for the continued service of these employees. During the months of March and April 2025, 50 employees attained 25 years of service, 49 employees attained 30 years of service, 16 employees attained 35 years of service, 15 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)

Mr. Collier recognized Chief Financial Officer Ron Steffa for 35 years of service. He highlighted Mr. Steffa's career which began in 1992 in the Human Resources Division. Mr. Steffa held positions in Executive Services and the Contracts and Procurement Department prior to being promoted to Deputy Chief Financial Officer in 2008 and being selected as the Chief Financial Officer in 2020. Mr. Steffa's analytical skills and profound understanding of the agency aid in his ability to oversee the agency's significant budget and his pivotal role in developing the agency's legislative appropriation requests. Mr. Steffa's integrity is unquestionable, and his leadership is strong. Mr. Steffa expressed his appreciation for the recognition and stated that he has been blessed to work with some of the best, smartest, and hardworking people who make the agency great.

Mr. Collier recognized April Zamora, Rehabilitation and Reentry Division Director, for 30 years of service. He highlighted Ms. Zamora's career, which began with TDCJ in 2000 as a parole officer in the Waco District Parole Office. Ms. Zamora was promoted within the Parole Division prior to her 2007 promotion to the manager of the Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments (TCOOMMI), and in 2012, Ms. Zamora was selected as the Director of the Reentry and Integration Division where she led the agency's efforts on inmate reentry. In 2024, the Reentry and Integration Division merged with the Rehabilitation Programs Division to form the Rehabilitation and Reentry Division. Ms. Zamora was chosen to direct this newly formed division, and she has worked closely with staff to ensure a smooth transition for all employees. Ms. Zamora is passionate about successful treatment, programming, and reentry, and she played a pivotal role in the new innovation unit concept. Ms. Zamora thanked Mr. Collier and the board members for the recognition and acknowledged the wonderful mentors that she learned from.

Mr. Collier recognized Kate Blifford, Governmental Affairs Director, for 25 years of service. Ms. Blifford began her career with TDCJ in July 2020; however, prior to joining TDCJ, she held positions in the offices

of Governor Greg Abbott, the Speaker of the House, Texas State Representative Tom Craddick, and the Texas House of Representatives. Ms. Blifford plays a key role in the agency's interaction with the legislative process, ensuring that the agency is well represented with members of the House and the Senate, and her contributions have made a significant positive impact on the legislative success of the agency. Ms. Blifford recalled the warm welcome she received when joining the agency, stated that the agency has the best board and executive director of any state government agency, and recognized the hardworking men and women who bring their expertise and effort to the agency.

Chief Operations Officer Bobby Lumpkin recognized newly promoted Fusion Center Director Terry Andrews. Mr. Andrews began his career with TDCJ in 2007 as a correctional officer and promoted through the correctional series until his most recent assignment as the Beto Unit Senior Warden. Mr. Andrews' correctional knowledge, criminal intelligence, and his ability to effectively link key stakeholders together in order to combat a significant challenge to the operations will be a proven asset to the agency. Mr. Andrews assured the board and Mr. Collier that he understood the gravity of leading this team of dedicated individuals in fighting a nuisance that has plagued the agency for far too long, and he looks forward to serving the agency in this new role.

Business and Finance Division Director Jennifer Gonzales recognized newly promoted Deputy Business and Finance Division Director Rebecca Waltz. Ms. Waltz has over 20 years of experience in the Budget Department. Since 2020, Ms. Waltz has served as the Budget Director, where she reshaped the operations of the department, leaving a lasting positive impact that continues to benefit the agency. She also has extensive knowledge of the agency's financial system and grants, and her dedication is evident in her work. Ms. Waltz expressed her appreciation for the opportunities she has had during her career and her excitement about this new opportunity and the challenges ahead.

Correctional Institutions Division (CID) Director Eric Guerrero recognized newly promoted CID Region VI Director Jennifer Cozby, who began her career in September 1995 as a correctional officer. Ms. Cozby promoted through the correctional series and was selected as Senior Warden of the Halbert Unit in 2017. Since that time, she has also served as Senior Warden at the Woodman, Murray, Hobby, Marlin, and Robertson units. Ms. Cozby's leadership philosophy centers around open communication and collaboration while actively promoting her vision for transformation within the agency. Ms. Cozby thanked her leadership team and stated she looks forward to providing solutions and innovative ideas to assist in achieving the mission of the agency.

Mr. Guerrero recognized newly promoted Region V Director Bryan Williams, who began his career in September of 1998 as a correctional officer at the Formby Unit prior to promoting through the correctional series at nine correctional facilities, most recently as the Smith Unit Senior Warden. As he advanced in his career, he built not only a broad base of correctional knowledge but has also shown a desire to lead and support staff. Mr. Williams thanked the leaders that he has worked with who made him a better person and leader, stated that his career has been shaped by the people that worked for him, and expressed his appreciation for the spirit of servant leadership within the agency.

Classification and Inmate Transportation Division Director Richard Babcock recognized newly promoted Inmate Transportation Director William "Jason" Wheat, who has 20 years of correctional experience. He began his career as a correctional officer and promoted through the correctional series, most recently serving as a Senior Warden. Mr. Wheat also previously served in the United States Marine Corps for six years in fleet management, which will serve him well in this new position. Mr. Wheat recognized the responsibilities of leading the Transportation Department and expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to continue to serve the agency.

Consideration of Approval of Consent Items

- 1. Hazardous Duty Pay Authorization Requests**
- 2. Personal Property Donations**
- 3. 239th TBCJ Meeting Minutes**

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

TDCJ Parole Division Spotlight

Parole Division Director Rene Hinojosa introduced Parole Officer Michelle Narvaez from the Austin II District Parole Office. Ms. Narvaez began working for the Parole Division in May 2023, and upon graduating from the Parole Officer Training Academy, she immediately began supervising a regular caseload. Mr. Hinojosa stated that her passion and inspiration for the job allowed her to quickly transition to supervise a therapeutic community caseload. Ms. Narvaez's goal is to continue her education to obtain a master's degree in forensic psychology. Mr. Hinojosa thanked Ms. Narvaez for her commitment to the agency and helping her clients become successful.

Ms. Narvaez thanked the board members and Mr. Collier for recognizing her and Mr. Hinojosa and Parole Regional Director Kristina Ramirez for the opportunity to begin her exciting career and for the ability to recognize a distinguished client in her caseload. She stated she was fortunate to be part of the task-oriented pilot program implemented by Mr. Hinojosa and received excellent support from Parole Officer Jessica Lindsay and Parole Supervisor Kimberly Mach. Ms. Narvaez stated their positive guidance, training, and commitment to the profession helped her to establish a strong love for the job with the mindset to treat everyone with respect and fairness. She aims to provide all of her clients with the necessary tools for successful reintegration into society. She introduced her client Charles Roberts, stating she has seen positive changes in him and his passion to help others. Mr. Roberts was released on parole supervision May 23, 2024, on the electronic monitoring caseload. He has since moved to phase two of the therapeutic community treatment program, which he is expected to complete in August. Mr. Roberts has maintained full-time employment since his release and has served as a peer support coach at the Kyle Unit. He has completed cognitive skills programs, such as Voyager and Authentic Manhood, and attributes his success to his participation in those programs.

Mr. Roberts thanked the board and Mr. Collier for the opportunity to share his story. He stated in thirteen years of incarceration he is blessed to have completed and help create programs that have had a positive impact. Some of those participants served time alongside him and others were volunteers. He expressed gratitude for the cognitive thinking programs, such as the Quest for Authentic Manhood, which gave him tools that helped inside the prison and upon release. He thanked Mr. Hinojosa and the Board of Pardons and Paroles for walking him through the parole process with grace and accountability. Mr. Roberts graduated from college in 2017 with a major in sociology and created a successful basketball program, Chariots of Fire, which caught the attention of the National Basketball Association, the San Antonio Spurs, and community leaders. Mr. Roberts stated Chariots of Fire made a mark in the prison system as it became a year-round training basketball camp, molding men to be positive leaders within the community. The program promotes rehabilitation and the successful change of culture with the support of the TDCJ. He stated this same approach was used to create an exercise program, focusing on the cognitive approach to rehabilitation and fitness. Prior to release, Mr. Roberts had the opportunity to pilot House Bill 3327 for peer support. He served as a peer support coach and was able to complement staff with a unique approach

to rehabilitation. Upon release, he served the homeless community through Urban Alchemy. Mr. Roberts currently works for the number one Generac dealer in North America and is still on a journey of growth and self-development. He concluded by thanking his family and everyone in attendance at the board meeting for their support.

Mr. Collier expressed pride in Mr. Roberts' phenomenal work and stated he earned it for the work he has done for the prison system. Mr. Nichols thanked Ms. Narvaez for her presentation and her involvement in the transformation of a life.

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

151.51, "Custodial Officer Certification and Hazardous Duty Pay Eligibility Guidelines"

General Counsel Stephanie Greger presented Board Rule 151.51, "Custodial Officer Certification and Hazardous Duty Pay Eligibility Guidelines," with proposed amendments that revise "offender" to "inmate" and "rule" to "section" throughout; revise the definition for "Routine Direct Inmate Contact" to align with PD-85, "Custodial Officer Certification, Hazardous Duty Pay, and Longevity Pay;" add sociologists and interviewers to employees eligible under Hazardous Duty Code 3; replace the deputy executive director with the chief operations officer in Hazardous Duty Code 3; add the chief operations officer, chief programs officer, other division directors, and no more than 25 administrative duty officers to employees eligible under Hazardous Duty Code 4 and remove language stating any other positions approved by the deputy executive director; add laboratory technicians assigned to parole offices to employees eligible under Hazardous Duty Code 8; and make grammatical updates. The rule will be posted in the *Texas Register* and available for public comment.

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

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 151.51, "Custodial Officer Certification and Hazardous Duty Pay Eligibility Guidelines," to receive public comment as presented.

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

152.25, "Maximum Rated Capacity of Individual Units"

Ms. Greger presented Board Rule 152.25, "Maximum Rated Capacity of Individual Units," with proposed amendments that increase the maximum rated capacity of the Beto, Clements, Coffield, Connally, Ellis, Ferguson, Hughes, McConnell, Memorial, Michael, Polunsky, Robertson, Stringfellow, Telford, Terrell, Wainwright, and Wynne units in response to the process set forth in Texas Government Code Chapter 499. The amendments will reduce the maximum rated capacity for the Allred and Stiles units due to recent renovations. 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 Sections 152.25, "Maximum Rated Capacity of Individual Units," to receive public comment as presented.

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

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed New Board Policy BP-11.75, "Telework"

Ms. Greger presented new Board Policy BP-11.75, "Telework," which establishes that TBCJ reporting entities operate with a traditional in-office model and allows telework in limited circumstances. Ms. Greger proposed a minor revision to the Discussion Section to replace the approval process from the head of the reporting entity to the chair of the TBCJ Human Resources Committee, which would be implemented upon approval.

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

Sydney Zuiker moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the proposed amendment to Board Policy BP-11.75, "Telework," as presented.

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

Ms. Greger continued to present new Board Policy BP-11.75, "Telework," for adoption. The new policy is modeled after TDCJ's telework policy and will apply to the independent reporting entities who report directly to the board. The policy reflects that the reporting entities will operate with a traditional in-office model.

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

Sydney Zuiker moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the proposed new Board Policy BP-11.75, "Telework," as presented.

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

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Revisions to Board Policies

BP-02.09, "Prison Rape Elimination Act Ombudsman Policy Statement"

Ms. Greger presented Board Policy BP-02.09, "Prison Rape Elimination Act Ombudsman Policy Statement," with a summary of revisions including revising the policy statement to specify the PREA

Ombudsman shall have sufficient time and authority to oversee training initiatives relating to the elimination of sexual abuse and harassment of inmates at correctional facilities; adding a definition of “Imminent Risk of Sexual Abuse;” revising the definition of “Other Individual” to clarify that it does not include an individual under the supervision or custody of the TDCJ; revising language to clarify the PREA Ombudsman’s responsibilities related to the oversight of education and training and to specify that the PREA Ombudsman serves as a subject matter expert regarding training. Grammatical and formatting updates were also made.

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

Judge Molly Francis moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the proposed revisions to Board Policy BP-02.09, “Prison Rape Elimination Act Ombudsman Policy Statement,” as presented.

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

BP-03.85, “Inmate Visitation”

Ms. Greger presented Board Policy BP-03.85, “Inmate Visitation,” with a summary of revisions including removing reference to the Private Facility Contract Monitoring/Oversight Division, which was eliminated during the agency’s reorganization last year.

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

Ambassador Sichan Siv moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the proposed revisions to Board Policy BP-03.85, “Inmate Visitation,” as presented.

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

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Revisions to the “TDCJ Inmate Visitation Plan”

Ms. Greger presented the “TDCJ Inmate Visitation Plan” and a summary of revisions to include removing reference to the Private Facility Contract Monitoring/Oversight Division throughout and replacing it with the appropriate personnel; replacing references to “Cellsense poles” with “ferromagnetic detector” throughout; revising “Mountain View” to “O’Daniel” throughout; clarifying language throughout related to the Director’s Review Committee being the final authority concerning the Visitors List; revising definition for hardship visit; adding language to allow a warden’s office designee to schedule visits; revising the list of permissible items to clarify that adult visitors are permitted to bring up to \$35 in coins and one debit or credit card, as previous language only referenced coin money; adding language related to the search of service animal vests and fur to ensure contraband is not present; removing service animals from the list of permissible items; adding new subsection to address service animals; expanding visitor rules to specify visitors are to remain seated until excused to leave and that their identification document will be returned prior to their departure from the unit; revising visitation hours for Polunsky death row inmates and clarifying that all Polunsky Unit visitation is to be scheduled through the warden’s office;

and replacing the “Classification and Records Office” with the “Classification and Inmate Transportation Division” where appropriate. Grammatical and formatting updates were also made.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Mr. Nichols asked for clarification whether service animals will still be allowed but will be addressed in a specific section of the policy. Ms. Greger confirmed and stated it would expand on those procedures in the new subsection. Chairman Nichols asked if there were any additional 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 proposed revisions of the “TDCJ Inmate Visitation Plan,” as presented.

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

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Revisions to Personnel Directives

PD-21 (rev. 1), “Diversity and Anti-Discrimination in the Workplace”

Ms. Greger presented proposed revisions to PD-21, “Diversity and Anti-Discrimination in the Workplace,” which include revising the title; adding definitions for “Active Period,” “Considerations,” “Disciplinary Packet,” “High-Level Investigation,” “Misconduct,” “Supporting Documentation,” “Unacceptable Performance,” “Violation,” and “Work Cycle;” adding language for the role of “Employee Representative” and “Witnesses;” revising language to include “Discrimination” as a “Type of Discrimination;” revising language to outline the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) investigation timelines and review process more concisely; adding language defining lower and higher-level violations; adding language granting the EEO-Designation Agency Official the ability to reconvene a conduct review; revising language extensively for ease of use and to maintain consistency with PD-22, “General Rules of Conduct and Disciplinary Action Guidelines for Employees;” adding attachments for “Conduct Review Process” and the PERS 495a, “EEO Investigation Extension;” and renumbering attachments. Grammatical and formatting updates were also made.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Mr. Nichols asked if the revised policy has been subject to vetting within the Human Resources Division. Ms. Greger stated the HR division is the proponent of the policy and it has also been reviewed by other divisions. Mr. Nichols asked if it has undergone a legal review. Ms. Greger confirmed. Chairman Nichols asked if there were any additional 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 revisions to Personnel Directive PD-21 (rev. 1), “Diversity and Anti-Discrimination in the Workplace,” as presented.

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

PD-22 (rev. 19), “General Rules of Conduct and Disciplinary Action Guidelines for Employees”

Ms. Greger presented proposed revisions to PD-22, “General Rules of Conduct and Disciplinary Action Guidelines for Employees,” which include reformatting and reorganizing the directive, revising definitions for “Active Period,” “Employee,” “High-level investigation,” “Inmate,” “Misconduct,” and “Unacceptable Performance;” revising the definition for “High-Level Investigation” to include Equal Employment Opportunity Investigations; adding language concerning file maintenance surrounding progressive corrective action; relocating language concerning an employee’s status pending a discipline; relocating language concerning high-level investigations; adding language defining lower and higher-level violations; adding language granting conduct officials the ability to reconvene a conduct review as warranted; and revising language extensively for ease of use and to maintain consistency with PD-21, “Anti-Discrimination in the Workplace.” Grammatical and formatting updates were also made.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Mr. Nichols asked if the revised policy has been subject to vetting within the Human Resources Division and if it has undergone a legal review. Ms. Greger confirmed. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Judge Faith Johnson moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the revisions to Personnel Directive PD-22 (rev. 19), “General Rules of Conduct and Disciplinary Action Guidelines for Employees,” as presented.

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

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Deletion of Personnel Directives

PD-13, “Sexual Harassment and Discourteous Conduct of a Sexual Nature”

Ms. Greger presented the proposed deletion of Personnel Directive PD-13, “Sexual Harassment and Discourteous Conduct of a Sexual Nature,” as the language has been incorporated into PD-21, “Anti-Discrimination in the Workplace.”

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Mr. Nichols asked for clarification that the provisions of this policy are being moved into PD-21 and not deleted. Ms. Greger confirmed. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Dr. Rodney Burrow moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the deletion of Personnel Directive PD-13, “Sexual Harassment and Discourteous Conduct of a Sexual Nature,” as presented.

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

PD-31, “Discrimination in the Workplace”

Ms. Greger presented the proposed deletion of Personnel Directive PD-31, “Discrimination in the Workplace,” as the language has been incorporated into PD-21, “Anti-Discrimination in the Workplace.”

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Mr. Nichols asked for clarification that the provisions of this policy are being moved into PD-21 and not deleted. Ms. Greger confirmed. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

Ambassador Sichan Siv moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the deletion of Personnel Directive PD-31, "Discrimination in the Workplace," as presented.

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

Public Comments

Chairman Nichols stated that for public comment within the jurisdiction of the TBCJ but not items posted on the agenda, 18 registration cards were received prior to the established deadline. The time limit set was three minutes per individual for each topic, and he reviewed the requirements for speaker registration in accordance with the *Open Meetings Act*.

Dani Allen registered to speak on the food at the unit as a representative from the Prison Show. She commented that some units are only allowing visitors to bring in either coins or a debit/credit card, which causes issues when the coin or card option is not working, specifically at the Polunsky Unit. She stated photos for death row inmates are only allowed on Saturday night, which is difficult for elderly family members who would have to drive at night. She claimed the officers at the Wynne Unit are killing cats and burying them on the property. She spoke on behalf of a friend, Curtis Robertson, at the Stiles Unit who wants a job and to be involved in programs for rehabilitation. Chairman Nichols commented that all concerns brought before the board are heard and considered, whether through a presentation before the board or through other means, such as the Office of the Independent Ombudsman. Judge Faith Johnson asked if there are other units with reports of killing cats. Ms. Allen stated there were.

Joy McFadden registered to speak on protesting execution; however, she stated she had already spoken to other attendees regarding most of her concerns and now had two issues she wanted to address. She requested that death row inmates at the Polunsky Unit who are diabetic have a different diet provided, as well as the inmates with renal medical issues. She claimed death row inmate Brian Davis had a stroke, which was ignored by unit medical staff. She added that, regardless of whether a HIPAA form was on file, a mother should be notified of such a serious condition, stating that Mr. Davis's mother was not informed for over a week. Mr. Nichols assured the commenter that notes were being taken and highlighted the value of attending the meeting, noting that it provided an opportunity to speak directly with agency staff to help resolve concerns.

Brittany Robertson registered to speak on solitary confinement as a representative for Texas Prison Reform. She asserted restrictive housing inmates are receiving out-of-cell time three times a week, which increases medical issues. She stated staff shortages make it difficult for restrictive housing inmates to be escorted to medical for bloodwork to determine vitamin deficiencies. She claimed that some of the restrictive housing inmates labeled as security threat groups have non-violent convictions and no disciplinaries. She remarked that some restrictive housing inmates would prefer to be escorted to a private area to discuss medical and mental health issues. She also expressed disappointment with the lack of rehabilitative programming for restrictive housing inmates. The commenter claimed restrictive housing inmates do not have access to information like boil water notices. She requested improved communication regarding the transfer of inmates between units and suggested using technology to track inmate

movement. She asked that restrictive housing inmates have equal access to tablet features, such as music and news. Mr. Nichols thanked her for her thoughtful comments.

Tona Southards registered to speak on solitary confinement and inhumane conditions. She discussed the loss of her son, Jon Anthony Southards, and attributed his death to the inhumane conditions of solitary confinement and the excessive heat. She claimed her son had not been given a shower in over eleven days and had not been to recreation for over 22 days before he died. She claimed the signature for refusal in his medical records was not his signature, as he intended to have his medication changed. She asked how it can be considered a refusal due to lack of an escort. She claimed TDCJ's medical records indicated that he should be housed in an area with air conditioning. She described the heat as a systemic failure of the agency and asked for transparency and accountability. Mr. Nichols expressed his appreciation for her comments and his sympathy for her loss.

Jennifer Toon registered to speak on mail policies and medical transportation for women as a representative of the Lioness Justice Impacted Women's Alliance. She provided data to the board, indicating it would show that digital mail has not made a significant impact on contraband and does not justify the prohibition of physical mail. She asked for the board to conduct an evidence-based review of this issue. She provided testimonies from female inmates to the board and claimed women have been left on concrete floors or in soiled clothing. She claimed the strip search area is not handicap accessible. She referenced Senate Bill 1146 regarding women accessing medical care and asked for a clear timeline on when these issues can be resolved. She recognized Rehabilitation and Reentry Division Director April Zamora for her work to bridge the gap between advocates and the system. Mr. Nichols expressed his appreciation for the thoughtful nature of her comments and respectful discussion.

Heather Rainwater registered to speak on hope and change. She described herself as an advocate for humane conditions in prison. She discussed working on a report on the 734 deaths that occurred from April 1, 2024, through April 2, 2025. She claimed 532 of those deaths were nonhospitalized deaths. She expressed concern because of her son's (Seth Anderson) suicide at the Ellis Unit. She claimed the death reports she read demonstrated hopelessness and medical neglect. She thanked the agency for the programs offered, such as anger management and life skills. She expressed gratitude for the enhanced correctional officer training and the tablets. She described the Bartlett Unit as a shining star and expressed hope that more of those units would be created. She asked the board to consider a partnership round table that would include formerly incarcerated people, family members, and advocacy groups. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her bravery for speaking at the meeting and offered the board's condolences for her loss.

Laura Aldrete registered to speak on TDCJ conditions as a representative of Voices for Texas Prisoners. She described the conditions of the TDCJ as flawed and inhumane. She discussed the lack of air conditioning, calling the heat deadly. She claimed there is nutritional and medical neglect and that segregation is being used excessively. She asked the system to have compassion and to focus on education and rehabilitation for G4 and G5 inmates. Chairman Nichols thanked her for coming.

Wolf Sittler registered to speak on solitary confinement. He discussed the lack of programming for administrative segregation inmates. He presented a drawing from an inmate who he claims has been in administrative segregation for 35 years. He asked the board to include more stakeholders in discussions about reform, including the creation of a task force. Chairman Nichols thanked him for coming.

Lekeshia Curtis registered to speak on the harassment of a loved one at the Allred Unit. She claimed that a captain harassed and abused her loved one, including moving him five to six times, removing him from his job, placing him on lockdown, and stealing his property. She expressed that staff and her family have

been lied to and retaliated against for seeking answers. She asked that he be restored to his position as a teacher's aide. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comments.

Brandon Coppock registered to speak on reentry housing as a representative of Forgiven Felons. He described his journey to rehabilitation while incarcerated and on parole. He stated Forgiven Felons was donated eight acres of land to build Forgiven Ranch, which will serve as transitional housing for formerly incarcerated men. He claimed the Board of Pardons and Paroles has halted this project due to a policy that prevents transitional housing from operating within 1,000 feet of another even after an agreement by the donor to redraw the border lines of the property. Chairman Nichols thanked him for his thoughtful comments and for his work in rehabilitation.

Michael Elizondo registered to speak on reentry housing as a representative of Forgiven Felons. He described his journey while incarcerated, which began when he was ten years old, and his experience of rehabilitating with Forgiven Felons. He requested that the board help Forgiven Felons gain approval to build Forgiven Ranch by changing the policy that prohibits it. Chairman Nichols thanked him for sharing.

Audra Pearson registered to speak on reentry housing as a representative of Forgiven Felons. She described her experience while incarcerated and her journey toward rehabilitation through Forgiven Felons. She asked the board to change policy requirements that prevent Forgiven Felons from building Forgiven Ranch. Chairman Nichols thanked her for sharing.

Beth Bell registered to speak on reentry and parole. She discussed her experience while on parole and asked how many parole violations could have been avoided if parole staff simply did their job. She claimed to have no reentry plan upon release but maintained her sobriety and found successful employment. She claimed her experience with parole involved missed home visits by the parole officer and a risk assessment that has yet to be completed, which would allow her to check in less often. She claimed to have lost her housing and, when seeking assistance from her parole officer, she was given unviable options. She claimed the parole officer stated she was not allowed to stay at an inn and had 24 hours to find an address. She claimed she moved into transitional housing where her car was broken into. She claims she has not been able to contact her parole officer to notify them of her new address at a safer location. Chairman Nichols thanked her for sharing her story and directed her to speak with Parole Division Director Rene Hinojosa.

Melissa Doege registered to speak on the overall constitutional obligation of the board. She discussed the obligation to provide rehabilitation and reintegration. She claimed the criminal justice system is failing inmates. She claimed she had previously requested that significant others be added to the visitation policy. She claimed she is prevented from hugging her fiancé due to the policy only allowing immediate family to do so. She claimed she is unable to divorce her husband and remarry due to domestic violence issues, so she will not qualify as immediate family without a policy revision. She claimed her efforts to change this resulted in retaliation for her fiancé who was pulled from incentive housing. She expressed that rehabilitation should begin before parole and consider the whole person. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comments.

Ashleen Gaddy registered to speak on K2 as a representative of the Texas Prison Transparency Project. She discussed the issues of K2 and K3 and expressed that the 15-day lockdowns are not a solution. She said the tools necessary to detect these substances do exist and should be utilized by the agency. Chairman Nichols thanked her for coming.

Shannon Marshall registered to speak on rehabilitation culture and reentry as a representative of the Texas Prison Transparency Project. He shared his journey to rehabilitation while incarcerated and upon release. He discussed rehabilitation, culture, and reentry. He commended the programs offered, such as Bridges

to Life. He claimed incentive housing is not as accessible as it should be and more help should be offered to promote rehabilitation. He expressed discontent with the culture on the wings, including violence. He asked for reentry solutions to educate released individuals on modern technology. Chairman Nichols thanked him for sharing his story and asked him to provide his ideas.

Francis Vaughn registered to speak but was not present.

Crystal Stanley registered to speak but was not present.

Report from the Chairman, TBCJ

Chairman Nichols highlighted programs within the TDCJ that are implemented statewide and designed to benefit public safety through the work done every day within the prison system and through vital partnerships that aide the incarcerated population in successfully reentering their communities. Mr. Nichols stated public safety is achieved through the rehabilitation of those members of the TDCJ population who can and will respond to the call to better themselves. Through education, professional and personal skills, and training qualified members of the incarcerated population while in TDCJ, these individuals who answer that call are better prepared to return home and be productive members of society. He expressed the board's appreciation that TDCJ has one of the lowest recidivism rates in the country at 16.9%, but also that hardworking staff, selfless volunteers, and dedicated community partners are working to lower that recidivism rate even more.

Mr. Nichols stated April is Second Chance Month and commented that having a felony should not be a reason to keep an individual from having a productive life. He introduced April Zamora, Director of the Rehabilitation and Reentry Division (RRD), and stated Ms. Zamora is an extremely talented and essential contributor to the effective operation of the criminal justice system in Texas. Ms. Zamora has worked for the State of Texas since 1998 and has held several positions in the criminal justice field, including parole officer, parole unit supervisor, program specialist for substance use services, internal review and training, and Director of the Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments. Ms. Zamora received her Master of Education in Guidance and Counseling from the University of Texas—Pan American. She is also a recipient of the Texas Corrections Association (TCA) Star Award and TCA Presidents Gavel. She previously served as President of TCA as well as Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Ms. Zamora also served on the American Correctional Association's Delegate Assembly. She is currently a commissioner on the Judicial Commission on Mental Health and commissioner for the American Correctional Association. He stated none of those accomplishments give Ms. Zamora the same satisfaction as seeing real accomplishment in changing lives.

Mr. Nichols stated Ms. Zamora and her team are guided by legislative mandates and work diligently to implement best practices beyond those legislative mandates in designing and implementing a reentry and integration plan for inmates involved in the adult criminal justice system. Ms. Zamora and her team empower individuals to transform their lives, preparing them for meaningful employment and a positive return to their communities. Mr. Nichols expressed the state's gratitude for the important role she serves in supporting public safety through the work she and her team do with the men and women who enter the correctional system and work toward successful reentry.

Ms. Zamora expressed joy at being able to share the great work of her team and community partners. She stated the TDCJ looks at reentry holistically, ensuring the appropriate emotional, educational, medical, and mental health resources and support are available. It is through the partnership with staff, community

members, employers, loved ones, and other state agencies that allow the agency to overcome obstacles to reentry. She stated the reentry system was developed in 2009 and still has room for improvement.

The Reentry Task Force was created by the legislature to develop strategies and make recommendations aimed at improving the reentry process. The task force is composed of a range of members, including individuals from other state agencies and non-profit organizations and those with lived experiences in other relevant sectors. She stated successful reentry does not happen in isolation. The TDCJ collaborates with various organizations and partners to provide comprehensive support to individuals entering back into communities. Employment is one of the most important elements of an individual's successful reentry. The RRD as well as the Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Logistics Division and the Windham School District have collaborated to host Skills Demonstrations and Career Expos to highlight the education and skills these individuals earn while in custody. Through events such as these, the agency has developed relationships with industry partners that have been instrumental. Two of these are the Texas Association of Business (TAB) and the Texas Restaurant Association (TRA).

The TAB and its foundation are Texas' leading employer organization companies from the largest multinational corporations to small businesses in nearly every community of the state. TAB and the TRA Foundation work to improve the Texas business climate. The TDCJ and TAB formed a memorandum of understanding in 2019 that prepares releasing individuals for reintegration into society through marketable job skills and productive employment to meet the needs of Texas businesses. Second Chances is a transformative initiative led by the TRA's Foundation. Their mission is to provide comprehensive training and unwavering support to individuals seeking to rebuild their lives through a career in the Texas restaurant and hospitality industry, striving to provide the necessary skills, knowledge, and certifications. In addition to equipping participants with the skills needed for successful reentry into the workforce, the Second Chances Program engages with employers to foster a supportive environment for these individuals, providing resources and guidance when obstacles are encountered. The partnership between the TDCJ and TRA has flourished. She stated the TRA is working to have a food truck set up during visitation at the Bartlett Unit where one of the chef participants will be able to cook, creating a whole new environment. TRA has donated chef coats for inmates who work at the San Antonio Food Bank and assisted the agency with its culinary curriculum.

Another incredible and dedicated organization is 7More, which assists individuals releasing from prison and providing support at the Houston and Huntsville bus stations for over a decade. The organization offers a variety of services, including backpacks, clothing, food, hygiene products, and phone calls, all aimed at helping individuals transition smoothly after incarceration. A key component of 7More's support system is its call center, which connects those released with peer coaches and mentors who have successfully navigated the challenges of reentry. The organization is committed to reaching all individuals and their families with plans to expand its services to high-traffic release areas throughout the state. 7More also provides transportation assistance for individuals released in Harris County, ensuring those individuals can reach their destinations safely without relying solely on public transportation. 7More distributes Christmas gifts to those releasing, allowing those individuals to take home something special for their loved ones. This organization also helped the agency establish reentry dorms at the Lychner and Plane state jails.

One major population that the agency supports is the veteran population. She stated over 55 volunteer organizations help the agency with its veteran population. The agency recognizes the unique challenges faced by veterans reintegrating into civilian life. The TDCJ partners with multiple state agencies and community organizations to provide veteran-specific resources and support to this population. The Texas Veteran Commission visits units to help the population complete applications and paperwork related to Veterans Affairs Benefits. This assistance ensures veterans receive benefits while in TDCJ custody and

upon return to their communities. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs supports the Veteran X program, which just launched at the Bartlett Innovation Unit. The Veteran X program is a peer-led recovery initiative designed for veterans who wish to achieve recovery within a group setting. Participants act as a recovery team for a fictional character, “Veteran X,” who faces challenges like those of the group members. Through this role, the veterans work together to address the various social barriers and challenges that Veteran X encounters, including social support, housing, substance use, and problem-solving skills. In addition, select veterans receive training to become facilitators for the Veteran X program. These trained veterans can then be deployed to teach the program at various veteran dorms within the agency.

The Bartlett Innovation Unit also has a unique partnership with the Williamson County Animal Shelter. The dog handler program offers a second chance to rescue dogs while providing companionship and purpose for veteran residents. Twenty selected veterans serve as dog handlers, providing 24-hour care for these animals. After completing training, the dogs are made available for adoption in the community. As an added benefit, families who adopt a program dog receive free boarding if needed.

The agency has partnered with Workbay, an interactive career development platform, to launch a comprehensive reentry and workforce development platform for incarcerated individuals. This initiative equips the agency’s population with job-ready skills, connects them with employers, and supports their successful transition back into the workforce. The Workbay system was launched on three units in 2024 as a pilot program and now is accessible on all secure tablets deployed across TDCJ’s 102 units. This digital platform offers a range of resources tailored to the needs of individuals preparing for reentry. She stated reentry begins on day one and the total number of users for the platform is 103,981. Judge Molly Francis asked if there was a way to promote more participation. Ms. Zamora stated the launch occurred recently, and Workbay is in the process of visiting units to determine how best to engage users. She discussed the legislation requiring the agency to provide résumés for the inmate population and stated the platform makes it easy.

The platform emphasizes employer engagement and job matching, connecting inmates with Fair Chance employers across Texas. This initiative provides a direct pipeline to hiring opportunities, enhancing the chances of successful reentry into the workforce. Currently, 103,981 users are active on the platform with new registrations daily. Ms. Zamora shared a video of the new platform. Through Website for Work, the agency is able to connect formerly incarcerated individuals who are seeking a job with recruiters, community services, and additional training opportunities. Website for Work has been updated and is now available at Websiteforwork.com. Released individuals will have access to this site for two years after release. She stated the agency held 18 events for Second Chances Month with 500 individuals attending. Twenty-nine percent of the population was offered jobs on the same day. Ms. Zamora stated a special proclamation signed by Texas Governor Greg Abbott, officially designating the month of April as Second Chance Month, would be presented later in the meeting.

Chairman Nichols thanked Ms. Zamora for her presentation and stated the agency is heading in the right direction. Sydney Zuiker expressed her excitement for Workbay and thanked Ms. Zamora and her team for the work put into the grand opening of the Bartlett Unit.

Report from the Executive Director,
Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Executive Director Bryan Collier provided an update on the agency’s activities related to the 89th legislative session.

Mr. Collier stated the 89th legislative session has now passed the midpoint, with approximately six more weeks left. Both the House and Senate have passed their respective budget bills, and the Budget Conference Committee will be meeting soon. In both bills, the TDCJ has received favorable funding, to include funding for pay increases, construction of expansion dorms, and additional air conditioning. This funding will allow the agency to meet population projections as well as make significant improvements. Mr. Collier expressed excitement for the Budget Conference Committee to complete negotiations and a final budget to be presented to both the House and Senate. The Senate and House versions of the TDCJ Sunset Bill were heard in their respective committees earlier this month, and the Sunset legislation is progressing well. He expressed gratitude to the Sunset Commission and appreciation for their efforts throughout the process. Mr. Collier stated the House and Senate committees, in addition to the TDCJ Sunset Bill, have been hearing bills over the past several weeks, and agency staff have provided testimony and feedback on the impact of potential legislation. The agency is currently tracking 988 bills and committees will continue to hear bills for the next several weeks. He stated the session has been favorable to TDCJ and expressed his optimistic outlook for the future. Mr. Collier stated he would keep the board updated on the agency's progress and thanked Chairman Nichols for his attendance at several of the agency's hearings and the work of all those who have provided testimony.

Chairman Nichols thanked the members of the Legislature and public officials for the careful consideration given to the funding decisions for the agency and for the participation of agency staff in the legislative process.

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

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

Ron Steffa, Chief Financial Officer, reviewed the purchases and contracts over \$1 million. Mr. Steffa stated there will be 55 items brought for the board's consideration and approval. Items one through five are increases to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-2026 design professional services contracts that provide architectural and design services for the agency's major repair projects. Item six is an increase to the FY 2024-2025 contract for outpatient substance abuse treatment services from the amount previously approved at the April 2023 board meeting due to utilization and cost increases. Items seven through nine are increases to the FY 2024-2025 contracts for the provision of residential outpatient and tele-treatment, substance abuse treatment, and aftercare services for inmates releasing from substance abuse felony punishment facilities, in-prison therapeutic communities, or referred to the Substance Abuse Counseling Program due to increases in per diem rates. Item ten is an increase to the FY 2025 contract from the amount previously approved at the April 2024 board meeting for beef trimmings at the Neal Unit beef processing plant due to increased prices, which includes a 10% variance. Item eleven is an increase to the FY 2025 contract for cloud-based analytics technology from the amount previously approved at the August 2024 board meeting due to receiving additional grant funding and will provide for increased utilization. Item twelve is the FY 2025 contract for the purchase of weaving looms at the Estelle Unit textile mill. Items thirteen through eighteen are FY 2026 contracts for the operation and management of residential reentry centers for parolees located in Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, and Edinburg. Item nineteen is the FY 2026 contract for the rental of tractors for agricultural use at multiple units throughout the agency. Item twenty is the FY 2026 contract for the purchase of John Deere Tractor parts used in the maintenance and repair of farm equipment. Item twenty-one is the FY 2026 renewal contract for the manufacturing of modular panel systems and components used by the Texas Correctional

Industries. Item twenty-two is the FY 2026 contract for the purchase of corrugated cardboard sheets used to manufacture boxes at the Polunsky Unit box factory. Items twenty-three and twenty-four are FY 2026 contracts for aluminum foil and license plate materials used in the manufacturing of license plates at the Wynne Unit license plate factory. Items twenty-five and twenty-six are FY 2026 contracts for the purchase of reflective sheeting and aluminum sign blanks for the manufacturing of highway signs at the Beto Unit metal sign factory. Item twenty-seven is the FY 2026 contract for the purchase of AT&T cellphone equipment and service. Items twenty-eight and twenty-nine are FY 2026 contracts for pork and beef trimmings to produce meat products for inmate consumption at the Michael Unit pork processing plant and beef processing plant. These items include a 10% variance. Item thirty is the FY 2026 contract for isolated soy protein used in the production of ground meat products. Item thirty-one is the FY 2026 contract for cans and lids for the canning of vegetables for inmate consumption at the Terrell Unit. Item thirty-two is the FY 2026 contract for feed supplement for agency livestock. Item thirty-three is the FY 2026 contract for soybean meal to produce feed for the agency's livestock. Item thirty-four is the FY 2026-2027 renewal contract to provide natural gas to various facilities. The agency is requesting a 10% variance on these items to accommodate any fluctuations in pricing or usage. Item thirty-five is the FY 2026-2027 contract for outpatient substance abuse treatment services with the Dallas County community supervision and corrections department. Items thirty-six and thirty-seven are FY 2026-2027 contracts for the operation and management of community residential reentry centers in Beaumont and Houston. Items thirty-eight and thirty-nine are FY 2026-2027 contracts for the operation and management of substance abuse felony punishment facility treatment services at the Crain and Estelle units. Items forty through fifty-five are FY 2026-2027 contracts for treatment at substance abuse felony punishment facilities, in-prison therapeutic communities, substance abuse treatment programs, pre-release therapeutic communities, female cognitive pre-release programs, intermediate sanction facilities, cognitive intervention programs, state jail substance abuse treatment programs, Driving While Intoxicated treatment programs, and pre-release therapeutic community and pre-release substance abuse program services at the Crain, Estelle, Glossbrenner, Halbert, Havins, Henley, Kyle, Sayle, and Stringfellow units; the Goodman intermediate sanction facility; the Dominguez, Hutchins, Lychner, Plane, Travis County state jails; and the Hamilton and Coleman units.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Ambassador Siv asked for clarification of the different blanket terms. Mr. Steffa explained that delegated blanket means the authority to enter into the procurement has been delegated to the agency. A term contract blanket is awarded by the Comptroller's Office. Distributor blanket means the agency will order from a catalogue directly from the distributor. Pastor Sprinkle asked about Item eleven and the 300% increase for search and analytics technology. Mr. Steffa stated the agency received an additional \$14 million in grant funding to bring more units into that software to manage the inmate telephone system. Mr. Collier stated that software is tied to the inmate phone system and utilized as an intelligence gathering tool. Pastor Sprinkle asked if more units will be able to use that technology with this increase. Mr. Collier confirmed. Ms. Zuiker asked if that is a one-time grant. Mr. Collier stated it was but anticipated it may be funded again. Chairman Nichols asked if there were any additional questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

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

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

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

Request to Repair/Replace Roof — Mechanical Department Building, Huntsville Unit, Walker County, Huntsville, Texas

Facilities Division Director Ron Hudson presented a new project for consideration which includes the request to repair/replace the roof of the mechanical department building at the Huntsville Unit, as briefed during the Business and Financial Operations Committee Meeting. The total estimated program cost is \$1,908,100.

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

Sydney Zuiker moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to repair/replace the roof of the mechanical department building at the Huntsville Unit, Walker County, Huntsville, Texas, as presented.

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

Request to Install HVAC Systems Efficiency Upgrades — 12 Building, Inmate Housing, Stiles Unit, Jefferson County, Beaumont, Texas

Mr. Hudson presented a new project for consideration which includes the request to install HVAC system efficiency upgrades for 12 building inmate housing at the Stiles Unit, as briefed during the Business and Financial Operations Committee Meeting. The total estimated program cost is \$4,077,300.

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

Pastor Nate Sprinkle moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to install HVAC systems efficiency upgrades for 12 building inmate housing at the Stiles Unit, Jefferson County, Beaumont, Texas, as presented.

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

Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action
Regarding Proposed Land Transactions

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

Request to Renew a Natural Gas Pipeline Easement, Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas

Bill Lewis, Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Logistics Division Director presented the request of Phillips 66 Pipeline, LLC, to renew an expiring pipeline easement at the Clemens Unit for one 20-inch

pipeline for the transport of natural gas liquids. The easement includes an area of approximately 1.85 acres. Phillips 66 Pipeline, LLC, has agreed to pay \$130,520 for the renewal of this easement for a 10-year term. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area. The easement includes language requiring indemnification as the grantee's responsibility and the most-favored-nation clause. The easement has been negotiated at the current geographical appraisal value.

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

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

Thomas Fordyce moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to renew a natural gas pipeline easement at the Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas, as presented.

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

Request to Renew a Natural Gas Pipeline Easement, Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas

Mr. Lewis presented the request of Phillips 66 Pipeline, LLC, to renew an expiring pipeline easement at the Clemens Unit for one 18-inch pipeline for the transport of natural gas liquids. The easement includes an area of approximately 1.87 acres. Phillips 66 Pipeline, LLC, has agreed to pay \$131,304 for the renewal of this easement for a 10-year term. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area. The easement includes language requiring indemnification as the grantee's responsibility and the most-favored-nation clause. The easement has been negotiated at the current geographical appraisal value.

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

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

Judge Faith Johnson moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to renew a natural gas pipeline easement at the Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas, as presented.

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

Request to Renew a Natural Gas Pipeline Easement, Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas

Mr. Lewis presented the request of Phillips 66 Pipeline, LLC, to renew an expiring pipeline easement at the Clemens Unit for one 16-inch pipeline for the transport of natural gas liquids. The easement includes an area of approximately 1.88 acres. Phillips 66 Pipeline, LLC, has agreed to pay \$132,168 for the renewal of this easement for a 10-year term. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area. The easement includes

language requiring indemnification as the grantee's responsibility and the most-favored-nation clause. The easement has been negotiated at the current geographical appraisal value.

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

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

Dr. Rodney Burrow moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to renew a natural gas pipeline easement at the Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas, as presented.

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

Request to Renew a Natural Gas Pipeline Easement, Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas

Mr. Lewis presented the request of Phillips 66 Pipeline, LLC, to renew an expiring pipeline easement at the Clemens Unit for one 10-inch pipeline for the transport of natural gas liquids. The easement includes an area of approximately 1.89 acres. Phillips 66 Pipeline, LLC, has agreed to pay \$133,208 for the renewal of this easement for a 10-year term. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area. The easement includes language requiring indemnification as the grantee's responsibility and the most-favored-nation clause. The easement has been negotiated at the current geographical appraisal value.

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

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

Judge Molly Francis moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to renew a natural gas pipeline easement at the Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas, as presented.

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

Request to Renew a Natural Gas Pipeline Easement, Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas

Mr. Lewis presented the request of Phillips 66 Pipeline, LLC, to renew an expiring pipeline easement at the Clemens Unit for one 16-inch pipeline for the transport of natural gas liquids. The easement includes an area of approximately 1.83 acres. Phillips 66 Pipeline, LLC, has agreed to pay \$128,792 for the renewal of this easement for a 10-year term. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area. The easement includes

language requiring indemnification as the grantee's responsibility and the most-favored-nation clause. The easement has been negotiated at the current geographical appraisal value.

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

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

Ambassador Sichan Siv moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to renew a natural gas pipeline easement at the Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas, as presented.

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

Request to Renew a Natural Gas Pipeline Easement, Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas

Mr. Lewis presented the request of Phillips 66 Pipeline, LLC, to renew an expiring pipeline easement at the Clemens Unit for one 18-inch pipeline for the transport of natural gas liquids. The easement includes an area of approximately 1.83 acres. Phillips 66 Pipeline, LLC, has agreed to pay \$128,712 for the renewal of this easement for a 10-year term. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area. The easement includes language requiring indemnification as the grantee's responsibility and the most-favored-nation clause. The easement has been negotiated at the current geographical appraisal value.

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

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

Pastor Nate Sprinkle moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to renew a natural gas pipeline easement at the Clemens Unit, Brazoria County, Brazoria, Texas, as presented.

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

Request for Right-of-Way Easement, Holliday Unit, Walker County, Huntsville, Texas

Mr. Lewis presented the request of the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) for a right-of-way easement consisting of three parts on approximately 1.697 acres of land. The land will be part of TXDOT's Interstate 45 widening project. TXDOT has offered to pay \$64,868 for the easement and \$9,418 for damages, for a total compensation of \$74,286. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area. The easement includes language requiring indemnification as the grantee's responsibility and the most-favored-nation clause. The easement has been negotiated at the current geographical appraisal value.

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

Sydney Zuiker moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request for a right-of-way easement at the Holliday Unit, Walker County, Huntsville, Texas, as presented.

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

Request for Right-of-Way Easement, Wynne Unit, Walker County, Huntsville, Texas

Mr. Lewis presented the request of the TXDOT for a right-of-way easement consisting of approximately 0.0546 acres of land. The land will be part of TXDOT's Interstate 45 widening project. TXDOT has offered to pay compensation of \$7,131. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area. The easement includes language requiring indemnification as the grantee's responsibility and the most-favored-nation clause. The easement has been negotiated at the current geographical appraisal value.

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

Thomas Fordyce moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request for a right-of-way easement at the Wynne Unit, Walker County, Huntsville, Texas, as presented.

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

Report from the Office of the Independent Auditor

Chris Cirrito, Chief Audit Executive, presented the Office of the Independent Auditor (OIA) Status Report for Fiscal Years (FY) 2024 and 2025 and stated only two changes were made to the document provided to the board:

Mr. Cirrito stated, for FY 2025, two audits have been canceled:

- **2503** – *Employment Related Companies*. He stated the Human Resources Division is working on a significant initiative to streamline the processes, and the OIA will conduct an audit after those changes have been implemented.
- **2509** – *Texas Correctional Industries*. He stated the audit was cancelled due to a need to expand the scope of a different audit currently in progress, so those resources were reallocated, as this audit was categorized as a lower risk.

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Mr. Nichols asked if the scope of the current audit plan is appropriate and if the OIA has the adequate resources to accomplish its mission. Mr. Cirrito confirmed. Chairman Nichols asked if there were any additional questions or comments. Hearing none, he thanked Mr. Cirrito for the status report.

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

Report from the Office of the Inspector General

Inspector General Lance Coleman presented a report on the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). He stated that Fuginet, which began in 1995 in response to a law enforcement agency need to share and obtain parole information effectively, provides real-time data to track parolees, including fugitive and resident status. There are currently approximately 1,400 users, with 53 added just this week. He highlighted Fuginet staff Lawrence Williams, Judy Goodwell, and Lauren Smith, referring to them as unsung heroes.

Mr. Coleman provided an overview of two recent cases. In February 2025, an employee attempted to introduce methamphetamines at the Michael Unit. The suspect was identified and admitted to introducing drugs into the facility. Total contraband seized as a result of this investigation consisted of 212.6 grams of methamphetamines, 1836 grams of tobacco, 370 grams of marijuana, three cell phones, eight vapes, 12 sheets of K2 paper, and four cans of smokeless tobacco. Mr. Coleman also reported that information was recently obtained indicating that contraband was being smuggled into the Clements Unit by a contract employee. The contract employee was identified and disclosed information that led to the arrest of two civilians who were involved in supplying contraband for introduction into the unit. Contraband seized as a result of this investigation consisted of 23 pre-paid cell phones, several sheets of paper soaked in K2, a bottle of liquid K2, drug paraphernalia, multiple vacuum-sealed packages of tobacco, and several nicotine vape cartridges.

In response to a prior request from the board, Mr. Coleman presented information related to estimated prison contraband values versus street values. He informed the board that the values were approximate and as more contraband is seized the value increases.

Mr. Nichols thanked Mr. Coleman for sharing the information and illustrating the efforts being taken to deal with contraband that affects the agency. He asked Mr. Coleman to comment on the necessity of restricting mail by not allowing inmates to receive the original mail sent. Mr. Coleman responded that loose mail can be sprayed with K2 or can have methamphetamine on it, and it can easily be passed off from one person to another while digital mail greatly reduces that source of supply. Mr. Coleman complimented Correctional Institutions Division (CID) leadership on the working relationship that is maintained in fighting contraband together. Mr. Collier also complimented both CID and OIG for their shared focus on contraband. He commented that while K2 is bad on its own, much of it is laced with fentanyl, which can be lethal. He stated the contraband fight continues to get more serious and more sophisticated. Judge Francis also voiced her concerns related to contraband and her support of the actions being taken to reduce it.

Report from the Office of the Independent Ombudsman

Independent Ombudsman Brian Patrick presented a report on the Office of the Independent Ombudsman (OIO), encompassing January 16, 2025 through March 15, 2025. The OIO received 710 inquiries during this period that required substantive work.

The OIO responded to 700 inquiries from the public or an inmate and ten elected official inquiries. The three most common inquiries received were related to life and safety, medical issues, and facility issues.

Chairman Nichols stated that the OIO has made great strides in streamlining operations and recently hired additional staff. He asked if the office continues making progress with identifying efficiencies. Mr. Patrick confirmed, stating that new staff continue to gain knowledge from working with more experienced staff, which leads to increased efficiencies in the investigation process.

Report from the State Counsel for Offenders

State Counsel for Offenders (SCFO) Director Wyvonne Long presented a report on the SCFO. She provided an update from the last board meeting concerning proposed amendments to statute which would allow the SCFO to change the name. She stated, in the past two months, the SCFO opened 336 cases, closed 273 cases, and had approximately 1,400 cases actively open. The SCFO answered or handled more than 5,000 pieces of correspondence. Ms. Long reported that the SCFO recently hired a new attorney, Michale Pitts, who is a criminal attorney with 14 years of experience.

Report from the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Ombudsman

PREA Ombudsman Cassandra McGilbra presented a report from the PREA Ombudsman. From February 2025 through March 2025, there were 357 PREA inquiries, with 143 from the general public and 214 from inmates. She stated the PREA Ombudsman Compliance Specialists have assisted with nine PREA audits at TDCJ facilities, including six Correctional Institution Division facilities, two community supervision corrections departments, and one transitional treatment center. She stated 248 PREA investigations were reviewed.

Chairman Nichols stated that he recently met a staff member at the Halbert Unit that proudly introduced herself as a PREA Officer and asked for a brief explanation of the duties involved. Ms. McGilbra provided a description of the Unit PREA Compliance Manager positions.

Recess and Reconvene

Chairman Nichols announced that the meeting would recess for the day and reconvene on Friday, April 25th for the 30th Annual Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Awards. The 240th meeting of the TBCJ recessed at 5:32 p.m.

Chairman Nichols reconvened the 240th meeting of the TBCJ on Friday, April 25, 2025, at 11:00 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*.

30th Annual Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Awards Ceremony

Chairman Nichols welcomed all honored guests joining the TBCJ for the 30th Annual Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Awards Ceremony. He celebrated the profound impact that volunteers make in the lives each day of individuals incarcerated, on parole, and on probation, stating lasting impacts and transformational differences are made. Volunteers build bridges of second chances and create environments where individuals are not defined by past mistakes but are given the opportunity to become the best version of themselves and to be productive members of their communities with the skills, confidence, and support needed to succeed. Chairman Nichols stated that TDCJ has more than 27,000 volunteers, and it is an honor to recognize all volunteers and the countless hours that individuals spend each day helping others. He acknowledged that the efforts of volunteers are not only changing lives, but they are helping the entire state in assisting in keeping the public safe.

Chairman Nichols announced that Governor Greg Abbott and First Lady Cecilia Abbott issued a proclamation to distinguish April as Second Chance Month and read the proclamation. He recognized that second chances are often considered something that happens when people make a successful transition out of the prison system but that it can also have a broader meaning, applying to individuals who will not reenter society.

Mr. Collier expressed his appreciation to the volunteers for the contributions made to the agency. He added, the mission of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is to provide public safety, promote positive change in inmate behavior, reintegrate inmates into society, and assist victims of crime. Mr. Collier stated every component of TDCJ's mission points back to two words – public safety. He recognized that through the combined partnerships of thousands of employees and volunteers, the TDCJ can achieve that mission of public safety. The agency provides public safety each day by incarcerating those that pose a risk, yet through a wide array of faith-based programming, work and rehabilitative programs, and educational and vocational programming, TDCJ helps achieve true public safety.

Mr. Collier reported that during the last year, approximately 28,000 volunteers gave almost 180,000 hours of their time to help change the lives of the TDCJ population. Each of those hours helps to achieve the TDCJ's mission and keep Texans safe. He stated that TDCJ is thankful for all the volunteers who unselfishly give their time and resources to help those in need. He acknowledged that volunteers do not do this for recognition but to make a difference and to give back by helping others find the right path. He expressed gratitude toward the volunteers for their work and, on behalf of the agency, recognized that Texas is safer because of their efforts.

Mr. Collier closed by recognizing the Texas Board of Criminal Justice for the time volunteered to serve on the board. He thanked the board members for their service provided to the agency and to the state. He added the board members' service is a significant commitment and helps to make the TDCJ stronger. Mr. Collier said, "On behalf of the over 30,000 employees of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, I want to thank all of the volunteers for your contributions; may God bless each and every one of you and may God continue to bless the great state of Texas."

Chris Carter, Chaplaincy and Volunteer Services Division Director, presented an overview of the new division, focusing primarily on the Volunteer Services Department. Mr. Carter announced that the leadership team within the division, including himself, Deputy Division Director Ruby Davis, Deputy Director of Volunteer Services Chad Wakefield, and Deputy Director of Religious Services C.F. Hazlewood, combines 140 years of experience. He noted they are a dedicated team of individuals that has the heart, vision, and drive to make their mission possible. He expressed his appreciation for the administrative support team who work behind the scenes to support the mission and provide guidance and support to the volunteers.

The mission of the Chaplaincy and Volunteer Services Division is to facilitate religious and volunteer services designed to enhance public safety through spiritual, moral, and ethical transformation. Mr. Carter stated we all know that spiritual transformation is key to positive change, which leads to the true public safety of which Mr. Collier spoke. Public safety is not the height of a fence, not the length of a sentence, true public safety is a change in the hearts of people, and that's what the Chaplaincy and Volunteer Services Division is here for.

Mr. Carter continued his presentation by mentioning Lisa Langley, Program Supervisor, who has more than 27 years of experience working with volunteers. He went on to define a TDCJ volunteer as an individual who embodies a spirit of selflessness and community service by donating one's time, skills, and resources to help a cause. He stated that volunteers also bring love and compassion to those they serve.

He reported that in the past five years there has been a 40% increase in approved volunteers, which he believes is attributed to the power of purpose. Mr. Carter said, “We have learned that when the why is big, the how is small; when the why is powerful, the how is weak; when the why is everything, the how is nothing; and there is nothing impossible for the volunteers to help us achieve.”

Volunteers provide Bible studies, religious services, marriage and parenting classes, life skills, and much more that impact public safety by reducing recidivism and improving prison culture. Crusades and special events are organized by volunteers, leadership, and agency staff coming together as a unified team to make the events possible. Mr. Carter stated that research has proven that incarcerated individuals that participate in faith-based services have a decreased likelihood of reoffending. He recognized that the volunteers play a major role in TDCJ having one of the lowest recidivism rates in the nation, and that it shows that when you can build hope on the inside, it transitions outside. Mr. Carter also discussed the volunteer hotline that is available on weekends and holidays for volunteers that need assistance to bridge the gap and provide guidance so that the volunteers can serve.

In 1995, the Governor’s Criminal Justice Volunteer Services Awards were created through a collaborative effort between the office of Governor George W. Bush and the Texas Board of Criminal Justice. Today marks the 30th anniversary. Mr. Carter presented a video related to the impact religious and volunteer services have on inmates, then he quoted Matthew 25:36-40. He thanked the volunteers for the example of servant leadership they set and said it was an honor to serve alongside the volunteers.

Chairman Nichols thanked Mr. Carter and welcomed Vice-Chair Judge Faith Johnson as the master of ceremonies. Judge Johnson announced the awards to the following individuals and organizations:

Jenn Harris, *Chaplaincy Department*
Alfred Deal, Jr., *Correctional Institutions Division*
Kings Crossing Prison Ministry, *Nancy Hees Award – Parole Division*
Jerry Nicholson, *Contracted Facilities*
Katelyn Smith, *Rehabilitation and Reentry Division*
Larry Harmon, *Religious Service*
Raenne Hance, *Chaplaincy and Volunteer Services Division*
Tisha Bos, *Substance Use Treatment Program*
Dr. Jeff Farroni, *Health Services Division*
Crystal Lyons, *Pathfinder Award – Victim Services Division*
Brandon Woods, *Judy Burd Award – Windham School District*
Johnny Adams, *Restorative Justice*
Sharon McKinney, *Susan Cranford Award – Female Inmate Program*
Charles Dewees, *Most Innovative Program*
Granny’s Tamales, *Community Service*
Albert Yancey, *Best Family Program*
Yvonne Rohlfing, *Leonard Davis Award for Most Hours Served*
Michael Wallace, *Extensive Travel Award*
Katherine Revis, *TDCJ Employee Volunteer*
Warden Donald Muniz, *Criminal Justice Administrator*
Roy Sherman Mercer, *Judge Carroll Wilborn, Jr. Award*
Mike Barber, *Carol S. Vance Volunteer of the Year*

Chairman Nichols and Mr. Collier presented the 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.

(Attachment C – Program for 30th Annual Governor’s Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Awards)

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Nichols thanked everyone for attending the meeting and announced that the next meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice will be June 26-27, 2025, in Bryan, Texas, and adjourned the 240th meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice at 1:03 p.m.

Chairman*

Secretary*