

**Texas Board of Criminal Justice  
242nd Meeting**



**Minutes**

**August 19, 2025  
Austin, Texas**

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## TEXAS BOARD OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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

**Tuesday, August 19, 2025  
10:00 AM – 4:00 PM**

### ORDER OF BUSINESS

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*Call to Order*

*Convene Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ) Meeting*

*Recess to TBCJ Executive Session*

I. Executive Session – ATX Boardroom

- A. The TBCJ may convene into Executive Session.
- B. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Selection or Appointment of the Executive Director.
- C. 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).
- D. Discussion regarding deployment of security personnel, devices, or security audits (closed in accordance with Section 551.076, Government Code).
- E. 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).
- F. 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 – Uptown Ballroom

- A. Recognitions
- B. Consideration of Approval of Consent Items
  - 1. Hazardous Duty Pay Authorization Requests
  - 2. Personal Property Donations
  - 3. 241st TBCJ Meeting Minutes
  - 4. Excused Absences
- C. Public Comments
- D. Report from the Presiding Officer, Judicial Advisory Council
- E. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget
- F. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Purchases and Contracts Over \$1 Million
- G. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Purchase of the Dalby Correctional Facility
- H. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Facilities Division Construction Projects
  - 1. Status of Board Approved Projects
  - 2. Request for Construction Expansion Dorms for the Bell, Moore, Estes, Hamilton, Hightower, Jester III, Luther, Memorial, Montford, and Pack Units, and the Lopez, Sanchez, and Travis County State Jails
  - 3. Request for Construction of Multi-Purpose Building at the Hobby Unit, Marlin, Texas
- I. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Land Transactions
  - 1. Request for a Pipeline Easement Renewal, Boyd Unit, Teague, Texas
  - 2. Request for Utility Easement Renewal, Ellis and Estelle Units, Huntsville, Texas
  - 3. Request for a Pipeline Easement Renewal, Ellis and Estelle Units, Huntsville, Texas
  - 4. Request for a New Access Road Easement, Young Medical Facility Complex, Dickinson, Texas
  - 5. Request to Sell Land, Montford Unit, Lubbock, Texas
- J. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Audit Plan
- K. Report from the Chairman, TBCJ

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

- L. Report from the Executive Director, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)
- M. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Establishment and Continuation of Standing or Limited Purpose Committees
- N. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Renaming of State Counsel for Offenders (SCFO)
- O. Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding the Selection or Appointment of the TDCJ Executive Director

*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. 242**

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice convened on Tuesday, August 19, 2025, in regular session at 10:01 a.m. at the Cambria Hotel in Austin, Texas, and recessed at 10:02 a.m. The TBCJ reconvened in executive session at 10:16 a.m., recessed at 1:03 p.m., reconvened in regular session at 1:13 p.m., and adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

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

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

**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  
Ashley Adkins                      Stephanie Greger  
Mary Babcock                      Eric Guerrero  
Andrew Barbee                      Rene Hinojosa  
Kate Blifford                      Ron Hudson  
Chris Carter                      Bill Lewis  
Tina Clark                      Rebecca Waltz  
Jennifer Gonzales                      Rachelle White  
Carey Green                      April Zamora

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

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

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Megan Molleur, Office of the Lieutenant Governor  
Mike Ward, Senate Criminal Justice Committee  
Haylee Plumley, Senate Criminal Justice Committee  
Shakira Pumphrey, Texas House of Representatives  
Corey Sharp, Legislative Budget Board Analyst

## **Convene the Texas Board of Criminal Justice**

Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols convened the 242nd meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ or board) on Tuesday, August 19, 2025, at 10:01 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*.

## **Executive Session**

Chairman Nichols announced that the meeting would recess into executive session and reconvene in regular session at 1:00 p.m. The meeting of the TBCJ recessed into executive session at 10:02 a.m.

## **Reconvene the Texas Board of Criminal Justice**

Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols reconvened the 242nd meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ or board) at 1:13 p.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 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." 24 registration cards were received for public comment prior to the deadline, so the board will hear public presentations 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 July and August 2025, 46 employees attained 25 years of service, 45 employees attained 30 years of service, 17 employees attained 35 years of service, 11 employees attained 40 years of service, one employee attained 45 years of service, and one employee attained 50 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)*

## **Consideration of Approval of Consent Items**

- 1. Hazardous Duty Pay Authorization Requests**
- 2. Personal Property Donations**
- 3. 241st TBCJ Meeting Minutes**
- 4. Excused Absences**

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

## **Public Comments**

Chairman Nichols stated the Public Comments agenda item would be presented later in the meeting to accommodate the schedule of the presiding officer of the Judicial Advisory Council.

*Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols moved to table the Public Comments agenda item until after the next agenda item, the Report from the Presiding Officer of the Judicial Advisory Council.*

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

## **Report from the Presiding Officer, Judicial Advisory Council**

Judge Rebecca Palomo presented an update on behalf of the Judicial Advisory Council (JAC). She stated the JAC is pleased with the success of the 89th legislative session. On behalf of the JAC, she thanked the board and executive director Bryan Collier for the support of community supervision funding initiatives that were secured in the 89th legislative session. As a result of this support, approximately \$128.3 million in additional funding was secured for community supervision and correction departments (CSCDs) for the fiscal year (FY) 2026-2027 biennium. This included salary increases for probation officers, funding to maintain quality treatment programming, and grants to expand pre-trial diversion across the state. In addition to CSCD funding, an increase of \$925,000 was provided by the Legislature for battering intervention and prevention programs. Those programs serve CSCDs, parole clients, and other agencies to provide critical services that aim to prevent future incidents of intimate partner violence. Judge Palomo stated the probation population has been increasing, and the Legislature allocated an additional \$35.2 million to address this increase. This funding will significantly enhance the CSCDs' ability to promote public safety and to deter justice-involved individuals. The Legislature also provided previous FY 2024-2025 salary increases with an additional \$21.7 million. Those salary increases will support staff retention and improve the overall effectiveness of supervision.

At the April JAC meeting, Facilities Division Director Ron Hudson and Correctional Institutions Division Director Eric Guerrero provided the council with an update on prison air conditioning and staffing command initiatives. Both were knowledgeable and informative, and she expressed the JAC's appreciation for the high degree of professionalism presented by the TDCJ. At the most recent JAC meeting held in July, Chief of Staff Rachelle White presented information related to the Virtual Court Program. The information shared offered valuable insight into the agency strategies to help reduce the number of individuals transported from the substance abuse felony punishment facilities (SAFPFs) and intermediate sanction facilities to counties on bench warrants, decreasing interruption of treatment

services. Rehabilitation and Reentry Division (RRD) Director April Zamora provided an update on the SAFPF continuum of care, highlighting recent recommendations for improvements and implementation of new programming and curricula under the direction of the RRD. Ms. Zamora reported she will be working with the Community Justice Assistance Division director Carey Green on a focus group with parole providers, which will include CSCD directors. Judge Palomo expressed the JAC's appreciation for the thoughtful solutions presented and stated the JAC looks forward to receiving updates on the progress of those initiatives. She stated the JAC stands ready to assist the board and the agency in any way. She stated the JAC's expectation is continued collaboration to ensure that the Texas probation system remains innovative, continues to attract and retain highly skilled staff, and maintains a high level of service to those it serves.

Chairman Nichols thanked her for the report and recognized Texas House of Representatives Policy Advisor Shakira Pumphrey and Office of the Lieutenant Governor Policy Advisor Megan Molleur for their work with the state legislature, which demonstrates that state leadership recognize the value and importance of CSCDs and the programs represented. Chairman Nichols stated the CSCDs have taken over a suite of local criminal justice services which used to be known as probation. He stated the vital importance of the CSCDS is not only in administering and supervising the probation programs but also the other great programs on criminal justice diversion at the local level. State leadership recognizes that, and this level of funding exists because of that recognition. On behalf of the state, Chairman Nichols thanked the JAC for the good work to help coordinate the efforts of the CSCDs. He also thanked state leadership and the Legislature for ensuring that taxpayer resources are distributed in the places that matter and make a difference.

Judge Molly Francis stated the agency has been trying to make the TDCJ population more accessible to the courts to prevent transportation for a plea deal that could be resolved in five minutes or a possible motion regarding missed photographs that would require the person to remain in county jail for 30 days while everything is processed before being transported back. She stated every unit has the sufficient bandwidth and electronic equipment to allow a personal view of the defendant, and the individual can talk to their attorney, enter a plea, and participate in a hearing to prevent that person from leaving the unit. She shared her personal experience with a virtual court hearing, stating it went smoothly and has become routine for everyone involved. She emphasized that the virtual court program should be broadcast throughout all the district courts in the state of Texas because it saves time, energy, and money, and reduces the risk of possible transportation issues.

Judge Palomo stated she has shared information about the virtual court program with judges and the JAC. She discussed possibly sharing the information with the Office of Court Administration, so that all the judges across Texas will be informed about and encouraged to use the program. She stated research shows that the risks of transportation are reduced but also the interruption of services as well. Chairman Nichols stated there are rules that require an in-person appearance in court, absent consent, and many of the virtual court appearances are completed with the consent of the individual member of the population to avoid interruption of services. He stated an inmate actively trying to improve by going to class and receiving programming has to be thoughtful about the impact of a 30-day interruption sitting in a county jail.

Judge Palomo mentioned that a hearing can be just a reschedule of a date, and the individual is unable to receive services during that time, which costs time and resources and increases risk. She stated, before coming to the bench, she was a state prosecutor. During that time, the options for prosecutors were completely limited. It was either prison or just straight probation without resources, which made it difficult to divert some individuals from prison, at least from a prosecutor's perspective. Since then, she has served as the Director of the Adult Probation Department for six years in Webb County and learned about the population served. She stated the Legislature has recognized the need and effectiveness of funding

diversions from prisons and creating programs in different communities across the state. She thanked Executive Director Bryan Collier for ensuring progress continues. Chairman Nichols stated there is a growing recognition across the state and political spectrum, including the business community, that a single felony conviction, in and of itself, should not be a disqualifying factor from someone who is willing to step forward and rehabilitate and reenter and be a productive member of society. In a responsible way consistent with public safety, there are local programs that provide the appropriate supervision or sanction that reduces the total amount of population in the TDCJ. He stated the board supports those responsible and well-run programs.

### **Public Comments**

Chairman Nichols stated that for public comment within the jurisdiction of the TBCJ but not items posted on the agenda, 24 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*.

Jennifer Toon registered to speak on strip searches as a representative of Lioness Justice Impacted Women's Alliance. She discussed an issue at the Carole Young Unit, concerning a strip search area for the elderly and individuals with a disability. She claimed the area was not accessible to those individuals and that the women who spoke of the issue before were no longer willing to speak with her about it. She encouraged the board to consider limiting the use of strip searches for the female population as women are considered low risk. She stated women will refuse programming and medical services to avoid being strip searched. She claimed strip searches have not been the most effective way to detect contraband. Judge Faith Johnson asked if the issue with the strip search area was resolved or still ongoing. Ms. Toon stated she did not believe the issue had been resolved.

Danielle Allen registered to speak on problems with the TDCJ units as a representative of The Prison Show. She discussed her concerns about the food being offered to inmates, stating it lacked quality. She asked for the commissary options to be expanded, such as sandwiches or salads. She claimed the vending machines at many units are broken, and those vendors should be held accountable. She stated every unit should be required to provide nutritious vending options. She commented that Step 2 grievances are disappearing, especially at the Stiles Unit. She claimed that some units allow families to attend graduations for the life skills program while others do not, such as the Wynne Unit. She claimed death row inmate Eric Williams is being denied access to a tablet without cause. Chairman Nichols thanked her for coming.

Tanika Crawford registered to speak on her husband Sterling Crawford's parole. She stated he has been incarcerated for over 21 years and has been denied parole due to the nature of his offense, which is a factor that will never change. She shared that he has committed himself to personal growth and transformation and has only had one discipline, which occurred in his first year. He has helped peers with rehabilitation and pursued an education. She stated three judges from his county of conviction have shown support for his parole request. She claimed that over 1,700 violent offenders were released on parole from January through June of 2024, but her husband has been denied. She asked the board to reconsider the parole review decisions. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comments and her evident care for her loved one and stated the board would relay her message to the Board of Pardons and Paroles.

Gloria Rubac registered to speak on death row conditions. She read a statement from death row inmate Prible, who recounted a medical experience and shared his frustration with medical issues. Ms. Rubac claimed the TDCJ has been torturing inmates with solitary. She discussed her adopted son, Michael

Gonzales, who told her he had gone two weeks without a shower. She stated he did receive his glasses, which took six years. She claimed he is diabetic and the food offered is not appropriate for his condition.

James Rollins registered to speak on death row conditions. He read a letter written by an inmate, Obie Weathers, discussing death row and inmate deaths that have occurred there. The inmate claimed death row inmates received limited phone time in comparison to general population and expressed concern with staff shortages. The inmate described death row as solitary with only two hours outside of the cell allowed, which he claims violates the *Death Row Plan*. The inmate's letter stated staff shortages have negatively impacted hygiene levels with some inmates contracting infections. The inmate's letter asked for the recreation schedule to be implemented as mandated. Chairman Nichols thanked him for sharing the inmate's thoughts.

Helen Gaebler registered to speak on parole warrants and revocations. She stated she works with the University of Texas Law School and is involved with the Parole Project. She discussed blue warrants and shared the experience of her clients who were on parole. She stated one of her clients experienced three blue warrants for technical violations, which involved alleged tampering with her monitor. She claimed the monitor was never evaluated for issues by anyone, and her client did not receive a notice beforehand that the monitor was an issue. She believed the allegations were weak and never proven, and the consequences for blue warrants are significant and should be processed differently. Her client lost her placement in a sober living home and job interview opportunities as a result. She asked for due notice to be given for blue warrants. Chairman Nichols encouraged her to provide her specific feedback in writing to the board, who will provide that information to the Parole Division.

Justin Martinez registered to speak on Sunset Review issues as a representative of Latino Justice. He discussed the facility closure plan recommended to close facilities with persistent staffing challenges. He stated the recommendation did not make it into the final bill but expressed his support for implementing the recommendation with expansion dorms. He asked the board to develop an open and transparent process for people to observe and comment on the Sunset legislation and its implementation. Chairman Nichols stated a comprehensive review of staffing did make it into the legislation and is a priority. He encouraged Mr. Martinez to provide any written materials to the board.

Frances Vaughn registered to speak but was not present.

Sister Mama Sonya registered to speak on death row conditions. She spoke on the hypocrisy of the death penalty and shared her concerns for the women on death row. She asked for death row to be given the same phone and visit privileges as general population. She asked why the food provided is not nutritious and why the health care is so poor. She asked why medical issues are not addressed. She claimed that 1,112 inmates have died between June 2023 and June 2025 and asked who is responsible. Chairman Nichols thanked her for coming.

Brittany Robertson registered to speak as a representative of Texas Prison Reform. She claimed grievances have become an issue since the introduction of body-worn cameras. She discussed medical escorts, claiming she has received reports from inmates who have been denied medical access due to a lack of escort. She stated her organization has been tracking meals provided at several units through specific individuals who have been diagnosed with vitamin deficiencies. She spoke about mental health issues in restrictive housing. She discussed the issue of inmates throwing bodily fluids, which make contact with other inmates as well as the officers, and stated those inmates are not being held accountable. She thanked the board for facilitating the inmates' access to music and media, which reduces drug use and improves cognitive ability. She asked if those inmates would be given access to news media to stay current on world

events. She recommended blank grievance forms be placed on meal carts, which would allow restrictive housing inmates better access to file a grievance. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comments.

Tona Southards Naranjo registered to speak on behalf of her son Jon Anthony Southards, who passed away while in TDCJ custody. She described his death as preventable and stated it was heat related. She stated her son did not receive safety, rehabilitation, or dignity in the TDCJ. She asked for a moment of silence for her son and others who have lost their lives in the TDCJ. She stated the system values punishment more than humanity. She expressed concern about the heat and lack of out-of-cell time. She claimed officers were forging medical signatures on medical refusals. She described the impact of losing her son. Chairman Nichols thanked her for coming.

Pam Tise registered to speak on death row and shared that she was incarcerated on death row for 20 years. She claimed the female death row inmates are being housed in the multi-purpose facility known as crisis management, which means sharing a shower and bathroom area with inmates in crisis management. She shared that some of the crisis management inmates have severe mental health issues, including self-harm, and the showers are not hygienic because the support service inmates (SSIs) are not cleaning it properly. She asked for consideration to be given to building another shower for the inmates who are not in crisis management status but are living in the same building. She proposed one of the female death row inmates be given a position as an SSI to help with the cleanliness issue. Chairman Nichols thanked her for attending.

Marci Marie Simmons registered to speak on medical transports and death rates. She mentioned SB 1146 and stated progress was made in implementing it but that progress has been lost. She expressed appreciation for the increase in tele-visits and localized health care. She claimed the extended stay at the Plane State Jail has become an issue, claiming inmates who just underwent major surgery are being asked to move a mattress to the cell. She claimed the dining hall schedule prevents the inmates from receiving meals, the trays are not clean, and meals are served without utensils. She shared the experience of one of the inmates who was unenrolled from her vocational program and extracurricular program due to her extended stay at the Plane State Jail. She claimed this prevents inmates from seeking necessary medical care. She asked the board to consider investing in transportation vehicles that provide privacy in the restroom areas.

Lori Mellinger registered to speak on Securus as the board president of Lioness Justice Impacted Women's Alliance. She discussed the tablets and stated they are often lost or confiscated during transport procedures, and the TDCJ does not have physical copies of electronic mail. She claimed Securus fails to maintain a reliable messaging system, with no notification provided to loved ones when a message is denied or communication access is restored. She recommended the board adopt standards that establish clear responsibilities for the vendor and the agency and asked the agency to provide back-up printed mail when electronic communication is unavailable. She asked that Securus create a notification system for inmates and their loved ones to know when communication access is interrupted. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comments.

Brittany Pokorski registered to speak on water conditions at the Hobby Unit. She stated the city of Marlin has faced chronic water quality issues for years, such as boil water notices. Incarcerated inmates cannot take independent steps to ensure safe water. She asked the board to have the agency take proactive measures to provide access to safe and clean water, including contingency plans, back-up water supplies, and regular independent testing. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comments.

Karen Munoz Trevino registered to speak on correspondence issues as a civil attorney at Latino Justice. She indicated the correspondence rules have been misinterpreted and applied inconsistently. Specifically,

correspondence has been denied for mentioning the names of staff, for violating the prohibition on third-party communications, and also for having another inmate's information in any context. She claimed two inmates received major cases on the prohibition on social media despite the inmates' testimony that the social media in question was run by someone else and the posts were made without consent. Incoming correspondence can be denied for unclear reasons, and the sender is not notified. When a letter is denied, it is removed from the Securus account for both the sender and the recipient. She asked for clarity in the mail policies and for consistent training for mailroom staff, along with a modified review process. She expressed the intent to speak with Office of the Independent Ombudsman Director Brian Patrick about these issues. Chairman Nichols expressed appreciation for her comments and collaboration.

Olga Verastegui registered to speak on medical and mental health issues. She asked for inmates to be treated with care, compassion, and dignity, and expressed concern regarding inmates being isolated in cells instead of receiving medical and mental health treatment. Chairman Nichols thanked her for coming.

Yolanda Garcia registered to speak but declined her opportunity to speak.

Jasmine Arnold registered to speak on inmate conditions on behalf of her brother Robert Arnold. She expressed concern for his safety and mental health. On November 10, 2023, he was found incompetent to stand trial and was transferred to a mental health facility. He was eventually reevaluated and found competent, and, on November 18, 2024, he accepted a ten-year plea deal. He is incarcerated at the Coffield Unit and is now involved in PREA, gang-related, and drug-related issues. She claimed he was kept in unit medical for over a month then placed in inmate protection investigation status. She alleged he was housed in general population inappropriately, his medications were changed, and he hallucinates and hears voices. Ms. Arnold asked for a new mental health evaluation for her brother and for a formal investigation to be conducted. She asked for transparency and oversight for the offices contacted regarding her brother's situation. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comments.

Ashleen Gaddy registered to speak on nitazene, describing it as a new opioid far stronger than fentanyl. She stated there is no drug test for it, and the strength of one dose increases the risk of overdose, which can be sudden. She alleged it has killed over fifteen people in Harris County. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comments. Judge Faith Johnson asked if there is evidence that it has been introduced into the prisons. She stated she did not know but said it has been found in vape pens and medications, and a test to detect it has not been developed.

Shannon Marshall registered to speak on rehabilitation and reentry on behalf of HeartCheck Prison Strategies Group, LLC. He stated he is a former inmate who created the organization to focus on solutions for inmates releasing into society. His focus is to expand rehabilitation and reentry programs and make those programs more available to the inmate population. He recommended adding programming on the housing wings to encourage practical life skills, such as learning new technology before release. He stated boredom leads to bad decisions, and programming can make a positive impact. Chairman Nichols asked him to contact the board to meet for discussions concerning these issues.

J.A. registered to speak on the impact of incarceration on siblings. His brother is incarcerated within the TDCJ, and J.A. would like to see a better prison life for the incarcerated. He asked for good food, air conditioning, and rehabilitation for the inmates. He asked the board to appoint an executive director who will make positive changes within the system. Chairman Nichols described his comments as inspirational and expressed his appreciation.

Laura Aldrete registered to speak on rehabilitation improvements on behalf of Voices for Texas Prisoners. She discussed the unsafe conditions of the prison and the preventable deaths. She asked the board to select

an executive director who will care for the inmate population and focus on redemption. She asked for better food, more education, and expanded programming. Chairman Nichols thanked her for her comments.

Diana Smith registered to speak on recidivism. She asked the agency to expand rehabilitation efforts and to engage the minds of the inmate population and expressed concern that her loved one may not make it out of the prison system. She asked the new executive director to be selected to make a positive impact.

Chairman Nichols called again for Frances Vaughn who was registered to speak, but she was not present to speak.

### **Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action** **Regarding the Texas Department of Criminal Justice** **Proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget**

Ron Steffa, Chief Financial Officer, presented a review of the Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Operating Budget. He thanked each of the board members for dedicating time to individual briefings on the budget and recognized budget staff for their hard work.

Mr. Steffa stated that the TDCJ's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 operating budget reflects decisions that were made during the regular legislative session and represents a significant investment in the criminal justice system. Mr. Steffa highlighted some of the significant funding decisions impacting the FY 2026 operating budget as follows:

- **Capital and Infrastructure:**
  - \$214.8 million in additional funding for major repair and renovation projects, including \$118 million to add air conditioning to approximately 18,000 beds
  - \$301 million to construct 14 inmate expansion dorms which will provide 5,600 air-conditioned beds
  - \$4.5 million to construct an employee dormitory at the Clements Unit
  - \$37 million for water projects at the Hobby and Memorial units
  - \$22.8 million for additional infirmary capacity
  - \$30 million for repairs to Hospital Galveston
  - \$258.3 million for agency systems, equipment, and vehicles, specifically a learning management system for staff development; training center equipment; vehicle replacements; telephone system upgrades; video surveillance equipment replacement; broadband expansion; integration solutions for the Comptroller's Centralized Accounting and Payroll/Personnel System; security enhancements to the inmate telephone system; a crime management system for the Office of the Inspector General; and the Corrections Information Technology System 2.0
- **Probation:**
  - Funding levels provided for felony and misdemeanor probation supervision based on the Legislative Budget Board's (LBB) population projections
  - \$23.2 million for residential and nonresidential treatment programs
  - \$23.2 million for an increase in employee salaries and \$25 million for pretrial diversion programs

- \$0.9 million for the Battering Intervention and Prevention Program
- **Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments (TCOOMMI):**
  - Funding received for maintaining FY 2024-2025 service levels for mental health services and continuity of care for adult and juvenile offenders and for an additional 90 dual diagnosis beds
- **Incarceration, Treatment, and Health Care:**
  - Funding provided for a 10% pay raise for correctional staff
  - \$63.4 million to maintain current operational levels of food, fuel, and utilities at increased prices and \$52.6 million for unit maintenance
  - \$34 million for initiatives to address correctional officer staffing
  - \$190 million to re-open previously idled units
  - Funding provided to maintain current operational levels for contracted treatment programs and facilities
  - Funding provided for the TDCJ to staff and operate seven facilities that are currently privately operated, which includes the Bridgeport, Kyle, Coleman, B. Moore, Bradshaw, Lindsey, and Willacy units
  - Funding to maintain current funding levels for rehabilitation and reentry programs
  - An additional \$304.6 million to maintain inmate health care
  - An additional \$4.4 million to operate the Bell Unit as an outpatient mental health facility
  - Funding for the purchase and operations of the Giles Dalby Correctional Facility in Post, Texas
- **Parole:**
  - 15% pay raise for parole officers
  - Staffing and funding for parole supervision based on the LBB population projections
  - Provided funding to maintain FY 2024-2025 operational levels for contract residential reentry centers and intermediate sanction facility beds
- **Other Agency Functions:**
  - \$20 million for targeted salary adjustments to improve staffing levels
  - 6% pay raise for attorney salaries
  - \$9.3 million to enhance Employee Support Services, as well as \$7 million for information technology staffing enhancements
  - Funding provided for projected Data Center Services
  - Provides funding and approval for the executive director's salary for \$319,813, as provided in the *General Appropriations Act*

With the additional funding to the FY 2026 budget, Mr. Steffa listed the FY 2026 budget goals:

- For probation, \$371.6 million
- For TCOOMMI, \$35.4 million
- \$4.9 billion to incarcerate felons
- \$215.1 million to operate the parole system
- \$217.7 million for administration

He stated the FY 2026 operating budget totals \$5,809,797,489 and concluded his presentation.

Chairman Nichols thanked Mr. Steffa and his staff for their report and briefings. He recognized state leadership for investing in the agency and its various programs. He asked for any questions from the board.

*General Bill Welch moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Operating Budget, to include the Executive Director's salary, as presented and authorize the executive director of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to make transfers as necessary and as authorized in the General Appropriations Act and other applicable laws.*

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

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

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

Mr. Steffa reviewed the purchases and contracts over \$1 million and stated there will be 11 items brought for the board's consideration and approval. Items one and two are increases to the FY 2024-2025 contracts for TCOOMMI for case management and continuity of care with local mental health authorities. Item three is the FY 2026-2027 contract for data center services through the Department of Information Resources. Item four is the FY 2026-2027 renewal contract for the inmate telephone system. Item five is the FY 2026 contract for inmate tablet services. Item six is the FY 2026-2027 contract for aircraft maintenance with the Texas Department of Transportation. Item seven is the FY 2026 contract for the maintenance and support of comprehensive video surveillance systems at maximum security facilities. Item eight is an increase to the FY 2025-2026 contract for inmate banking, point of sale application, and parole fee management. Item nine is the FY 2026-2027 contract for the replacement of agency vehicles. Item ten is the FY 2026-2027 contract for the replacement of agency computers. Item eleven is the FY 2026-2027 contract with the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) for deferred maintenance at Hospital Galveston. This contract is for \$30 million and will contain a funding match by UTMB, which will provide a total of \$60 million in hospital renovations.

Chairman Nichols asked for further clarification on Items four and five to explain the zero amount listed. Mr. Steffa stated the inmate telephones and tablets do not have a cost to the agency, and commissions are generated from those systems, which are provided to the state and generate revenue for the vendor. 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 purchases and contracts over \$1 million as presented.*

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

### **Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action** **Regarding the Purchase of the Dalby Correctional Facility**

Mr. Steffa presented for consideration and approval the purchase of the Giles Dalby Correctional Facility in Post, Texas. The Dalby Unit, currently vacant and owned by Garza County, contains approximately

251,000 square feet of facilities and is on approximately 74 acres. It will have a capacity of approximately 2,000 beds and will help provide the additional capacity needed to accommodate the increase in population projections. The Legislature provided funding in the amount of \$110 million for the purchase.

Chairman Nichols asked for confirmation that the Legislature specifically appropriated funds for the purpose of purchasing the Dalby Unit. Mr. Steffa confirmed. 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 purchase of Dalby Correctional Facility 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**

### **Status of Board Approved Projects**

Ron Hudson, Facilities Division Director, reviewed the Status of Board Approved Projects.

- Item 1 is the roof replacement project at the Michael Unit which is 82% complete. The contractor is continuing to work on 8 building, which is the last building to be roofed.
- Item 2 is the roof replacement project at the Stringfellow Unit which is 98% complete. All eight roofs are complete; additional work to add gutters and downspouts is ongoing.
- Item 3 is the Huntsville Unit project to repair and replace the mechanical department building roof. The Notice of Award has been issued.
- Item 4 is the Holliday Unit project to construct a new training facility which is 35% complete. The contractor is working on electrical, mechanical, and plumbing for the main training building. Concrete walls are being erected for building C, which is the firing range. At the staff barracks, the underground plumbing is being prepared for the concrete slab to be poured.
- Item 5 is the Lynaugh Unit project to make structural repairs in inmate housing J1-J4 dorms (design only) which is complete.
- Item 6 is the Ferguson Unit project to construct a water treatment plant which is 24% complete. Trenching and installation of the perimeter water line is ongoing. The contractor is installing foundation pipes under the groundwater storage tanks. Once complete, compaction in all areas will be tested.
- Item 7 is the Terrell Unit project to refurbish the water tower and water treatment plant which is 99% complete. The only item left is to replace one valve. The Stringfellow Unit water well is under repair, and, upon completion, an outage will be scheduled to replace the valve.
- Item 8 is the Connally Unit project to replace plumbing and controls in 3, 4, 7, 10, and 11 buildings for inmate housing which is 20% complete. Work is ongoing in 7 building to install the water conservation system.
- Item 9 is the Connally Unit project to replace plumbing and controls in 8, 12, 18, and 19 buildings for inmate housing which is 4% complete. The contractor will begin working on the buildings once building 7 is completed.
- Item 10 is the Ellis Unit project to install a fire alarm system which is 30% complete. The contractor has mobilized and is currently working in the main building.
- Item 11 is the Ferguson Unit project to install a fire alarm system which is 45% complete. Conduit and device installation is ongoing in the main building.

- Item 12 is the design-only project to install HVAC in A, B, C, and D dorms at the Beto Unit which is 90% complete.
- Item 13 is the McConnell Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing (design only) which is 15% complete.
- Item 14 is the Goodman Unit project to install HVAC – ISF which is 5% complete. The contractor has mobilized in anticipation of the HVAC equipment arrival in late August. This project was brought before the board in December, the vendor ordered the material in January, and it has taken nine months for the materials to arrive.
- Item 15 is the Michael Unit project for HVAC system efficiency upgrades to inmate housing 12 building which is 83% complete. All new air handlers are in operation. Installation of #1 chiller is ongoing, and the new generator has been delivered.
- Item 16 is the Stiles Unit project for HVAC system efficiency upgrades to inmate housing 12 building, and the Notice to Proceed has been issued.
- Item 17 is the Boyd Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing, and the Notice of Award has been issued.
- Item 18 is the Gurney Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing, and the Notice of Award has been issued.
- Item 19 is the Hightower Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing, and the Notice of Award has been issued.
- Item 20 is the Jester III Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing, and the Notice of Award has been issued.
- Item 21 is the Luther Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing, and the Notice of Award has been issued.
- Item 22 is the Polunsky Unit project to install HVAC – 3 building, and the Notice of Award has been issued.
- Item 23 is the Powledge Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing, and the Notice of Award has been issued.
- Item 24 is the Stevenson Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing, and the Notice of Award has been issued.
- Item 25 is the Stiles Unit project to install HVAC – 8 building, and the Notice of Award has been issued.
- Item 26 is the Terrell Unit project to install HVAC – Inmate Housing, and the Notice of Award is pending.
- Item 27 is the Beto Unit project to renovate the icehouse which is 20% complete. The new ice machine equipment has been ordered. Prepping and caulking on the outside of the building is ongoing due to the interior abatement process.
- Item 28 is the project to replace the clarifier wastewater treatment plant at the Michael Unit which is complete. The board-approved program cost for this project was \$2,456,100, and the estimated closeout cost of this project is \$1,816,538, which is 27% less than program cost.
- Item 29 is the project to replace the Region III training buildings at the Ramsey Unit which is complete. The board-approved program cost for this project was \$10,698,500, and the estimated closeout cost of this project is \$9,501,560, which is 11% less than program cost.
- Item 30 is the project to replace agricultural building #4, at the Wainwright Unit which is complete. The board-approved program cost for this project was \$3,806,000, and the estimated closeout cost of this project is \$2,920,707, which is 24% less than program cost. Mr. Hudson stated 68,000 chickens have been laying eggs in the new building.
- Item 31 is the project to replace agricultural building #5, at the Wainwright Unit which is 70% complete. The assembly of cages and electrical components, to include the exhaust fans, is ongoing. The estimated completion date is the end of August with chickens arriving in September.

## **Request for Construction Expansion Dorms for the Bell, Moore, Estes, Hamilton, Hightower, Jester III, Luther, Memorial, Montford, and Pack Units, and the Lopez, Sanchez, and Travis County State Jails**

Mr. Hudson presented 14 projects for consideration, which include the construction of new expansion dorms at the Bell, C. Moore, Hamilton, Hightower, Jester III, Luther, Memorial, Montford, Pack, Sanchez, and Travis County facilities. Each of those locations have an individual program cost of \$27,895,000. The Estes Unit project program cost is \$28,215,800. Each of those 12 locations has one expansion dorm. The Lopez State Jail has two expansion dorms and a program cost of \$55,789,600. The work will consist of constructing 14 new air-conditioned 400-bed dormitory buildings; installation of connections to the existing site utilities; and security fencing and site improvements needed to include the dormitory within the unit's secure perimeter. This dormitory will provide needed space and infrastructure for the agency and will meet all applicable building and life safety codes, as well as ADA/Texas Accessibility Standards. Once complete, this will add a total of 5,600 air-conditioned dorm beds on 13 units that are well staffed. Construction manager at-risk proposals were received on June 12, 2025.

Chairman Nichols asked for confirmation that the project is dormitory-style housing and to explain the difference between that and cellblock housing. Mr. Hudson confirmed and stated dormitory-style housing is an open concept building with three or four different pods in one area that have bunks and an attached recreation area. Cellblock housing has restricted movement and is typically reserved for higher custody levels. 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 for construction expansion dorms for the Bell, Moore, Estes, Hamilton, Hightower, Jester III, Luther, Memorial, Montford, and Pack units, and the Lopez, Sanchez, and Travis County state jails, as presented.*

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

## **Request for Construction of Multi-Purpose Building at the Hobby Unit, Marlin, Texas**

Mr. Hudson presented a new project for consideration which includes the construction of a new multi-use facility at the Hobby Unit. The work will consist of constructing one new air-conditioned pre-engineered building, installation of connections to the existing site utilities, and security fencing and site improvements needed to include the facility within the unit's secure perimeter. This facility will provide needed space and infrastructure for the agency and will meet all applicable building and life safety codes, as well as ADA/Texas Accessibility Standards. The total estimated program cost is \$6,682,200.

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 for construction of a multi-purpose building at the Hobby Unit, Marlin, Texas, as presented.*

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

Judge Molly Francis asked if this project had anything to do with water issues at the Hobby Unit. Mr. Hudson stated there is another project that is in the design phase to place the Hobby Unit on its own

water system and will be brought before the board at a later date. Judge Francis asked for information on the \$118 million received for air conditioning. Mr. Hudson stated the projects approved by the board in June totaled \$85 million, and future projects will move faster due to being placed in the design phase before funds are received.

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

#### **Request for a Pipeline Easement Renewal, Boyd Unit, Teague, Texas**

Bill Lewis, Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Logistics Division Director presented the request of Energy Transfer GC NGL Pipeline LP to renew an expiring easement for one thirty-inch pipeline at the Boyd Unit. The easement includes an area of approximately 0.73 acres of land or 638.32 feet long by 50 feet wide for the transportation of natural gas liquids. Energy Transfer GC NGL Pipeline LP has agreed to pay \$27,083 for the renewal of the easement for a ten-year term. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area.

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

*Dr. Rodney Burrow moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request for a pipeline easement renewal at the Boyd Unit, Teague, Texas, as presented.*

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

#### **Request for Utility Easement Renewal, Ellis and Estelle Units, Huntsville, Texas**

Mr. Lewis presented the request of Energy Transfer NGL Pipeline LP requests to renew an existing utility easement at the Ellis and Estelle units. The easement includes an area of approximately 0.08 acres of land or 173.77 feet long by 20 feet wide. Energy Transfer NGL Pipeline LP has agreed to pay \$5,400 for the renewal of the easement for a ten-year term. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area.

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

*Judge Faith Johnson moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request for a utility easement renewal at the Ellis and Estelle units, Huntsville, Texas, as presented.*

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

#### **Request for a Pipeline Easement Renewal, Ellis and Estelle Units, Huntsville, Texas**

Mr. Lewis presented the request of Energy Transfer NGL Pipeline LP to renew an expiring easement for one thirty-inch pipeline at the Ellis and Estelle units. The easement includes an area of approximately 4.68 acres of land or 4,074 feet long by 50 feet wide for the transportation of natural gas liquids. Energy Transfer NGL Pipeline LP has agreed to pay \$185,213 for the renewal of the easement for a ten-year term. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area.

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

*General Bill Welch moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request for a pipeline easement renewal at the Ellis and Estelle units, Huntsville, Texas, as presented.*

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

### **Request for a New Access Road Easement, Young Medical Facility Complex, Dickinson, Texas**

Mr. Lewis presented the request of Red Egret LLC for an access road easement which includes a surface area of 3.1 acres of land or 135,695 square feet at the Carole S. Young Medical Facility. Easements for this access road have been granted to Texas New Mexico Power; therefore, construction of the road is not required. Red Egret LLC will be subcontracting and utilizing that road and has agreed to pay \$200,000 for the easement for a ten-year term. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area.

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

*Thomas Fordyce moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request for a new access road easement at the Young Medical Facility Complex, Dickinson, Texas, as presented.*

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

### **Request to Sell Land, Montford Unit, Lubbock, Texas**

Mr. Lewis stated the TDCJ has identified 640 acres of land located on the Montford Unit as surplus to the agency's current and projected needs and, as such, are subject to sale. The land is located south of the facility and is currently used for contract farming and grazing only. As authorized by Texas Government Code § 496.0021, the board may sell state-owned real property at fair market value, and the General Land Office (GLO) shall negotiate and close a transaction on behalf of the board. The Montford Unit's total real property is 1,301 acres. The proposed sale would not hinder operations or security protocols. Mr. Lewis presented a map of the area. Mr. Lewis recommended the board approve the resolution authorizing the GLO to proceed with the sale of the 640 acres on behalf of the board, using procedures in Natural Resources Code § 31.158(c).

Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions or comments. Thomas Fordyce recommended the agency seek to retain the mineral and water rights of the land. Mr. Lewis agreed. Dr. Rodney Burrow asked why the board should sell the land. Mr. Lewis stated the agency was contacted by the Lubbock Economic Development Council, and the area in question is in an industrial area. Property next to the facility has sold far beyond fair market value, and the contract farming is not as profitable. Dr. Burrow asked for further information on contract farming. Mr. Lewis stated there are three different crops grown, which include cotton, milo, and corn. Contract farming occurs on 1,185 acres, and the agency retains 24% of anything harvested. Chairman Nichols asked for confirmation that the agency determined this land was surplus to its current and projected needs. Mr. Lewis confirmed. Chairman Nichols asked for further explanation for the determination. Mr. Lewis stated approximately 1,700 acres grows edible crops, with the majority grown in other areas. The small amount of crops grown on the land in question does not have a significant cost benefit. Chairman Nichols asked where the proceeds of the sale will go. Mr. Lewis stated more chicken houses will be built. Dr. Burrow asked if the agency can turn down an offer from the GLO

if it is deemed unacceptable. Chairman Nichols stated the board would be ceding its authority to the GLO by approving the motion. Mr. Fordyce commented on purchasing the Buffalo Ranch. Executive Director Bryan Collier clarified that the language in the rider only allows the agency to use the funds to complete major repairs. Chairman Nichols asked if the motion should include language requiring a discussion with the GLO to reserve the mineral and water rights of the land. Chairman Nichols asked if there were any additional questions or comments. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

*Sydney Zuiker moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the request to sell land at the Montford Unit, Lubbock, Texas, as presented.*

*Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols moved to make a friendly amendment to the motion to include a provision that adds subject to discussions with the GLO about potential reservations of mineral and water rights concerning the property. Ms. Zuiker agreed.*

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

### **Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action** **Regarding the Proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Audit Plan**

Chief Audit Executive Chris Cirrito requested that the board approve the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Audit Plan as briefed individually with the board. He stated the plan has five full scope audit projects, eight follow-up audit projects, and eight non-audit or advisory services.

Chairman Nichols asked for confirmation that Mr. Cirrito has discussed the plan with each individual of the board. Mr. Cirrito confirmed. Chairman Nichols asked if a discussion had occurred with questions from the board asked and answered in detail. Mr. Cirrito confirmed. Chairman Nichols asked if he had received feedback from the board. Mr. Cirrito stated he received an extensive amount of feedback. Chairman Nichols asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

*Judge Molly Francis moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the Internal Audit Plan for Fiscal Year 2026 and authorize the Internal Audit Director to perform audit work outside of the Audit Plan if the Director deems deviations are warranted, documented as required by the Texas Internal Auditing Act, and presented to the board at the next scheduled meeting.*

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

### **Report from the Chairman, TBCJ**

Chairman Nichols recognized Executive Director Bryan Collier, describing him as an extraordinary leader, and stated his impending retirement represents not the end of a road but instead the opening and beginning of his next route and direction. Mr. Collier's tenure at the TDCJ has been marked by unparalleled dedication, innovative leadership, and a profound commitment to both public safety and the great state of Texas. With 40 years of service to the agency, Mr. Collier has held a wide variety of positions to include clerk, correctional officer, parole officer, section director, Parole Division director, deputy executive director, and executive director. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminology and

Corrections from Sam Houston State University. He is a member of the American Correctional Association (ACA), serving on its Board of Governors as Vice President and is Vice-Chair of the Performance-Based Standards Committee. He has received numerous awards including ACA's Best in the Business Award, the Correctional Leaders Association (CLA) Michael Francke Career Achievement Award, and the Dr. George J. Beto Hall of Honor Award. He will receive the Edward R. Cass Correctional Achievement Award, the highest award bestowed by the ACA, at the ACA's meeting in Denver.

Throughout Mr. Collier's tenure and leadership, the TDCJ consistently improved its operations, despite challenges and adversity. It will be part of Mr. Collier's legacy that his steady and thoughtful leadership led the TDCJ to progress during a time that presented significant challenges. When Hurricane Harvey struck Texas in 2017 causing catastrophic flooding and other devastation, Mr. Collier calmly and effectively led the TDCJ's response. The TDCJ did not lose a single life to that natural disaster, among staff and the inmate population, despite the fact that many TDCJ facilities were directly in the storm's path. Thousands of inmates were swiftly evacuated from flooded areas. Under Mr. Collier's leadership and direction, thousands of individuals on supervision were monitored in difficult circumstances, families of incarcerated individuals and the public were kept well informed, and the TDCJ maintained all essential services and public safety.

As another example, the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to all, including those in corrections. Under Mr. Collier's guidance, the TDCJ implemented an effective and connected command center; extensive testing for employees and inmates; access to personal protective equipment (PPE) and vaccines, including during times of PPE and vaccine scarcity; and adherence to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Correctional Managed Health Care guidelines. Chairman Nichols stated the pandemic exacted a great toll in terms of loss of life and extreme illness, but the loss of life in TDCJ facilities was lower than that experienced in the world outside the fences from that terrible pandemic. Those effective responses to the scourge of COVID-19 allowed for the safe resumption of in-person visitation, uninterrupted intake from counties, and a return to classroom settings for important inmate programming. Challenges such as those and many others did not interrupt the steady flow of progress, and in some instances accelerated that continuous improvement. COVID-19 required expansion of technology across the system. Video visitation systems allowed families and friends to stay in touch with loved ones, fostering crucial connections for successful reentry. Secure inmate tablets were rolled out in December 2021. As a result, more than 130,000 inmates now have access to educational, vocational, religious, and legal materials, as well as the ability to make phone calls and send messages.

Mr. Collier's commitment to public safety extends to every corner of the TDCJ and state. Under his leadership, the TDCJ secured legislative funding for vital safety equipment for officers, including body-worn cameras, tasers, wave millimeter and x-ray machines, and stun fencing. Recognizing the critical need for advanced training, Mr. Collier spearheaded the establishment of the Training and Leader Development Division (TLDD) in 2019. The TLDD delivers quality training focused on performance, employee learning, development, and wellness, including leadership training at all levels and taking on the vital role of recruiting correctional and parole officers. Additionally, under his leadership, the TDCJ procured funding for a new, state-of-the-art training facility. Mr. Collier's direction also led to the initiation of the Gang Renouncement and Disassociation Process (GRAD), a crucial program allowing inmates affiliated with security threat groups to renounce their gang affiliation. As just another commitment to public safety, Mr. Collier addressed the contraband and dangerous drugs in the system with the implementation of the digital mail program in 2023. This innovative initiative replaced physical mail with scanned digital copies accessible on secure inmate tablets.

Mr. Collier's vision has extended far beyond the traditional concept of incarceration; he has displayed consistent commitment to rehabilitation, successful reentry, and reduction in recidivism. Texas boasts one

of the nation's lowest recidivism rates following release, which has continuously declined during his service as executive director. His time as executive director has seen the creation and expansion of programs that prepare inmates for successful reentry. The Strength Through Restoration, Independence, Vision, and Empowerment (STRIVE) program for female inmates provides gender-responsive trauma-informed programming and career readiness. When the agency had to reopen facilities as its population grew following the COVID-19 pandemic, his forward-thinking led to the creation of the Bartlett Innovation Unit, a facility designed to pilot new programs to advance rehabilitation efforts. His time as executive director has seen the start of career expos, which allow second-chance employers to witness firsthand the job skills inmates acquire, through live demonstrations of ready-for-work skills in a number of professions, including culinary arts, building and repair trades, automotive trades, and truck driving.

As a man of faith, it is no surprise that the TDCJ's seminary program expanded under his watch, and now proudly includes female participants. Mr. Collier also championed the creation of Life Coaches and additional Peer Educator programs, providing invaluable support for rehabilitation. Mr. Collier has understood throughout his tenure that the strength of the TDCJ lies in its dedicated staff. His leadership was crucial to securing significant and well-deserved pay increases for correctional staff. Since April 2022, correctional officers have received more than a 40% increase in pay. He has championed improvements in the recruitment and retention of correctional staff, which assist all the agency's hard-working staff. Those efforts have included employee education opportunities, empowering staff to pursue educational goals through lower tuition rates and tuition reimbursement programs. He has always demonstrated a commitment to mentoring and developing the next generation of leaders within the TDCJ. Chairman Nichols stated his legacy at the TDCJ is also cemented with the 2030 Plan he helped to create. That plan will continue to be a blueprint for the TDCJ's future and the continuation of improvements and modernization in agency operations. Chairman Nichols invited each board member to share their thoughts.

Pastor Nate Sprinkle described Mr. Collier as a man of commitment, dedication, sincerity, compassion, understanding, wit, and faith. General Bill Welch stated he has met many great leaders but none better than Mr. Collier and wished him success. Dr. Rodney Burrow expressed his appreciation and respect for Mr. Collier and his commitment to the state and improving the agency. Sydney Zuiker expressed her gratitude for his personal sacrifices to support the agency. Thomas Fordyce recounted his personal history with Mr. Collier and stated Mr. Collier is well respected in the criminal justice community. Judge Molly Francis expressed confidence in Mr. Collier's leadership and thanked him for sacrificing his time with family to support the agency. She stated he prepared the agency to succeed upon his departure. Judge Faith Johnson thanked him for his faithfulness, dedication, and service, along with his sacrifices in support of the agency and the community. Ambassador Sichan Siv described Mr. Collier's retirement as a graduation to the next chapter of his life and expressed his admiration and respect for his service.

Chairman Nichols called for a standing ovation and stated that, in honor of Mr. Collier's service, vision, and unwavering commitment to excellence, the board is proud to name the new training facility as the Bryan Collier Leadership and Training Center. He read the resolution from the board and stated it is in addition to the well-deserved recognition that he received directly from Texas Governor Greg Abbott. He presented the Governor's resolution and the board's resolution to Mr. Collier to display proudly.

### **Report from the Executive Director,** **Texas Department of Criminal Justice**

Executive Director Bryan Collier expressed gratitude for the opportunity to pursue a career in his field of interest. He thanked the board for supporting him through good and tough times with their time and

expertise. He expressed appreciation for the board, as service on the board is voluntary, and included appreciation for former members. He stated the board has the most talented state leadership in state government, describing his achievements as a team effort. He described the men and women of the agency as heroes who accomplish the agency's mission when no one else could. He stated it has been a privilege to serve the agency for the past 40 years and shared a personal connection to Dr. George Beto who helped Mr. Collier attain his first position with the agency as a clerk. He stated he enjoyed working with the people who work for the agency and the population.

Mr. Collier thanked the board for reviewing the budget, which will create significant changes for the agency. Technology and infrastructure will continue to move the agency forward. He expressed gratitude for the board's active involvement and support. He stated he has never felt alone as the executive director and expressed his faith in the agency's ability to succeed without him.

**Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action**  
**Regarding the Establishment and Continuation of**  
**Standing or Limited Purpose Committees**

Chairman Nichols stated, as a result of SB 2405, known as the TDCJ Sunset bill, Texas Government Code § 497.111, which established the Advisory Committee on Agriculture for the TDCJ, was repealed. Pursuant to Texas Government Code Chapter 2110 and Texas Administrative Code § 151.3, the board's presiding officer may appoint members of the board to advisory committees. These advisory committees promote opportunities for all board members to serve actively as liaisons regarding particular subject areas, to interact with TDCJ staff responsible for those areas, and to provide guidance and support to TDCJ staff. There are currently several such committees on the board, and each board member is actively engaged in multiple committees. Those committees include Audit and Review, Business and Financial Operations, Community Corrections, Correctional Institutions, Correctional Law Enforcement, Health Care, Human Resources, Legal, Rehabilitation and Reentry, and Victim Services. With the repeal of the statute establishing the Advisory Committee on Agriculture, he presented the board's consideration for adding a board committee focused on the agricultural operations of the TDCJ.

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

*Pastor Nate Sprinkle moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the establishment and continuation of standing or limited purpose committees, as presented.*

Chairman Nichols asked if that would include the formation of the new agricultural committee. Pastor Sprinkle confirmed.

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

**Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action**  
**Regarding the Renaming of State Counsel for Offenders (SCFO)**

Wyvonne Long, SCFO Director, thanked House Representative Mano DeAyala, a former board member, and his staff for amending statute concerning the renaming of her office. She presented the request to rename the State Counsel for Offenders office to the Independent Office of Inmate Counsel, which represents the commitment to independence, fairness, and zealous representation for clients. Additionally,

the phrase “counsel for inmates” clearly shows who the office serves and its focus on access to justice for individuals in custody. She expressed the office’s continued commitment to serving with integrity, compassion, and professionalism under the new name.

Chairman Nichols stated this is an important name change, and the proposed new name emphasizes the independence of the office in accomplishing the mission of providing thoughtful and effective representation of indigent members of the TDCJ population by employing the professional judgments and skills of the office’s lawyers and legal staff in a manner that is wholly free from oversight or control of the TDCJ. He thanked Rep. DeAyala and the state Legislature for their assistance. Chairman Nichols asked if there were any additional questions. Hearing none, he called for a motion and a second.

*Dr. Rodney Burrow moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice approve the recommendation to rename the State Counsel for Offenders to the Independent Office of Inmate Counsel, as presented.*

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

### **Discussion, Consideration, and Possible Action** **Regarding the Selection or Appointment of the TDCJ Executive Director**

Chairman Nichols stated Mr. Collier announced his retirement at the end of August 2025. He stated Texas Government Code § 492.013 makes it the responsibility of the TBCJ to search for, evaluate, and appoint the executive director to serve as the administrator of the TDCJ. He named an executive director search committee composed of himself, Vice-Chair Faith Johnson, and Secretary Dr. Rodney Burrow. He mentioned the position was posted for 30 days, and the committee selected and interviewed qualified candidates. Chairman Nichols thanked all those who applied. The committee presented its findings to the full TBCJ for the discussion of this personnel matter during executive session and has made a decision for possible action.

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

*Dr. Rodney Burrow moved that the Texas Board of Criminal Justice appoint Mr. Bobby Lumpkin as the next Executive Director of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, effective September 1, 2025.*

*Judge Molly Francis seconded the motion which prevailed unanimously when called to a vote.*

Chairman Nichols congratulated Mr. Bobby Lumpkin for his appointment as the next executive director of the TDCJ and asked him for his thoughts. Mr. Lumpkin thanked the board for the honor of leading the agency. He thanked his family for supporting him and stated the position comes with a distinguished and sacred responsibility, leading 32,000 professional men and women, serving the population of the TDCJ, protecting victims of crime, and safeguarding the citizens of Texas. He acknowledged there have been accomplishments but there are improvements to be made ahead. He stated, with deep humility, the values of the agency, and steadfast faith, the agency will move forward in strengthening public safety and enhancing rehabilitation and reentry. He stated this calling comes with a distinct purpose to serve with

compassion, ensure fairness, and provide hope. He expressed his heartfelt gratitude for Mr. Collier's friendship, leadership, and mentorship, and conveyed his determination to continue Mr. Collier's legacy.

### **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 October 16-17, 2025, in El Paso, Texas, and adjourned the 242nd meeting of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice at 5:00 p.m.

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Chairman\*

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Secretary\*

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\* Signature on File