

MINUTES

Meeting: Commission on Jail Standards

Place: Stephen F Austin Building
Room 170
1700 Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701

To obtain a recording of the meeting August 6, 2026, contact Richard Morgan, at Richard.morgan@tcjs.state.tx.us.

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Date: August 6th, 2026

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Sheriff Rowe of the Texas Commission on Jail Standards at 9:00 a.m.

II. Roll Call of Commission Members

Sheriff Kelly Rowe, Chairman	Mr. Ross Reyes
Dr. Porsa, Vice Chairman	Ms. Monica McBride
Mr. Duane Lock	Sheriff Richard Kirkpatrick
Ms. Patricia Anthony	Judge Joseph Fauth III
Commissioner Ben Perry	

Commission members present at roll call were Sheriff Rowe, Dr. Porsa, Mr. Duane Lock, Sheriff Richard Kirkpatrick, Judge Joseph Fauth III, Ms. Patricia Anthony, Ms. Monica McBride, and Commissioner Ben Perry. Mr. Ross Reyes was absent. Staff members attending in-person included Executive Director Ricky Armstrong, Deputy Director Jason Jouett, Todd Allen, Michael Garrett, Michael Gravitt, Martin Arnold, Leslie Spear, Christina Hentschel, Richard Morgan, Chris Keith, Clarissa Fasci, Zachary Aguirre, Lindsey Bailey, Stephanie Reneau, Courtney Holm, Nicole Alexander, Justin Padilla, and Rebecca Perez.

Also in Attendance:

Travis Hall, Galveston County Sheriff's Office	Grace Reynolds, Texas Jail Project
Michael Starkey, Henderson County Sheriff's Office	Jacqueline Johnson, Tarrant County
Sheriff Bobby Rader, Liberty County	Meredith, Texas Jail Project
Oscar Rivera, San Patricio County	Beverly Boone, Walker/Harris County

Tonya Mius, Harris County Sheriff's Office Shane Sowell, Dallas County Sheriff's Office DC Dawn Pena, Bexar County Sheriff's Office T Flores, BCSO Marya Cabrera, Leon County J. Spencer, Harris County Sheriff's Office Tony Fredo, Bexar County Sheriff's Office Cody Copeland, Austin American-Statesman Ani Pagni Anthony Pestello, Bexar County Lon Burnan Carmen Nuncio Amber Artis, GHC Justice w/ Evan Lee Lisa Moreira-Soto, GHCFJ Raymundo Ruiz, Robertson County Sheriff's Office Davis Anspach, Robertson County Sheriff's Office Sylvia Zapata, Justice Impact Institute Brandon Wood Sheriff Don Sowell, Grimes County Kiki Teal, Harris County Sheriff's Office Heather Guerrero, Liberty County Sheriff's Office Carmen F, Liberty County Sheriff's Office Shannon Herklotz, Tarrant County Sheriff's Office Raul Banasco, Travis County Sheriff's Office	Goldie Van Zandt, Texas Jail Project Adrian Rodriguez, San Patricio County Dennis Wilson, ICS Waco Jason Ross, Burns Architecture Chad Stroud, Hunt County Sheriff's Office Krish Gundu, Texas Jail Project Matthew Arias, Travis County Sheriff's Office Martin Cohick, OAG Robert Kelly, Leon County Sheriff's Office Alice Miller, Leon County Sheriff's Office Phillip Bosquez, Harris County Sheriff's Office Thomas Diaz, Harris County Sheriff's Office Sheriff Javier Salazar, Bexar County Joel Janssen, Bexar County Sheriff's Office Tracy M., Williamson County Patrick Walz, Texas Jail Project Tamara Hutcherson, Texas Jail Project Gilbert P., Justice for Evan Lee Jeff Reese, Justice for Evan Lee Jocilet Griffin, Justice for Evan Lee Rosita L., Justice Impact Institute non-profit Aiden Gonzalez, Texas Tribune Joseph Gregg Sheriff Bill Ruland, Robertson County Alex Nguyen, Texas Tribune Caitlyn Sepulvado, Liberty County Katherine Johnson Dr. Eboni Ceasar, Texas Jail Project
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III. Approval of Minutes

Sheriff Rowe asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes for the meeting conducted May 7th, 2026. A motion was made to approve by Dr. Porsa and seconded by Judge Fauth. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Public Comment

Rev. Jacilet Griffin – Provided testimony regarding her organization, Justice for Evan, and her son Evan Lee. She describes a lack of answers regarding her son's in-custody death at Harris County Jail, and concerns about medical care at both Harris County and Liberty County Jails. She requested the commission put "more standards or audits" in place.

Vanesia Johnson - provided testimony regarding systemic jail health neglect, the absence of public-health "best practices" in jails, built-in bias toward incarcerated people, and the need for statutory standards for advocacy and case management in jail health.

Trinidad Castillo - provided testimony regarding her son's mental illness, coerced plea, and civil-rights violations in Harris County, highlighting inadequate legal support for poor families and failures to protect mentally ill youth.

Lisa Moreira-Soto - provided testimony regarding retaliatory incarceration and solitary confinement in a Texas jail after she advocated for a domestic-violence victim, describing dehumanizing conditions, denial of medical care postpartum, and use of jails to silence victims and advocates.

Rosita Lira - provided testimony regarding medical neglect, exploitation, and misdirection in Bexar County Jail, including abusive treatment of pregnant women post-C-section, extortion attempts by deputies via Cash App/Zelle, and systemic confusion and harm to poor working-class families.

Michele Vela - provided testimony regarding the formation of Justice Impact Institute, seeking to collaborate with TCJS on policy reforms, conditions in Bexar County and across Texas, and requesting more transparent, independent investigations where local relationships may compromise accountability.

Hannah Reed - provided testimony regarding Johnson County Jail treatment of Prairie Land prisoners describing filthy and unsafe housing areas, pesticide-contaminated, infirmary placement without access to daily inhalers, exposure to cooperating witnesses without counsel present, punitive administrative segregation, excessive shackling and strip searches, and repeated violations of Texas Administrative Code sections on medical care, segregation, due process, suicide precautions, and attorney-client privilege.

Grace Reynolds - provided testimony regarding her husband (a former corrections officer) detained pretrial in Guadalupe County Jail, detailing severe medical neglect, dangerous staffing ratios far above TCJS minimums, outing his prior employment leading to threats, and calling for higher standards, not "bare minimums," and real accountability when standards are used as a shield for abuse.

Anthony Pestello - provided testimony regarding decades of unconstitutional conditions and extreme isolation in multiple Texas jails (especially Bexar County), including denial of grievances, law-library access, detox meds, and pervasive efforts to "stage" facilities before inspections, advocating for peer support and inclusion of formerly incarcerated people in oversight.

Lydia Leos - provided testimony regarding her son Julian's death in Bexar County Jail, emphasizing that she was not notified during his medical emergency or hospitalization and only learned of his death about 10 hours after he died, and urging TCJS to adopt a statewide standard for emergency/medical next-of-kin notification for life-threatening events, hospitalizations, and deaths in custody.

Jacqualyne Johnson - provided testimony regarding her son Anthony Johnson Jr.'s death in Tarrant County Jail, noting that TCJS declared the jail "fully compliant" just before four

deaths occurred in rapid succession, and questioning what “compliance” means when conditions are deadly.

Meredith Ridenour - provided testimony regarding her son Ian, who has schizoaffective disorder and anosognosia, describing years of failed attempts to obtain treatment across multiple counties, repeated ER visits, probation imposed while in psychosis, prolonged jail stays without timely competency restoration, and the broader forensic wait-list crisis, urging upstream intervention, community treatment, and genuine family partnership.

Beverly Boone - provided testimony as a retired licensed professional counselor and Ian’s grandmother, corroborating Meredith’s account and describing her own inability—despite professional expertise—to secure meaningful treatment, detailing repeated failures by emergency rooms, law enforcement, and courts to act until criminalization and prolonged incarceration had already occurred.

Jennifer Belknap - provided testimony regarding her son’s death in Leon County Jail, citing failures by MHMR, jail medical providers, and staff to implement appropriate precautions and life-saving interventions during a mental-health crisis, and calling for meaningful TCJS oversight of sheriffs’ contracts with private medical vendors so that liability avoidance does not override human life.

Tracy McClain - provided testimony regarding her son who developed schizophrenia after a traumatic brain injury and has cycled through at least 10 arrests, repeated 180-day detentions, and short “long-term” hospital stays with minimal care, including jail solitary confinement while acutely psychotic; she emphasized blocked civil-commitment attempts, broken promises from providers, and urged immediate implementation of Rider 56 and explicit inclusion of families in jail mental-health care.

Patrick Walz - provided testimony regarding his stepson John Robert, who has a schizophrenia-spectrum disorder and has been jailed more than 10 times, repeatedly held in solitary with lights on 24/7 and released home in worse condition without family communication, criticizing Texas for criminalizing untreated mental illness and calling for implementation of Rider 56, stronger community mental-health systems, and an end to “Texas jail therapy.”

Nan Terry - provided testimony regarding multiple deaths from dehydration and starvation in Tarrant County Jail, criticizing TCJS praise in inspection letters despite 21 uninvestigated deaths, staff indicted or disciplined in death cases, and urging true risk-based inspections and accountability.

Goldie Vanzandt - provided testimony as a Navy veteran and client advocate with Texas Jail Project, describing her late veteran husband’s repeated cycling through Harris County Jail without receiving needed mental-health and substance-use treatment, and highlighting cases like Nathaniel, a 31-year-old 100% disabled veteran in Walker County Jail facing vision loss due to delayed care; she thanked TCJS for adopting the VRSS

veteran-identification standard but urged the commission to move beyond identification to enforce standards for continuity of care, behavioral health treatment, benefits linkage, and housing for veterans pre- and post-release.

Tamera Hutcherson - provided testimony regarding Johnson County's handling of multiple Prairie Land defendants, including a male prisoner subjected to a cross-gender strip search, a trans woman (Megan Morris) being denied estrogen and adequate medical response after falls, and systemic scanning and opening of legal mail, all in the context of an indicted sheriff facing evidence-tampering and retaliation charges, and urging TCJS investigation and enforcement of standards on searches, medical care, and privileged correspondence.

Victoria Rogers - provided testimony regarding her uncle Victor Runnels' death tied to Tarrant County Jail, describing delayed family notification, removal of shackles only minutes before death, and an apparent manipulation of "release" timing to avoid counting his death under the Sandra Bland Act, urging that every such death be counted and independently investigated.

Lon Burnan - provided testimony regarding his recent 12-hour incarceration in Tarrant County Jail, describing filthy conditions and alleged misrepresentations by the sheriff's office, and criticizing TCJS for appearing to prioritize reducing sheriffs' liability over protecting people in custody, failing to conduct truly risk-based inspections, and not enforcing Sandra Bland Act investigation requirements for numerous deaths.

Ani Pagni – (on behalf of Gloria Riverd) provided testimony regarding the in-custody death of Tamian Keenan in Fort Bend County Jail, including failures in crisis intervention, non-notification of next of kin, conflicting and obstructed death-record information, unexplained removal of organs, and Attorney General rulings used to withhold records, calling for mandatory CIT response, notification timelines, and bans on hiding in-custody deaths under law-enforcement exemptions.

Kris Gundu - provided testimony regarding statewide custody-death data, noting that roughly 79–85% of people who die in Texas jails are pretrial, highlighting uncounted deaths (e.g., Diana Bailey in Dallas County, Victor Runnels in Tarrant County), outsourcing deaths in Louisiana after transfers from Texas jails, and a Bexar County case where a man held six years pretrial died after being "released" on paper while dying—urging new standards to prevent over-detention and end erosion of Sandra Bland Act protections.

Victoria Barrera – provided testimony regarding her husband who is incarcerated at the Bexar County Jail. She described her husband's difficulties with medical care/treatment, and "five hour" shift change related lock-ups. She stated that her husband has been there three weeks and had not received medication.

After public comment was closed Sheriff Rowe reminded those in attendance of the rules regarding public comment.

V.

Old Business

A. Bexar County Jail – Review of, and possible action regarding Notice of Non-Compliance and Remedial Order

Executive Director Armstrong advised Commission members that Bexar County was on enhanced enforcement and had passed the first of two required inspections to regain compliance and be removed from enhanced enforcement. Bexar County Sheriff Salazar was available to answer questions and provide testimony.

Director Armstrong recommended no action be taken, and that staff be allowed to continue to monitor Bexar County. No action taken.

B. Harris County Jail- Review of, and possible action regarding **Notice of Noncompliance and Remedial order**

Dr. Porsa recused himself from this conversation.

Director Armstrong advised that Harris County jail remains in enhanced enforcement and have passed the first of two inspections to regain compliance and be removed from enhanced enforcement. Harris County reported reducing its out-of-state outsourced population by 100 beds (about 950 remaining), with plans for further reductions in the next year. Harris Health reported an average of 260 transfers to the emergency department per month with zero officer escort related delays in April to June 2026. The county also reported completion and certification of new or upgraded fire alarm panels in key jail and courts facilities, resolving prior life-safety deficiencies.

Director Armstrong recommended no action be taken, and that staff be allowed to continue to monitor and work with Harris County. No action taken.

C. Leon County Jail – Review of, and possible action regarding **Notice of Noncompliance and Remedial Order**

Director Armstrong advised that Leon County jail remains in enhanced enforcement and have passed the first of two comprehensive inspections to regain compliance and be removed from enhanced enforcement. Jail Administrator Miller, with her assistant jail administrator and sergeant, reported that they are closely monitoring every booking, medical screening, and medical record as part of their corrective efforts.

Director Armstrong recommended no action be taken, and that staff be allowed to continue to monitor the Leon County Jail. No action taken.

D. Liberty County Jail – Review of, and possible action regarding **Notice of Noncompliance and Remedial Order**

Director Armstrong advised that Liberty County was on the agenda due to the issuance of a notice of noncompliance and the presence of a remedial order and remains in enhanced enforcement with two items of deficiency outstanding: completion of staff training and the replacement and repair of exhaust fans. County representatives, including counsel, Sheriff Rader, and jail administrator Heather Guerrero, reported that required training is on track for completion by October 31, 2026, that the fire panel issues have been cleared

with fire marshal certification in hand, and that exhaust fan parts are ordered, partially installed, and expected to be fully operational by late August or early October.

Director Armstrong recommended that no action be taken and that staff be allowed to continue working with Liberty County Jail. No action taken.

E. Robertson County Jail – Review of, and possible action regarding Notice of Noncompliance and Remedial Order

Director Armstrong advised that Robertson County has completed two comprehensive inspections required to be removed from enhanced enforcement. Sheriff Bill Ruland reported that new policies, procedures, and documentation practices have been implemented and are holding consistently.

Director Armstrong confirmed that Robertson County had already been removed from enhanced enforcement and recommended the removal of the remedial order. A motion to approve the recommendation was made by Dr. Porsa and seconded by Commissioner Lock. The motion passed unanimously.

F. San Patricio County Jail - Review of, and possible action regarding Notice of noncompliance and Remedial Order

Director Armstrong advised that San Patricio County was under enhanced enforcement and has passed the first of two required comprehensive inspections to regain compliance and be removed from enhanced enforcement. The sheriff reported ongoing physical-plant and maintenance work, including addressing significant roof leaks, and noted that the county is in the process of planning and building a new jail facility, though that project is several years out.

Director Armstrong confirmed current compliance with minimum jail standards by San Patricio County. He recommended continued enhanced enforcement and monitoring. No action taken.

VI. New Business
None

VII. Variances

A. Galveston County

- a. **§259.143(b) Furnishings for Inmate Housing Areas: See below**
- b. **§259.143(c) Furnishings for Inmate Housing Areas:** Director Armstrong advised that Galveston County was requesting the continuation of a variance approved for six months at the previous (May 2026) meeting, and Galveston County's presence was requested for a 3-month follow-up review. Galveston County explained that retrofitting the affected areas with additional toilets and showers would cost an estimated \$300,000–\$400,000, significantly disrupt operations, and may be short-lived because the county is in the study phase for a major jail expansion expected to go to voters as a bond election in May 2027.

Jail leadership reported that the extra beds are used mainly for short-term overflow, with no reported plumbing, medical, or safety incidents tied specifically to the variance beds.

Director Armstrong recommended no action be taken, leaving the variance in place for the balance of the current six-month term and requiring Galveston County to return in 3 months with data use on the beds, any replated problems, and updated population trends. No action taken.

VIII. Administrative Rules Advisory Committee

A. Rules for Adoption

§259.132 Exercise Areas

§253.1 Definitions

§251.6 Complaints

§265.4 Inmate Files

§265.5 Health Tags

§265.7 Telephone Use

§267.7 Release of Ward

§273.2 Health Services Plan

§273.9 Guardianship (new)

§281.5 Staff Supervision

Director Armstrong advised that the above rules were published in the Texas Register for public comment after the May 2026 meeting and have received no public comment and were ready to be published in the Texas Register for adoption with the exception of §267.7 Release of Ward. Director Armstrong requested permission to continue working on this rule to ensure compliance with related statutes. A motion to approve the recommendation was made by Dr. Porsa and seconded by Commissioner Anthony. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Rules for Public Comment

§291.2 Inmate Correspondence plan

Director Armstrong advised that this rule change was proposed by the Administrative Rules Advisory Committee to ensure that the inmate correspondence plan covers electronic correspondence, and recommended publication of this rule in the Texas Register for public comment. A motion was made by Dr. Porsa to approve the recommendation and seconded by Commissioner Anthony. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Public Petition for Change to Minimum Jail Standards

a. Alirma Davis – Over Detention: See item c

b. Paula Keeth – Over Detention: See item c

c. Leroy Jones – Over Detention: Director Armstrong advised that items a, b, and c were over similar concerns regarding over detention and TDCJ time credit, and release practices. Director Armstrong explained that the petitions ask TCJS to adopt rules that would effectively require jails (and indirectly TDCJ) to track and prevent over-detention by monitoring sentence calculations and release eligibility under areas that are legally

TDCJ's responsibility and not within TCJS's current direct authority.

Director Armstrong recommended no action be taken to allow the Administrative Rules Advisory Committee to review and await further recommendations at the November 2026 meeting. No action taken.

- d. **Ritu Sampige – Women's Health:** Director Armstrong advised that Commission members had been provided with a cost analysis regarding the request for provisions regarding undergarments in this public petition. Executive Director Armstrong reported that staff consulted three correctional medical subject-matter experts (one female, two male providers working in jails), who concluded that lack of underwear did not rise to a public-health requirement that must be written into the health standards, but all three agreed that women should have underwear as a matter of basic dignity and humane treatment, particularly in relation to menstrual care. Director Armstrong also presented survey data showing that about 83% of responding jails already provide underwear, and a cost estimate requested by Judge Fauth.

Director Armstrong recommended no action be taken, and that the Administrative Rules Advisory Committee be allowed to review this petition. No action taken.

- e. **Lydia Leos – Medical Notifications:** Director Armstrong advised that another public petition for changes to standards similar to this request was already being reviewed by the Administrative Rules Advisory Committee with draft language ready for review at the next ARAC meeting.

Director Armstrong recommended forwarding this petition to the ARAC as well for consideration. A motion to approve the recommendation was made by Dr. Porsa, and seconded by Commissioner Anthony.

- f. **Nautica Richard – Personal Hygiene/Lice:** Director Armstrong advised that, although this request was submitted as a public petition for changes to minimum standards it met the criteria for a complaint and had been processed in that manner. No action taken.

D. Four-year Rule Review

- a. **Readoption - None**

- b. **Publish for Review**

- §299.1 Policy

- §299.2 Filing

- §299.3 Contents

- §299.4 Burden

- §299.5 Determination/Notice

- §299.6 Request for Hearing

- §300.1 General

- §300.2 Designated Services

- §300.3 Applicable Facilities

§300.4 Setting Fees

§300.5 Collection of Fees

§301.1 Procedures

§301.2 Decision

Director Armstrong advised that the above rules were on the agenda for review at the previous May 2026 meeting but were continued to this agenda due to the Administrative Rules Advisory Committee being unable to meet in July. Director Armstrong said staff will send ARAC members “homework” and advance reading so they can come prepared to the next meeting to decide whether any existing rules need to be updated, clarified, or left unchanged as part of the formal four-year review process.

IX. IDD Advisory Committee

A. Update

Director Armstrong provided an update on the state of the IDD Advisory Committee, its report, and legislation related to the advisory committee.

B. HHSC Representative Appointment

Director Armstrong advised that the current member from HHSC, Dr. Fegan-Bohm, was no longer able to serve this position on the IDD Advisory Committee. HHSC recommended Latrise Page to the committee. A motion to approve was made by Dr. Porsa and seconded by Commissioner Lock. The motion passed unanimously.

X. Staff Report

A. Completed Jail Projects

Director Armstrong reported that the completed projects are listed in the commission meeting book provided to commission members.

B. Jail Planning and Construction List

The 4-page construction report is included in the packets.

C. Jails in Compliance/Noncompliance

Director Armstrong referred Commissioners to the list in their book.

D. Status of Remedial Orders

Director Armstrong listed the counties currently under remedial order. This information was provided in the commission members’ books.

E. Status and Composition of Jail Population

Director Armstrong advised members that this information is provided in a one-page report in the commission members’ books.

F. Staff Training/Activities

Director Armstrong advised members that a list of training performed by staff members is

provided in their book.

G. Financial Report/Budget

Director Armstrong directed all to the current budget expenditures for FY 2025 in their books.

H. Inmate Complaint Report

Included in their book is the three-month report on complaints. Non-jurisdictional complaints continue to be prevalent. Received complaints have risen slightly.

XI. Executive Session: Personnel matters related to the Executive Director: Sheriff Rowe began the executive session at 11:18 AM. Regular session resumed at 11:38 AM.

XII. Other Business

- **Commission-sponsored Events and Workshops**
 1. IDD Advisory Committee, July 8, 2026
- **Commission Staffing**
 1. Christina Hentschel, Complaint Inspector
 2. Justin Padilla, Operational Plans
 3. Rebecca Perez, Field Inspector
 4. Jason Jouett, Deputy Director
- **Off Duty Employment**

No events to report.
- **Miscellaneous Letters of Comment**
 1. Falls County regarding Michael Gravitt
 2. Aaryce Hayes regarding the IDD Advisory Committee.
 3. Assistant Director **Courtney Holme – 5 year award**
 4. **Melvin Bowser - 5 year awards**

XIII. Adjourn

By appropriate motion to adjourn by Dr. Porsa and a second by Judge Fauth, the meeting was adjourned.

XIV. Next Commission meeting is tentatively scheduled for:

- **Thursday, November 5th, 2026, at the Stephen F Austin Building**
- **Thursday, February 4th, 2027, at the Stephen F Austin Building**

The Board may meet in Closed Session on any item listed above if authorized by the Texas Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code Ann. Ch. 551.

Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aids or services, such as interpreters or persons who are deaf or hearing impaired, readers, large

print or Braille, are requested to contact Leslie Speir (Leslie.speir@tcjs.state.tx.us) two (2) working days prior to the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made.