



MINUTES

MARCH 6, 2026

PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OVERSIGHT BOARD MEETING

1. Call to Order

A meeting of the Brazos County Public Defender's Office Oversight Board was held on Friday, March 6, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. in suite 332 of the Brazos County Administration Building, 200 South Texas Avenue, Bryan, Texas. The following members of the Board were present:

County Judge Duane Peters;
Judge Willie Blackmon (retired);
Commissioner Wanda J. Watson;
Michele Esparza;
Fran Duane;
Jim James;
Jamie Martin, Absent.

The attached sheet contains the names of officials and citizens that were in attendance.

2. Approval of Minutes from the December 5, 2025 Public Defender's Oversight Board Meeting.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes for the meeting held on December 5, 2025 with a correction to Board Member Michele Esparza's name. A copy of the corrected minutes is attached.

Motion: Approve w/ Conditions, Moved by Michele Esparza, Seconded by Fran Duane. Passed. 5-0. Ayes: Duane, Esparza, James, Peters, Watson. Absent: Blackmon, Martin.

3. Introduction of new employees with the Brazos County Public Defender's Office.

Chief Public Defender Nathan Wood introduced the newest staff members, Amanda Buenger, Marsha Tunsel, Missy Kershaw and Callie Roe, to the Board. The Board welcomed the new staff members and discussed the status of the Juvenile Division.

4. Approval to accept the resignation of Judge Travis Bryan, III, Board Chair.

Mr. Wood informed the Board that Judge Bryan submitted a letter of resignation from the Public Defender's Oversight Board on December 6, 2025. The Board entered into discussion and voted unanimously to accept Judge Bryan's resignation.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Fran Duane, Seconded by Michele Esparza. Passed. 5-0. Ayes: Duane, Esparza, James, Peters, Watson. Absent: Blackmon, Martin.

5. Approval to nominate and approve of new Board Chair.

Judge Willie Blackmon entered the meeting at this time.

Fran Duane nominated Board Member Michele Esparza as the Chairman of the Public Defender's Oversight Board. The nomination was seconded by Jim James and the Board voted unanimously to appoint Michele Esparza as the Chairman for a term that expires on August 15, 2026. A new Chairman will be selected at the September meeting.

Ms. Esparza served as Presiding Officer for the remainder of the meeting.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Fran Duane, Seconded by Jim James. Passed. 6-0. Ayes: Blackmon, Duane, Esparza, James, Peters, Watson. Absent: Martin.

6. Approval to withdraw board action taken on September 5, 2025 Public Defender's Oversight Board Meeting to amend the Oversight Board Membership and Policies to refelct eight voting members.

Ms. Esparza explained that on September 5, 2025 the Board took action to approve an eighth Board Member position in an effort to mitigate the ongoing issues of absentee Board Members. At this time, maintaining a Board of seven members is more appropriate and it is her recommendation to withdraw the action taken to increase the number of members. The Board entered into discussion on the matter and ultimately agreed that is was reasonable to maintain a Board of seven members. The Board voted unanimously to withdraw the action taken to increase the Board to eight members.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Jim James, Seconded by Judge Duane Peters. Passed. 6-0. Ayes: Blackmon, Duane, Esparza, James, Peters, Watson. Absent: Martin.

7. Report from Chief Public Defender concerning the hiring of personnel to fill new grant positions.

Mr. Wood stated that they have filled the 10 new positions in the Mental Health Division and they are now taking Juvenile cases. They currently have two vacant attorney positions. Ms. Duane suggested that the PDO host an open house to help in the hiring process. She noted that positive press is always helpful. Mr. Wood stated that he would meet with the County's Public Communications Officer to discuss this option.

8. Review and discuss the 2025 Fourth Quarter Progress Report.

Mr. Wood presented the Fourth Quarter Progress Report for FY25. They received 122 misdemeanor appointments and 51 felony appointments from October through December of 2025. Mr. James questioned how Mr. Wood's Office handles Writs of

Habeus Corpus and stated that he would visit with Mr. Wood further on this matter. A copy of the Fourth Quarter Report is attached.

9. Report from the Chief Public Defender concerning PDO access to Odyssey.

Mr. Wood shared that he spoke again with Information Technology regarding the PDO's access to Odyssey software. He was instructed to get written approval from Judge Kyle Hawthorne for their office to receive the access. Judge Hawthorne did provide written approval and that has been submitted to IT. Juvenile Division Attorney Amanda Buenger reiterated the importance of the PDO having Odyssey access to do their job effectively.

10. Discuss changes to Advisory Board bylaws.

The Board reiterated their decision to have a total of seven Board Members, and discussed renaming the document from "Membership and Policies" to "Public Defender's Oversight Board Bylaws". They then discussed the attendance of Board Members. The current policy does not include a process to replace absentee members of the Board. Ms. Esparza proposed that Board Members must attend at least fifty percent of the meetings each year. Ms. Duane suggested the language be something to the effect of, "To sustain membership on the Board, one must complete 50 percent of all scheduled meetings per calendar year. Failure to do so may allow the Board to replace you." Mr. Wood stated that he would make the modifications to the bylaws and have them ready for the next Oversight Board meeting. The Board then addressed which Board Member's terms are expiring this year.

11. Announcement of interest items and possible future agenda topics.

Mr. Wood stated that at the next Board meeting, he will present the PDO Operating Plan and Budget requests.

Announcements

12. Upcoming Public Defender's Office Oversight Board Meeting Dates for 2026:

- a. June 5, 2026 at 2:00pm
- b. September 4, 2026 at 2:00pm
- c. December 4, 2026 at 2:00pm

Ms. Esparza proposed setting future meetings on Thursdays at a different time. The Board entered discussion and directed Mr. Wood to set the next meeting on a Thursday at 1:30 p.m.

13. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:01 p.m.



**BRAZOS COUNTY
BRYAN, TEXAS**

NOTICE OF MEETING AND AGENDA

PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OVERSIGHT BOARD MEETING

THIS NOTICE IS POSTED PURSUANT TO THE TEXAS OPEN MEETINGS
ACT (TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 551)

MEETING DATE: March 6, 2026
MEETING TIME: 2:00 PM
MEETING PLACE: Brazos County Administration Bldg., 200 South Texas Ave.,
Suite 332, Bryan, TX 77803

-
1. Call to Order
 2. Approval of Minutes from the December 5, 2025 Public Defender's Oversight Board Meeting.
 3. Introduction of new employees with the Brazos County Public Defender's Office.
 4. Approval to accept the resignation of Judge Travis Bryan, III, Board Chair.
 5. Approval to nominate and approve of new Board Chair.
 6. Approval to withdraw board action taken on September 5, 2025 Public Defender's Oversight Board Meeting to amend the Oversight Board Membership and Policies to reflect eight voting members.
 7. Report from Chief Public Defender concerning the hiring of personnel to fill new grant positions.
 8. Review and discuss the 2025 Fourth Quarter Progress Report.
 9. Report from the Chief Public Defender concerning PDO access to Odyssey.
 10. Discuss changes to Advisory Board bylaws.
 11. Announcement of interest items and possible future agenda topics.

Announcements

12. Upcoming Public Defender's Office Oversight Board Meeting Dates for 2026:

- a. June 5, 2026 at 2:00pm
- b. September 4, 2026 at 2:00pm
- c. December 4, 2026 at 2:00pm

13. Adjourn

The Brazos County Administration Bldg., 200 South Texas Ave., Suite 332, Bryan, TX 77803 is wheelchair accessible. Handicap parking spaces are available. Any request for sign interpretive services must be made two working days before the meeting. To make arrangements, please call (979) 361-4102.



PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE OVERSIGHT BOARD MEETING

March 6, 2026

Name

Organization

Sharyl Lowe

Comm. Court

Aubrey Cozzett

Comm. Court

Natulip Daniel

PDO

Nathan Wood

PDO

Amanda Buenger

PDO

Nina Payne

Budget

Kali Conn

County Judge transition

Marsha Tunzel

PDO

Missy Kershaw

PDO

Callie Roe

PDO

Dana Zachary

Indigent Defense/Assoc. Ct. 1

Willie Plakman

RETIRED JUDGE

Patrick Gendron

CITIZEN



**BRAZOS COUNTY
BRYAN, TEXAS**

DEPARTMENT:

NUMBER:

DATE OF COURT MEETING: 3/6/2026

ITEM: Approval of Minutes from the December 5, 2025 Public Defender's Oversight Board Meeting.

TO: Commissioners Court

DATE: 03/02/2026

FISCAL IMPACT: False

BUDGETED: False

DOLLAR AMOUNT: \$0.00

ATTACHMENTS:

<u>File Name</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Type</u>
Minutes - 12.5.25 PDO Oversight Board Meeting.pdf	Minutes - 12.5.25 PDO Oversight Board Meeting	Backup Material



BRAZOS PUBLIC DEFENDER

EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

Action Item #2

Date: March 6, 2026

RE: Approval of December 5, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Approval Item:

On December 5, 2025, the Public Defenders Oversight Board met for its quarterly meeting.

Recommendation:

Move to approve the Minutes for December 5, 2025, PDO Meeting as amended to correct the spelling of Board Member Michele Esparza's name.

Nathan Wood, Chief Public Defender

3/6/26

Date

Board Approval:

Oversight Board Member

3-6-26

Date

Oversight Board Member

3/6/26

Date

Oversight Board Member

Date



MINUTES

DECEMBER 5, 2025

PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OVERSIGHT BOARD MEETING

1. Call to Order

A meeting of the Brazos County Public Defender's Office Oversight Board was held on Friday, December 5, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. in suite 332 of the Brazos County Administration Building, 200 South Texas Avenue, Bryan, Texas. The following members of the Board were present:

Acting County Judge, Kyle Kacal, Absent;
Judge Travis Bryan, III (retired);
Judge Willie Blackmon (retired), Absent;
Commissioner Wanda J. Watson;
Michele Esparza;
Fran Duane;
Jamie Martin, Absent.

The attached sheet contains the names of officials and citizens that were in attendance.

2. Approval of Minutes from the September 5, 2025 Public Defender's Oversight Board Meeting.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes for the meeting held on September 5, 2025.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Fran Duane, Seconded by Commissioner Wanda J. Watson. Passed. 4-0. Ayes: Bryan, III, Duane, Esparza, Watson. Absent: Blackmon, Kacal, Martin.

3. Approval of appointment of Jim James to the Public Defender's Office Oversight Board, including the determination of their terms of office.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the appointment of Jim James to the Public Defender's Office Oversight Board for a term to begin upon Commissioner's Court

approval and ending on August 15, 2027.

Judge Bryan welcomed Mr. James to the Board and asked that he say a few words. Mr. James thanked the Board for the appointment and noted his heart for indigent defense.

Motion: Approve, Moved by Fran Duane, Seconded by Commissioner Wanda J. Watson. Passed. 4-0. Ayes: Bryan, III, Duane, Esparza, Watson. Absent: Blackmon, Kacal, Martin.

4. Introduction of new employees with the Brazos County Public Defenders Office.

Chief Public Defender Nathan Wood stated that there are no new employees to introduce at this time however, they have filled several positions and the new-hires will start in the upcoming weeks.

5. Review and discuss the 2025 Third Quarter Progress Report.

Ms. Duane thanked Mr. Wood for sending the progress report to the Board prior to the meeting. Mr. Wood shared that the Public Defender's Office remained fully staffed through the 4th Quarter and asked the Board if they had any questions related to the report. The Board did not have any questions.

Misdemeanor Associate Court Judge Dana Zachary commended the Public Defender's Office for their quick response times and willingness to accommodate tight schedules. A copy of the Third Quarter Progress Report is attached.

6. Convene into Executive Session pursuant to Texas Government Code §551.074(a)(1) to deliberate the appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline, or dismissal of the Chief Public Defender.

At 2:16 p.m. Judge Bryan announced the meeting closed, so that the Board members could convene into Executive Session as stated above. He asked the following individuals to attend the closed session:

Aubrey Leggett, Executive Assistant
Nathan Wood, Chief Public Defender

7. Consider and possible action on Executive Session.

Judge Bryan opened the meeting back up at 2:41 p.m. and announced there would be no action on the closed session.

8. Announcement of interest items and possible future agenda topics.

Mr. Wood stated that in the next meeting, he would like to add an item to evaluate the Board by-laws and procedures. The Board agreed and specifically discussed including procedures to remove inactive Board members.

The Board also requested updates on Odyssey access being granted to the Public Defender's Office.

Announcements

9. Upcoming Public Defender's Office Oversight Board Meeting Dates for 2026:
 - a. March 6, 2026 at 2:00pm

- b. June 5, 2026 at 2:00pm
- c. September 4, 2026 at 2:00pm
- d. December 4, 2026 at 2:00pm

10. Adjourn



**BRAZOS COUNTY
BRYAN, TEXAS**

DEPARTMENT:

NUMBER:

DATE OF COURT MEETING: 3/6/2026

ITEM: Approval to accept the resignation of Judge Travis Bryan, III, Board Chair.

TO: Commissioners Court

DATE: 03/02/2026

FISCAL IMPACT: False

BUDGETED: False

DOLLAR AMOUNT: \$0.00



BRAZOS PUBLIC DEFENDER

EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

Action Item #4

Date: March 6, 2026

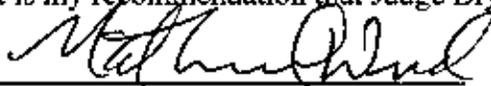
RE: Approval to accept the resignation of Board Chair Judge Travis Bryan, III

Approval Item:

On December 6, 2025, Oversight Board Chairman, Judge Travis Bryan, III (ret.), submitted his resignation as a member of the Public Defenders Office Oversight Board.

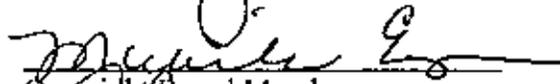
Recommendation:

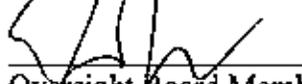
It is my recommendation that Judge Bryan's resignation be accepted and approved.

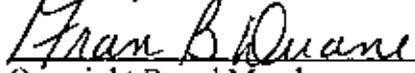
	<u>3/6/26</u>
Nathan Wood, Chief Public Defender	Date

<u>Board Approval:</u> 	<u>3-6-26</u>
Oversight Board Member	Date

	<u>3/6/26</u>
Oversight Board Member	Date

	<u>3-6-26</u>
Oversight Board Member	Date

	<u>3-6-26</u>
Oversight Board Member	Date

	<u>3/6/26</u>
Oversight Board Member	Date

_____	_____
Oversight Board Member	Date



**BRAZOS COUNTY
BRYAN, TEXAS**

DEPARTMENT:

NUMBER:

DATE OF COURT MEETING: 3/6/2026

ITEM: Approval to nominate and approve of new Board Chair.

TO: Commissioners Court

DATE: 03/02/2026

FISCAL IMPACT: False

BUDGETED: False

DOLLAR AMOUNT: \$0.00



BRAZOS PUBLIC DEFENDER

EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

Action Item #5

Date: March 6, 2026

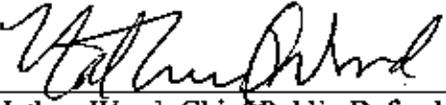
RE: Recommendation of new Oversight Board Chair

Approval Item:

On December 6, 2025, Oversight Board Chair Judge Travis Bryan, III (ret.) offered his resignation as a member of the Oversight Board leaving the Chair position vacant.

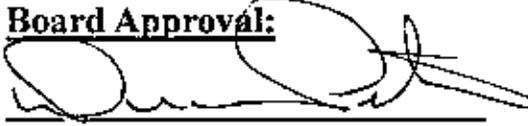
Recommendation:

Move to recommend the nomination of Michele Esparza as acting Oversight Board Chair to serve from March 6, 2026 until August 15, 2026.


Nathan Wood, Chief Public Defender

3/6/26
Date

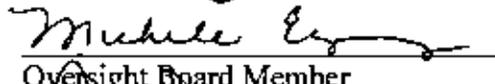
Board Approval:


Oversight Board Member

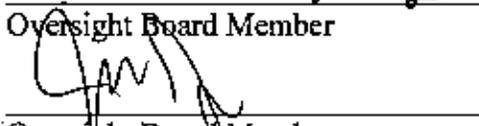
3/6-26
Date


Oversight Board Member

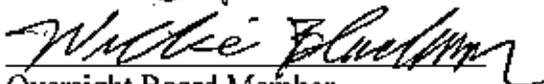
3/6/26
Date


Oversight Board Member

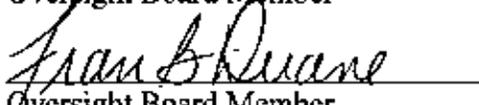
3-6-26
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Oversight Board Member

3-6-26
Date


Oversight Board Member

3-6-26
Date


Oversight Board Member

3/6/26
Date



**BRAZOS COUNTY
BRYAN, TEXAS**

DEPARTMENT:

NUMBER:

DATE OF COURT MEETING: 3/6/2026

ITEM: Approval to withdraw board action taken on September 5, 2025 Public Defender's Oversight Board Meeting to amend the Oversight Board Membership and Policies to reflect eight voting members.

TO: Commissioners Court

DATE: 03/02/2026

FISCAL IMPACT: False

BUDGETED: False

DOLLAR AMOUNT: \$0.00



BRAZOS PUBLIC DEFENDER

EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

Action Item #6

Date: March 6, 2026

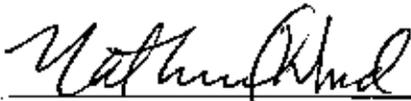
RE: Withdrawal of Amendment to Oversight Board Membership and Policies to reflect eight voting members.

Approval Item:

On December 5, 2025, the Oversight Board voted to amend the Oversight Board Membership and policies to include eight members.

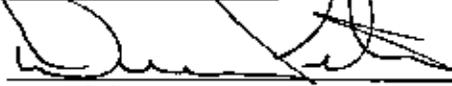
Recommendation:

Move to approve the removal of the amended policy guidelines for the Oversight Board Membership and Policies from eight members to seven members.

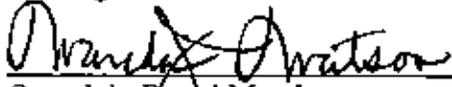

Nathan Wood, Chief Public Defender

3/6/26
Date

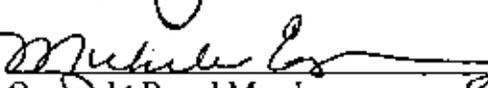
Board Approval:


Oversight Board Member

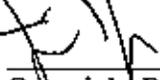
3-6-26
Date


Oversight Board Member

3/06/26
Date


Oversight Board Member

3-6-26
Date


Oversight Board Member

3-6-26
Date


Oversight Board Member

3-6-26
Date


Oversight Board Member

3/6/26
Date



**BRAZOS COUNTY
BRYAN, TEXAS**

DEPARTMENT:

NUMBER:

DATE OF COURT MEETING: 3/6/2026

ITEM: Review and discuss the 2025 Fourth Quarter Progress Report.

TO: Commissioners Court

DATE: 03/02/2026

FISCAL IMPACT: False

BUDGETED: False

DOLLAR AMOUNT: \$0.00

ATTACHMENTS:

File Name

Description

Type

[2025 Q4 Progress Report.pdf](#)

2025 Q4 Progress Report

Backup Material

Progress Report for Grant 212-26-C03: Brazos County Public Defender
Brazos County
October 1 - December 31, 2025
Submitted by Nathaniel T. Wood at 1/20/2026 1:11:53 PM
Read-Only Access

Change Reporting Period 

Question	October 2025	November 2025	December 2025
Public Defender Office			
Caseflow Measures			
Report the average number of business days between appointment of Public Defender and the initial attorney interview.	11	6	6
Report the average number of days clients are in jail prior to resolution of the case for Felonies for the cases disposed each month. (Exclude any clients with MH competency proceedings initiated.)	105	48	200
Report the average number of days clients are in jail prior to resolution of the case for Misdemeanors for the cases disposed each month. (Exclude any clients with MH competency proceedings initiated.)	24	21	20
Use			
Report the number of new Juvenile appointments.	0	0	0
Workload/Caseload Measures			
Report the number of new Misdemeanor appointments.	54	31	37
Report the number of new Felony appointments.	23	14	23
Report the number of new Appeals filed.	5	0	3
Report the number of Felony cases disposed.	19	24	11
Report the number of Misdemeanor cases disposed.	53	45	30
Report the number of Juvenile cases disposed.	0	0	0
Report the average number of active Felony cases per attorney on the last day of the quarter.		129	
Report the average number of active Misdemeanor cases per attorney on the last day of the quarter.		89	
Report the average number of active Juvenile cases per attorney on the last day of the quarter.		0	
Program Activities			

Report the date the Oversight Board is setup		08/02/2022	
Report the date the Chief Defender is hired.		12/28/2022	
Report the date the office begins accepting appointments.		03/17/2023	
Report the date the case management system goes live.		03/17/2023	
Report the date the County indigent Defense Plans have been updated to reflect the use of the Public Defender		12/02/2022	
Report the number of Felony cases where charges were reduced or dismissed.	5	3	1
Report the number Misdemeanor cases where charges were reduced or dismissed.	13	4	6
Report the number of Juvenile cases where charges were reduced or dismissed.	0	0	0
Report the number of bench or jury trials (jury empaneled) for Felonies .	1	0	0
Report the number of bench or jury trials (jury empaneled) for Misdemeanors .	1	0	2
Report the number of bench or jury trials (jury empaneled) for Juveniles .	0	0	0
Report the number of Misdemeanor trials that resulted in a not guilty verdict	0	0	1
Report the number of Felony trials that resulted in a not guilty verdict.	0	0	0
Report the number of Juvenile trials that resulted in a not guilty verdict.	0	0	0
Report the number of Misdemeanor cases where an investigator assisted the attorney with investigation of the case for the cases disposed each month.	43	20	14
Report the number of Felony cases where an investigator assisted the attorney with investigation of the case for the cases disposed each 14 month.		16	4
Report the number of Juvenile cases where an investigator assisted the attorney with investigation of the case for the cases disposed each 0 month.		0	0
Report the number of dispositive motions filed for Misdemeanor cases.	1	0	0
Report the number of dispositive motions filed for Felony cases.	2	1	1
Report the number of bond reduction motions/hearings for Misdemeanor defendants.	1	0	0
Report the number of bond reduction motions/hearing for Felony defendants.	2	1	1
Report the number of detention and review hearings.	0	0	0

Report the number of Juveniles released at detention hearings.	0	0	0
Report the number of writs of habeas corpus filed for Misdemeanors .	1	0	0
Report the number of writs of habeas corpus filed for Felonies .	2	1	1
Report the number of post-conviction writs filed.	0	0	0

Describe any additional services provided to defendants (mental health attorneys, immigration consultations, social services, etc.) referrals made

Provide any additional details you feel are important about the trials this quarter. First 1st-chair NG for the office and for Bryce Pringle.

Report the date of the last Board meeting. 12/05/2025

Report the number of cases disposed each month by the public defender in which program social workers and/or caseworkers consulted with attorneys.	26	14	5
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Summary

Explain any official allegations of misconduct. None.

Provide any program highlights for the quarter. This quarter saw initial action concerning our new MH and juvenile divisions. Candidates interviewed, and hires made to lead both. New misdemeanor defender hired. (3 attorney hires total.)

Describe any challenges and the corrective actions taken or being taken. Nothing to report here.

Describe the activities planned for next quarter. continue hiring. start taking juvenile cases. start designating cases as belonging to MH division.

Describe any staffing changes which occurred during the quarter or that are anticipated in the next quarter. we anticipate hiring 2 additional juvenile defenders and a number of juvenile support staff. In December, we started interviewing for these positions.

If you wish to submit supporting documentation other than text notes entered above, click [here](#). If you have internet mail configured on your computer, a new message window should open up with the To: field filled in. Attach any desired documents and then send the message.

Submitted by Nathaniel T. Wood at 1/20/2026 1:11:53 PM

Home