



TEXAS ETHICS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Public Meeting Minutes

September 17, 2025, 12:05 p.m.
Capitol Extension, Room E1.014
Austin, Texas 78701



COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chris Flood, Chair; Patrick W. Mizell, Vice Chair, Randall H. Erben, Sean Gorman, Geanie W. Morrison, Richard S. Schmidt, Joseph O. Slovacek, and Mark Strama, Commissioners.

COMMISSIONERS NOT PRESENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: Neha Abhyankar, Brandon Barrett, Margie Castellanos, Carmen Dalpiaz, David Guilianelli, Jessie Haug, Cristina Hernandez, Jordan Hunn, Natalie McDermon, Amy Padilla, Mark Pillsbury, Lindsay Powers, Marie Primm, Margaret Sanchez, Patti Shannon, James Tinley, Samantha Vasquez, and Bill Wilson.

MINUTES

These minutes are a summary record of the Commission's actions at the meeting. For a detailed record of discussions and statements made by persons speaking at the meeting, please consult the video recording located on the Texas House of Representatives' audio/video website here: <https://house.texas.gov/video-audio/capitol-events/>.

The minutes reflect the order in which the items were heard.

Agenda Item 1: Call to Order; Roll Call.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Flood. James Tinley, Executive Director, called the roll. All Commissioners were present.

Agenda 1, Item 2.E, Public Announcement and Vote

The Commission announced its decisions on pending motions filed in the formal hearing for sworn complaint No. SC-3230109, In the Matter of Christopher D. Paddie, Sr. and voted to issue a Final Order.

Chair Flood announced that the Commission granted the respondent's request to waive the formal hearing and at the respondent's request, formally entered the evidence submitted by Commission's enforcement staff at the preliminary review hearing and with their motion for summary disposition into the record of the formal hearing. Based on that evidence and the written arguments of both parties, motion by Commissioner Erben to find by the preponderance of the evidence that Mr. Paddie violated section 253.007 of the Election Code and imposed a civil penalty of \$105,500; second by Commissioner Schmidt. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Agenda Item 2: Discussion and possible action related to the hiring of TEC's general counsel.

Chair Flood briefed the Commission on this agenda item.

Motion by Vice Chair Mizell to appoint Amanda Arriaga as General Counsel of the Texas Ethics Commission; second by Commissioner Schmidt. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Chair Flood announced that Samantha Vasquez, Assistant General Counsel, will be leaving the Commission to go into private practice.

Agenda Item 3: Discussion regarding dates for next quarterly Commission meeting.

Chair Flood led the discussion on the next Commission meeting dates. Commissioners Schmidt and Slovacek responded with questions or comments. The tentative dates for the next Commission meetings are December 10, 2025 and February 11, 2026. **No action was taken.**

Agenda Item 4: Approve minutes for the following meetings:

- **Executive Session on June 12, 2025; and**
- **Public Meeting on June 12, 2025.**

Chair Flood briefed the Commission on this agenda item. Motion by Commissioner Schmidt to approve the minutes in Agenda Item 4, as amended; second by Vice Chair Mizell. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Agenda Item 11: Advisory Opinion Request No. AOR-731: Whether members of the State Employee Charitable Campaign are appointed officers required to file a Personal Financial Statement.

Adam Bellows and Lisa Craven addressed the Commission. Natalie McDermon, Interim General Counsel, briefed the Commission on this agenda item. Chair Flood, Vice Chair Mizell, Commissioners Schmidt and Strama, James Tinley, Executive Director and Ms. McDermon responded with questions or comments. Motion by Commissioner Erben to table the discussion of Agenda Item 11; second by Vice Chair Mizell. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Agenda Item 5: Discussion and possible action on the adoption or proposal and re-publication in the Texas Register regarding amendments to 1 Tex.

Admin. Code § 18.31, regarding adjustments to reporting thresholds.

Chair Flood briefed the Commission on this agenda item. Motion by Commissioner Schmidt to adopt Agenda Item 5; second by Commissioner Erben. **Motion passed by a vote of seven ayes.**

Agenda Item 6: **Discussion and possible action on the proposal and publication in the Texas Register regarding re-adoption of Chapter 34 of the TEC rules, related to regulation of lobbyists.**

James Tinley, Executive Director, briefed the Commission on this agenda item. **No action was taken.**

Agenda Item 7: **Discussion and possible action on the proposal and publication in the Texas Register regarding re-adoption of Chapter 22 of the TEC rules, related to restrictions on contributions and expenditures.**

Natalie McDermon, Interim General Counsel, briefed the Commission on this agenda item. Motion by Commissioner Schmidt to publish Agenda Item 7 for public comment; second by Commissioner Erben. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Agenda Item 8: **Discussion and possible action on the proposal and publication in the Texas Register regarding re-adoption of Chapter 24 of the TEC rules, related to restrictions on contributions and expenditures applicable to corporations and labor organizations.**

Natalie McDermon, Interim General Counsel, briefed the Commission on this agenda item. Motion by Commissioner Schmidt to publish Agenda Item 8 for public comment; second by Commissioner Slovacek. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Agenda Item 9: **Discussion and possible action regarding the TEC's comprehensive review its rules, including closing rule reviews for the following chapters: Chapter 6 (Organization and Administration), Chapter 8 (Advisory Opinions), Chapter 10 (Ethics Training Programs), Chapter 12 (Sworn Complaints), Chapter 13 (Referrals to Prosecutors), Chapter 18 (General Rules Concerning Reports), Chapter 28 (Reports by a Candidate for Speaker of the House of Representatives) and Chapter 40 (Financial Disclosure for Public Officers).**

James Tinley, Executive Director, briefed the Commission on this agenda item. Motion by Commissioner Schmidt to adopt Agenda Item 9; second by Commissioner Erben. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Agenda Item 10: **Advisory Opinion No. AOR-727: May an incorporated out-of-state political committee that accepts corporate contributions contribute to Texas state and local candidates, including to a specific-purpose committee, provided it does so from a separate account that only accepts contributions from individuals and that would otherwise come**

from permissible sources under Texas law? Second, assuming the contributions described under the facts above are permissible, does it matter if the out-of-state political committee is controlled by a non-candidate officeholder? Third, if control by a candidate leads to the conclusion that the out-of-state committee is prohibited from making the contributions described above, would it be permissible for the out-of-state committee to: (i) contribute to a Direct Campaign Expenditure Only Committee or (ii) make direct expenditures itself?

James Tinley, Executive Director, briefed the Commission on this agenda item. Chair Flood and Mr. Tinley responded with questions or comments. Motion by Commissioner Schmidt to adopt AOR-727; second by Commissioner Slovacek. **Motion passed unanimously. AOR-727 is adopted.**

Agenda Item 12: Advisory Opinion Request No. AOR-732: Whether a member of the legislature may use campaign funds to reimburse lodging and meal expenses incurred in connection with officeholder duties during the interim if the member also receives a state per diem for that day of legislative work.

Natalie McDermon, Interim General Counsel, briefed the Commission on this agenda item. Commissioners Erben and Strama responded with questions or comments. Motion by Commissioner Strama to adopt AOR-732; second by Commissioner Schmidt. **Motion passed unanimously. AOR-732 is adopted.**

Agenda Item 13: Advisory Opinion Request No. AOR-733: Whether certain Public Service Announcements produced by a non-profit and featuring Texas state elected officials would trigger any campaign finance reporting requirements or require a political advertising disclosure statement?

James Tinley, Executive Director, briefed the Commission on this agenda item. Motion by Commissioner Gorman to adopt AOR-733, as amended; second by Commissioner Schmidt. **Motion passed unanimously. AOR-733 is adopted.**

Agenda Item 14: Advisory Opinion Request No. AOR-734: Whether a current State Board of Education (SBOE) member can provide continuing professional development to educators in return for compensation during their SBOE service.

Natalie McDermon, Interim General Counsel, briefed the Commission on this agenda item. Motion by Commissioner Schmidt to table the discussion of Agenda Item 14; second by Commissioner Strama. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Agenda Item 15: Advisory Opinion Request No. AOR-735: Whether the TEC has authority to assess a civil penalty for a late personal financial statement filed by a director of the Harris County-Houston Sports Authority.

Natalie McDermon, Interim General Counsel, briefed the Commission on this agenda item. Motion by Vice Chair Mizell to table the discussion of Agenda Item 15; second by Commissioner Gorman. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Agenda Item 16: Discussion and possible action on appeals of determinations made under 1 Tex. Admin. Code §§ 18.11, 18.25 and 18.26 relating to administrative waiver or reduction of a fine, for the following filers:

Staff Recommendation: Waiver

- A. Cook, Molly C. (00086313)
- B. Crownover, Buffy (00087462)
- C. Doyle, Michael P., Campaign Treasurer, Harris County Republican Party (CEC) (15507)
- D. Garza-Steele, Vivian, Campaign Treasurer, Zachry Corporation Political Action Committee (00017353)
- E. Graves, Brooke, Campaign Treasurer, High Plains Republican Women PAC (00054835)
- F. Herrera, Diane, Campaign Treasurer, Leander Area Republican Women (00085167)
- G. Kosich, Nicole Amy (00088275)
- H. Moré, Janette, Campaign Treasurer, Travis County Republican Party (CEC)(00039023)
- I. Otts, Barry (00087994)
- J. Raymond, Carlos Antonio (00080137)
- K. Snelgrooes, Kimberly, Campaign Treasurer, Panhandle First (00087989)
- L. Snowden, Tara D. (00060389)
- M. Zachary, Linda (00058757)

Staff Recommendation: Reduction

- N. Bendele, Fohn (00087669)
- O. Bess, Danielle (00086211)
- P. Blair, Emily, Campaign Treasurer, Austin Apartment Association PAC (00016265)
- Q. Esquenazi, James, Campaign Treasurer, Killeen Firefighters for Responsible Government (00081138)
- R. Hopkins, Perla Muñoz (00086384)
- S. Ramirez, Gocha Allen (00083328)
- T. Rublein, Aaron, Campaign Treasurer, Houston LGBTQ+ Political Caucus PAC (00016168)
- U. Trimble, James, Campaign Treasurer, Haltom City Firefighters Committee for Responsible Government (00065031)

Staff Recommendation: No Further Reduction or Waiver

- V. Armstrong, Lisa, Campaign Treasurer, We Love Odessa (00088878)

Chair Flood and Natalie McDermon, Assistant General Counsel, briefed the Commission on this

agenda item. The minutes reflect the order in which the items in Agenda Item No. 16 were heard.

Commissioner Erben left the dais during this agenda item.

#A through M: Motion by Commissioner Schmidt to accept staff recommendations of waiver for Agenda Item 16, Nos. A through M; second by Commissioner Slovacek. **Motion passed by a vote of seven ayes.**

Commissioner Erben returned to the dais during this agenda item. Vice Chair Mizell left the dais during this agenda item.

#N: Fohn Bendele addressed the Commission. Motion by Commissioner Gorman to accept staff recommendations on Agenda Item 16, No. N; second by Commissioner Slovacek. **Motion passed by a vote of seven ayes.**

#O: Danielle Bess addressed the Commission. Chair Flood and Commissioners Erben and Morrison responded with questions or comments. Motion by Commissioner Schmidt to reduce the penalty to \$1,000 on Agenda Item 16, No. O; second by Commissioner Erben. **Motion passed by a vote of seven ayes.**

Vice Chair Mizell returned to the dais during this agenda item.

#P: Vice Chair Mizell and Ms. McDermon responded with questions or comments. Motion by Vice Chair Mizell to waive the late filing penalty on Agenda Item 16, No. P; second by Commissioner Slovacek. **Motion passed unanimously.**

#Q: James Esquenazi addressed the Commission. Chair Flood, Vice Chair Mizell and Ms. McDermon responded with questions or comments. Motion by Commissioner Morrison to adopt staff recommendations on Agenda Item 16, No. Q; second by Commissioner Gorman. **Motion passed unanimously.**

#R: Perla Munoz Hopkins addressed the Commission. Motion by Commissioner Slovacek to waive the late filing penalty on Agenda Item 16, No. R; second by Commissioner Gorman. **Motion passed unanimously.**

#S: Motion by Commissioner Slovacek to adopt staff recommendations on Agenda Item 16, No. S; second by Commissioner Schmidt. **Motion passed unanimously.**

#T: Aaron Rublein addressed the Commission. Chair Flood and Ms. McDermon responded with questions and comments. Motion by Commissioner Slovacek to waive the late filing penalty on Agenda Item 16, No. T; second by Commissioner Schmidt. **Motion passed unanimously.**

#U: Motion by Commissioner Schmidt to adopt staff recommendations on Agenda Item 16, No. U; second by Commissioner Gorman. **Motion passed unanimously.**

#V: Ally Bowling addressed the Commission. Motion by Commissioner Slovacek to waive the late filing penalty on Agenda Item 16, No. V; second by Vice Chair Mizell. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Agenda Item 17: Discussion and possible action regarding the termination of a campaign treasurer appointment for the following inactive candidates:

Individuals

1. Arrieta, Alejandro (00086356)
2. Byrn, Charles D., Jr. (00088141)
3. Cantu, Robert (00088172)
4. Carmona, Omar (00087731)
5. Crenshaw, Sandra (00069780)
6. Freeman, Dawn E. (00088010)
7. Guillory James O., II (00085736)
8. LeBlanc, Jeinay (00088325)
9. Mazzola, Brian N. (00088206)
10. McDaniel, Joe S. (00088221)
11. Price, Albert J., Jr. (00087663)
12. Ramirez, Larissa (00088089)
13. Sloan, Terry L. (00087999)
14. Walton, Victoria (00082438)

Political Committees

15. Citizens for the Students of Boling ISD, Kem Ford, Treasurer (00088760)
16. Friends for Katy Schools, Jason T. Walker, Treasurer (00087882)
17. Grand Prairie Strong, Peter Salas, Treasurer (00088637)
18. Keep Collin Red, Christine Vorderbruggen, Treasurer (00086580)
19. Red River Patriots PAC, Ryan Benjamin Davis, Treasurer (00088304)
20. Save Texas Now, Lance Cargill, Treasurer (00085775)
21. Vote YES for New Diana Kids PAC, Joshua Sims, Treasurer (00088658)
22. Wylie Bulldogs United for Growth Bond 2023, Jud Beall, Treasurer (00088048)

Chair Flood briefed the Commission on this agenda item. Motion by Commissioner Erben to adopt staff recommendations on Agenda Item 17, except for #1 which was removed; second by Commissioner Morrison. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Agenda Item 18: Briefing, discussion and possible action, including the formation of a subcommittee of legislation regarding new legislation from the 89th Regular and Special Legislative Sessions, including the implementation SB 293, SB 869, SB 2514, HB 119, HB 551, and actions taken or in-progress to implement recommendations made in the Sunset Advisory Commission report on the TEC.

James Tinley, Executive Director, briefed the Commission on this agenda item. Chair Flood and Mr. Tinley responded with questions or comments. Chair Flood appointed Vice Chair Mizell and Commissioners Gorman and Slovacek to a subcommittee to research actions needed in response to Senate Bill 293 from the 89th regular legislative session. **No further action was taken.**

Agenda Item 19: Discussion and possible action related to extending or otherwise

amending existing contracts (Nos. OCC 2023-356-0089 and OCC 2024-356-0503) with Butler Snow, LLP, or entering into new contracts with Bulter Snow, LLP for legal services in connection with the same scope of legal services described in the existing contracts (Nos. OCC 2023-356-0089 and OCC 2024-356-0503).

James Tinley, Executive Director, briefed the Commission on this agenda item. Motion by Commissioner Schmidt to extend the contracts and authorize Mr. Tinley to enter into new contracts; second by Commissioner Gorman. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Agenda Item 20: Adjourn.

Commission meeting adjourned by unanimous consent.

Meeting adjourned at 1:45 pm.