TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

Texas Agricultural Finance Authority
11th Floor Conference Room, Stephen F. Austin Building
Meeting Minutes
July 6, 2026
9:30 am

Board Members Present:
Ted Conover, Chairman
Justin Tucker, Vice Chairman
Nelda Barrera
Craig Davis
Zachary Davis
Scott Frazier
Tommy Henderson
Colby McClendon
Brian McCuiston (Virtual)
Lee Norman
Aaron Wiechman

TDA Staff Present:
Marios Parpounas
Susan Maldonado
Danielle Mitchell (Virtual)
Karen Reichek
Mindy Fryer

Guests Present:
Andy Prihoda, Bracewell LLP (Virtual)
Kody Bessent, Plains Cotton Growers (Virtual)
Kelley Green, Texas Cotton Ginners (Virtual)
Aaron Nelson, Texas Cotton Ginners (Virtual)
Brant Wilbourn, Texas Farm Bureau (Virtual)
Duncan McCook, Texas Cotton Ginners (Virtual)
Holt Bivins, Texas Ag Insurance (Virtual)

I. **Call to Order.**
Chairman Ted Conover called the meeting to order at 9:34 AM.

II. **Roll Call and Confirmation of Quorum.**
Mindy Fryer called roll and confirmed a quorum with all members present.

III. **Welcome and Opening Remarks.**
Chairman Conover thanked Vice-chairman Justin Tucker for conducting the June meeting while he was unavailable.

IV. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to approval of meeting minutes for the June 11, 2026, board meeting.**

Chairman Conover called for edits to the June meeting's minutes. Hearing none, Scott Frazier moved to approve the minutes as presented, and Nelda Barrera seconded it. All approved and the motion passed unanimously.

V. **Public Comment, including reading written public comments submitted directly to TDA, if any.**

Chairman Conover opened the floor for public comment. He asked for anyone wishing to speak to state their name and who they represent. There may be additional opportunities to speak on specific agenda topics throughout the meeting.

Karen Reichek read a written comment submitted by Katie Tritsch with the Texas Center for Local Food, which is included as Attachment A to these minutes.

No other public comment was provided at this time.

VI. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to State of Texas Fiscal Year 2026 Budget.**

No modifications were presented by staff for the FY 2026 budget, and no action was taken on this agenda item.

VII. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to open obligations and actions of the Subcommittee on Financial Assistance Applications associated with the TAFA programs.**

There were no new balances to report at this time, and the outstanding obligation amounts presented to the Board at the April 2026 meeting remain unchanged. Updated figures will be provided at the next meeting.

The Subcommittee on Financial Assistance Applications met on June 23, 2026, and approved one Farmer Interest Rate Reduction application. Nelda Barrera moved to ratify the action of the Subcommittee related to Application# FIRR-2026-001 with UMB Bank, N.A. for borrower Benjamin and Katherine Wheeler. Zach Davis seconded it. All approved and the motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Conover stated that Interest Rate Reduction applications only require an administrative processing function rather than a Board credit decision. Justin Tucker noted that all credit decisions are made by the participating financial institution, not by the TAFA Board, and that there is no risk to TAFA funds associated with these administrative actions. Chairman Conover recommended that staff process the applications administratively and provide periodic reports to the Board on actions taken, rather than convening a subcommittee to review each application. He further recommended that this matter be placed on the agenda for the next Board meeting for discussion and possible action.

VIII. **Discussion and Possible Action regarding the Pest Disease Control and Depredation Program (ADP) applications and funding decisions.**

Staff distributed the six proposals submitted by Texas A&M AgriLife Research to the Board for review prior to the meeting. The Board discussed each proposal, including the availability of alternative funding sources and the potential impact on Texas agriculture. Following discussion, the Board determined that the feral hog proposal was the only project primarily focused on mitigation efforts rather than research activities.

Tommy Henderson moved to approve funding for the feral hog mitigation project in the amount of $4 million, with the condition that the project focus on mitigation activities and not research. Justin Tucker seconded the motion. The motion carried Zach Davis, abstained.

IX. **Discussion and Possible Action regarding 2026 AgLink grant applications and award decisions.**

Karen Reichek explained that all Board members' scores were compiled and applications ranked according to the total scores. After discussions, Scott Frazier recommended funding projects at 90%, 80%, 70%, 65%, and 60% based on the scores.

The Board took a break at 10:47 am.
The Board reconvened at 10:59 am

Judge Lee Norman moved to approve 80 projects for a total of $22,454,965. This provides some level of funding to all projects that received a total score of 152 (72%) or higher. Scott Frazier seconded the motion. All approved and the motion passed unanimously. A list of awards is included as Attachment B to these minutes.

Karen Reichek asked the Board to make a determination on the thirteen projects that requested advanced funds. After discussions, Scott Frazier moved to deny the request for advanced funds from all projects. Zach Davis seconded the motion. All approved and the motion passed unanimously.

Staff will work with all selected recipients to revise their budgets and will provide an update to the Board at the next meeting if anyone chooses to decline the grant offered.

The Board discussed ongoing staffing challenges within the Grants Office and expressed concern regarding existing vacancies and their potential impact on program administration. Board members encouraged TDA staff to expand recruitment efforts by sharing job postings with colleges and universities to attract qualified applicants.

Marios Parpounas informed the Board that hiring for other Grant Specialist positions under his management has been placed on hold until the Grants Office vacancies are filled, allowing priority to be given to fully staffing the team responsible for administering the grant programs.

X. **Discussion and Possible Action regarding 2026 AgPro and AgBoost grant programs.**

The Board discussed potential allocation of the $100 million appropriation. Based on the award decisions made earlier in the meeting that would leave $63 million for AgPro and more than $10 million for AgBoost. No motion or vote was taken by the Board on this agenda item.

XI. **Discussion and Possible Action regarding the next meeting date and time.**

The Board agreed to tentatively schedule the next meeting for Thursday, September 3, 2026, at 9:30 AM. No motion or vote was taken by the Board on this agenda item.

XII. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to other business raised at this meeting to be placed on the next agenda.**

Chairman Conover reiterated his desire for the Board to discuss delegating the administrative approval process for Interest Rate Reduction applications to TDA staff at a future meeting.

Karen Reichek advised the Board that AgBoost would also be included on the agenda for the upcoming meeting. Tommy Henderson requested that the L-Glufosinate production facility project presented at the June Board meeting be placed on the agenda for further discussion.

With no objections, staff stated they will include these items on the next agenda.

XIII. **Executive Session, if necessary**

The Board did not conduct an executive session

XIV. **Adjourn.**

Zach Davis moved to adjourn the meeting and Nelda Barrera seconded it. All approved and the meeting adjourned at 11:26 am.