

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Texas Agricultural Finance Authority

Meeting Minutes

September 25, 2025

Board Members Present:

Ted Conover, Chairman
Justin Tucker, Vice-Chairman
Craig Davis
Brian McCuiston
Sarah Burnett (virtual)
Georgina Macias (virtual)
Barry Smith (virtual)

Guests Present:

Andy Prihoda
Aaron Nelsen (virtual)
Tracy Tomascik (virtual)
J Pete Laney (virtual)
Lauren Fairbanks (virtual)
Kelley Green (virtual)
Kody Bessent (virtual)
Billy Tiller (virtual)
Brant Wilbourn (virtual)

TDA Staff Present:

CJ Balderrama
Emily Daly
Mindy Fryer
Emily Hirsh
Susan Maldonado
Zona Martin
Danielle Mitchell
Kat Neilson
Marios Parpounas
Karen Reichek
Julia Rico (virtual)
Kelly Sara (virtual)

- I. **Oath of Office:** Danielle Mitchell administered the oath of office to incoming member Craig Davis.
- II. **Call to Order:** Ted Conover called the meeting to order at 9:06 AM.
- III. **Roll Call and Confirmation of Quorum:** Mindy Fryer called roll and confirmed a quorum.
- IV. **Opening Remarks:** Ted Conover provided opening remarks and invited comments from the Board.
- V. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to Approval of Meeting Minutes for the August 18, 2025, board meeting:** Ted Conover called for a motion to approve the previous meeting minutes. Justin Tucker motioned; Brian McCuiston seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

- VI. **Public Comment:** No members of the public provided comment.
- VII. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to State of Texas Fiscal Year 2026 Budget:** Ted Conover invited discussion of the fiscal year budget approved at the previous meeting. Karen Reichek informed the Board they had the opportunity to make any additional comments or changes. No motion or vote was taken by the Board on this agenda item.
- VIII. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to TAFE bonding authority:** Karen Reichek informed the Board that the Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller wished the Board to pursue the commercial paper program the Board tabled at the previous meeting. Karen Reichek requested direction from the Board on whether to pursue the commercial paper program. Ted Conover recommended TDA staff develop a plan for Board review. No motion or vote was taken by the Board on this agenda item.
- IX. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to rule review of TAFE's administrative rules located at Texas Administrative Code, Title 4, Part 1, Chapter 28:** Susan Maldonado recommended the Board open an official rule review for a 30-day public comment period. Ted Conover called for a motion to approve. Justin Tucker motioned; Craig Davis seconded; the motion passed unanimously.
- X. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to proposed revisions to TAFE's administrative rules located at Texas Administrative Code, Title 4, Part 1, Chapter 28:** Susan Maldonado presented revised rules for Board review. Regarding Rule §28.2 (20), Justin Tucker and Andy Prihoda discussed adding "or another area defined by resolution of the board with respect to a particular program" to the definition of "rural area." Ted Conover called for a motion to approve. Brian McCuiston moved; Barry Smith seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

Regarding Rule §28.28 (C), Susan Maldonado confirmed the Board would not like to change the \$100 loan application fee.

Regarding Rule §28.29 (A), Karen Reichek inquired whether the Board would like to entertain loan applications above \$1 million. The Board confirmed they would like to add language allowing this change.

Regarding Rule §28.36 (B), The Board agreed to cap interest rebates at the amount described in Section §28.052 (e).

Ted Conover called for a motion to approve these, and all other changes proposed by TDA. Justin Tucker motioned; Brian McCuiston seconded, the motion passed unanimously.

XI. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to HB 43 program development, including but not limited to the following:**

- a) **IRR (Chapter 44)**
- b) **IRR (Chapter 58)**
- c) **ALG**
- d) **Ag Grant Program**
- e) **Pest and Disease Control and Depredation Program**
- f) **Other programs**

Interest Rate Reduction Program

Mindy Fryer mentioned that the application for the IRR programs had been updated to reflect changes made in statute. This included name changes, and updates to the maximum amounts. No motion or vote was taken by the Board on this agenda item.

Agricultural Loan Guarantee Program

Justin Tucker presented potential changes to rebate policies for the Agricultural Loan Guarantee program. Justin Tucker proposed adding language to tie rebates to the lower of the two interest rates: prime rate or ten-year treasury rate on the date of the TAFA Agricultural Loan Guarantee approval. Justin Tucker motioned to approve; Barry Smith seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

Agriculture Grant Program

Justin Tucker presented a worksheet that identified a percentage of how much grant funding could be allocated toward the different commodity areas to help ensure portfolio diversification. He discussed that the amounts were derived based on commodity acreage data. The Board discussed and no formal motion was made to adopt the allocation of funding.

Mindy Fryer presented potential “buckets” for the Agriculture Grant Program, including agriculture production and increased capacity/infrastructure improvement based on previous commentary provided by Board members. Justin Tucker requested including application questions that allow the Board to evaluate the viability of a candidate. Mindy Fryer presented several developmental questions, such as whether the Board would like to allow advances of grant funding. The Board confirmed they would allow Board evaluation of advances not to exceed 5% of the award, provided the applicant justifies why they cannot use their cost match for the expense. Ms. Fryer indicated that she would bring a draft version of an application template for discussion at the next meeting. No motion or vote was taken by the Board on this agenda item.

Pest and Disease Control and Depredation Program

Mindy Fryer indicated that TDA has a current program called Zero Agricultural Pest and Disease Program that looked similar to the Pest and Disease Control and Depredation Program. While the programs are different, Ms. Fryer stated that the existing grant application could be used as a basis to launch the Pest and Disease Control and Depredation Program. She further confirmed that TDA would bring a breakdown of potential program structures for the Pest and Disease Control and Depredation Program at the next meeting. The Board discussed setting up a grant program to execute this program's tasks including funding new programs, or funding programs that are currently in statute for pest and disease function that are unfunded under the eligible entities' authority. No motion or vote was taken by the Board on this agenda item.

- XII. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to next meeting date:** Ted Conover proposed October 23, 2025, at 9:30 AM and November 20, 2025, at 9:30 AM for the next two Board meetings. No motion or vote was taken by the Board on this agenda item.
- XIII. **Discussion and Possible Action relating to other business raised at meeting to be placed on next agenda:** Ted Conover called for additional business to be placed on the agenda. No motion or vote was taken by the Board on this agenda item.
- XIV. **Executive Session (as necessary):** The Board did not conduct an executive session.
- XV. **Adjourn:** Ted Conover called for a motion to adjourn. Justin Tucker motioned; Sarah Burnett seconded; the meeting adjourned at 11:30 AM.