

MINUTES
ARK-TEX COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
April 1, 2026

The Board of Directors of the Ark-Tex Council of Governments (ATCOG) met at 10:00 a.m., Thursday, April 1, 2026, at the Pilgrim's Community Center, 820 West Pecan Street, Mt. Pleasant, Texas, and via videoconference.

1. Scott Norton, Executive Director/CEO of TexAmericas Center, called the meeting to order.
2. Robert Newsom, Judge, Hopkins County, gave the invocation.
3. Public Comment.

No member of the public made a comment.

Scott Norton recognized Chris Spencer and thanked him for his attendance.

4. Ms. Mary Beth Rudel, Executive Director, presented the following consent agenda items:
 - Approval of the minutes as submitted for the ATCOG Board of Directors Meeting held Thursday, December 4, 2025.
 - Acceptance of the minutes as submitted for the ATCOG Area Agency on Aging Regional Council meeting held Thursday, March 5, 2026.

Motion to approve was made by Kent Cooper, Judge, Titus County, and seconded by Scott Lee, Judge, Franklin County. It was approved.

5. Ms. Leslie McBride, Deputy Director, presented for review and approval of revisions to the ATCOG Policies and Procedures Manual.

According to ATCOG's holiday policies, employees must have paid leave status on both the day before and the day after a holiday to receive payment for that holiday.

The proposed revisions to the following policies and procedures aim to remove certain stipulations on holiday pay to ensure consistency for all employees.

- 6.00 Leave
- 8.01 Holiday – General Policy
- 10.03 Workers' Compensation
- Attachment B

The proposed revisions to the following travel policies clarify the reimbursement rates for employees using the personal vehicle option and the gas mileage rate. The revisions will also specify when to reconcile day travel and how to handle non-travel-related expenses.

- 17.02 Day Travel
- 17.04 Overnight Travel
- 17.05 Overnight Travel Expense Reports
- 17.12 Non-Travel Expenses

Motion to approve was made by Judge Newsom and seconded by Doug Reeder, Judge, Morris County. It was approved.

6. Ms. Debbie Purifoy presented for review and approval to authorize the Executive Director to enter into an Interlocal agreement with The Local Government Purchasing Cooperative (BuyBoard).

The Interlocal agreement with BuyBoard will improve the efficiency of the procurement process. The Local Government Purchasing Cooperative (BuyBoard) will:

- Coordinate the Competitively Bid Process for all Vendor Awarded Contracts.
- Provide members with procedures for placing orders through the BuyBoard PO System.
- Maintain a filing system for Due Diligence Documentation.
- Collect fees from vendors to support the costs of operations of BuyBoard.

Motion to approve was made by Judge Cooper and seconded by Lowell Walker, Mayor, City of DeKalb. It was approved.

7. Ms. Whitney Fezell presented for review and approval of the prioritization of 2026 Homeland Security Grant Program funds.

The Homeland Security Advisory Committee (HSAC) met on March 31, 2026, and reviewed the 2026 funding requests. Projects were submitted across numerous categories, including Regional Planning, Interoperable Communications, Intelligence Information Sharing, and First Responder Capabilities. The HSAC scored the projects via ballot based on risk, reasonableness, and priority level. The HSAC approved the prioritization of the 2026 Homeland Security Grant Program funds on March 31, 2026. The proposed 2026 funding distribution list was provided as a handout at the meeting.

Motion to approve was made by Tanner Crutcher, Judge, Delta County, and seconded by Judge Lee. Scott Norton asked if there were any questions or discussion. Judge Lee inquired whether a higher score is more likely to receive the full funding overall. Ms. Fezell confirmed that it is correct and provided an explanation of the process.

In reference to the funding distribution list, ATCOG Law Enforcement Regional Terrorism Prevention Project is ranked last. We only have that from the ballot if we do not reach our normal level requirement of 30%. If we don't, we can pick up and partially fund that project as needed to supplement it, so we do not lose funds.

Franklin County submitted two projects: a primary and a secondary. According to our HSAC Bylaws, we allow submission of two projects, with the requirement that both a primary and a secondary project are identified. Once all primary projects have been fully funded, we will then consider the secondary projects.

Judge Lee inquired whether the formula is still based on county population. Ms. Fezell responded no, but HSAC scoring uses a risk-based formula that includes population and critical infrastructure, such as miles of highways and railroads.

Scott Norton asked if there were additional questions or discussion. No further discussion. A motion and a second on the floor. It was approved.

8. Ms. Whitney Fezell presented for review and approval to authorize the Executive Director to enter into a contract with The Cambridge Group (TCG Investments LLC) to install dispatch consoles with accessories in Lamar County.

ATCOG Homeland Security Program utilized The Local Government Purchasing Cooperative (BuyBoard) to obtain a quote from Air Waves Communications Inc., an authorized designated dealer under The Cambridge Group (TCG Investments LLC), to purchase/install the following:

- Zetron Maz Dispatch consoles with accessories (including 12 Kenwood NX5700k VHF Control radios and 12 Kenwood NX5800K UHF Control Radios)

The estimated total for the purchase and installation of consoles with accessories in Lamar County is \$317,804.56. The grant will cover expenses up to \$320,000.00. Expenses exceeding \$320,000.00 will be the responsibility of Lamar County.

Motion to approve was made by Brandon Bell, Judge, Lamar County, and seconded by Judge Newsom. It was approved.

9. Ms. Mary Beth Rudel presented for review and approval of the Northeast Texas Housing Finance Corporation request for membership to ATCOG.

Ms. Rudel directed the Board to page 31 of the packet, which contained the resolution adopted by the Northeast Texas Housing Finance Corporation requesting membership on the Board of Directors and the appointment of a representative to serve as Director on the Ark-Tex Council of Governments Board of Directors. Judge L. D. Williamson, the former judge of Red River County, was appointed by the resolution to serve as their representative. Judge Williamson was present.

Ms. Rudel stated that the Northeast Texas Finance Housing Corporation is an organization formed by the county governments in our region. It serves the same nine counties as ATCOG, with two (2) appointees from each county on the Northeast Texas Housing Finance Corporation Board.

ATCOG has reviewed its bylaws and affirmed that the Northeast Texas Housing Finance Corporation would fit into the associate membership category, subject to case-by-case approval by the board. Ms. Rudel asked if there were any discussions, comments, or questions. No further comments or questions.

Motion to approve was made by Mayor Walker and seconded by Chris Brown, Vice President, Hopkins County Hospital District. It was approved.

10. Ms. Patricia Haley presented for review and approval of the representative as a replacement member to serve on the Regional Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (RCJAC) through December 31, 2027.

- RCJAC Education Category - Hayes Leshar, Principal, Mt. Pleasant ISD DAEP Campus.

Ms. Haley stated that ATCOG is required to have a member representing the education category on the RCJAC. Mr. Ronnie Humphrey, the Mt. Pleasant ISD Police Chief, who has served under the law enforcement category, instead of the education category, per the Office of the Governor-Public Safety Office, has agreed to forgo his membership in order to allow Mr. Hayes Leshar to serve in his place as follows. Mr. Leshar has agreed to serve.

Motion to approve was made by Judge Bell and seconded by Mayor Walker. It was approved.

11. Ms. Patricia Haley presented the Computerized Criminal History System (CCH) update for information only.

The deadline for counties to meet the 90% or higher criminal history disposition percentages for both adults and juveniles is August 1, 2026. If the disposition percentages are not met by August 1, counties will not be eligible for any grant funding through the Office of the Governor and may be ineligible for funding from other agencies.

Ms. Haley will continue to provide updates to the county judges and sheriffs.

12. Ms. Daneshia Cherry presented for adoption of a resolution authorizing recognition of April as National Fair Housing Month.

Motion to approve was made by Judge Reeder and seconded by Judge Newsom. It was approved.

13. Ms. Rea Allen presented for adoption of a resolution authorizing recognition of National Public Safety Telecommunicators, April 12 – 18, 2026.

Motion to approve was made by Judge Lee and seconded by Chris Brown. It was approved.

14. Ms. Rea Allen presented Ms. Kiana Stewart, Dispatcher, for the Mt. Pleasant Police Department (MPPD), with the ATCOG Telecommunicator of the Year Award.

Kiana Stewart was nominated by both Senior Dispatchers at the Mt. Pleasant Police Department, Eric Hall and Arturo Ramirez. Ms. Allen read Arturo Ramirez's nomination letter, and Eric Hall was present to read his nomination letter. Mr. Hall expressed MPPD's appreciation of Kiana Stewart's dedicated service to the region.

Scott Norton congratulated Ms. Kiana Stewart and her coworkers for their service throughout the region.

15. Following the announcements, Scott Norton called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion to adjourn was made by Mayor Walker and seconded by Judge Cooper. It was approved. Meeting adjourned.

Announcements

Ms. Rudel announced that ATCOG received the Defense Economic Adjustment Assistance Grant awarded from the Office of the Governor of Texas and the Texas Military Preparedness Commission. The \$5 million grant supports the mission of the Red River Army Depot. It is a significant win for our region and the surrounding areas.

Ms. Rudel commended Toni Lindsey, ATCOG Regional Development Director, for her outstanding work in writing the grant. The grant will benefit our educational institutions, including Texarkana College and Texas A&M University-Texarkana, as well as the Red River Army Depot.

Ms. Rudel announced the resignation of Bobby Howell, Judge, Bowie County, resignation as president of the board. He will remain as a Bowie County Representative on the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors. He has served as president since January 2023. ATCOG appreciates Judge Howell and his service to ATCOG.

Scott Norton, Vice President, will serve as president until ATCOG fills the vacancy in July, pending approval at the Board meeting in August.

Ms. Rudel announced that the next joint meeting of the Northeast Texas Economic Development District, Inc. (NETEDD) and the Board of Directors of the Ark-Tex Council of Governments (ATCOG) will be held on Thursday, April 30, 2026, at the Pilgrim's Community Center, 820 West Pecan Street, Mt. Pleasant, Texas, and via videoconference.

ATCOG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Scott Norton, Executive Director/CEO, TexAmericas Center
Travis Ransom, Judge, Cass County
Scott Lee, Judge, Franklin County
Brandon Bell, Judge, Lamar County
Kent Cooper, Judge, Titus County
Tanner Crutcher, Judge, Delta County
Bobby Howell, Judge, Bowie County
Robert Newsom, Judge, Hopkins County
Doug Reeder, Judge, Morris County

ATCOG BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Robert Bridges, Judge, Red River County
Chris Brown, Vice President, Hopkins County Hospital District
Laney Harris, Director, City of Texarkana-AR
Shannon McGuire, Board of Regents, Paris Junior College
Jeff Parker, Council Member, City of Hooks
Gary Spraggins, Council Member, City of Sulphur Springs
Shawn Tully, Director, Red River County Appraisal District
Lowell Walker, Mayor, City of DeKalb

GUESTS PRESENT

Claribell Banda, Mt. Pleasant Economic Development Corporation
Seth Cox, Board Member, Northeast Texas Economic Development District
Josh Davis, Judge Elect, Bowie County
Eric Hall, Senior Dispatch, Mt. Pleasant Police Department
Sherrie Houff, Department of State Health Services
Janeth Morena, Mt. Pleasant Economic Development Corporation
Chris Spencer, Candidate/Texas House
Kiana Stewart, Mt. Pleasant Police Department
Rob Vine, City Manager, Mt. Pleasant
L.D. Williamson, President, Northeast Texas Housing Finance Corporation
Ray Wilson, Office of Senator Bryan Hughes

ATCOG STAFF PRESENT

Mary Beth Rudel, Executive Director
Leslie McBride, Deputy Director
Laura Cowling, Finance Director
Rea Allen, 9-1-1 Director

Jenny Butler, Agency on Aging Director
Daneshia Cherry, Housing Director
Mark Compton, Transportation Director
Whitney Fezell, Homeland Security
Patricia Haley, Criminal Justice Coordinator
Melody Harmon, Economic Development Director
Toni Lindsey, Regional Development Director
Marla Matthews, Executive Assistant
Paul Prange, Environmental Resources Coordinator
Debbie Purifoy, Compliance and Purchasing Officer

/s/ Scott Lee, May 28, 2026

Scott Lee, Treasurer
Board of Directors
Ark-Tex Council of Governments

ATTEST:

/s/ Kent Cooper, May 28, 2026

Kent Cooper, Executive Board Member
Board of Directors
Ark-Tex Council of Governments