



109th Semi-Annual Board of Directors' Meeting

Whitehouse City Center
109 E. Main St.
Whitehouse, TX 75701

March 19, 2026

Registration - 11:30 a.m.

Lunch - 11:45 a.m.

Business Meeting & Awards Presentation - 12:15 p.m.



Message from the Executive Director

Enclosed is the agenda and related materials for the 109th Semi-Annual Board of Directors meeting scheduled for Tuesday, March 18, 2025. **The meeting will be held in Smith County at the City Center, 109 E. Main St., Whitehouse, TX.**



This meeting honors special individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to the quality of life throughout our region. Registration begins at 11:30 a.m., lunch will be served at 11:45 a.m., and the business meeting will begin at 12:15 p.m.

If you are physically impaired and require special meeting accommodations, please contact the ETCOG office prior to the meeting and we will do our best to assist you. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I look forward to seeing you on March 19th in Smith County!

Sincerely,

David A. Cleveland



Agenda

Board of Directors Meeting • March 19, 2026, 11:45 a.m.
Location: 109 E. Main St., Whitehouse, TX 75701



1-6. OPENING OF MEETING

1. Call to Order Chairman, Mayor James Wansley
2. Invocation & Pledge
3. Welcoming Remarks Judge Neal Franklin and Mayor Wansley
 - Smith County Judge Franklin
 - Whitehouse Mayor Wansley
4. Introductions Chairman Wansley
5. Roll Call: Presentation of Commissioner Paula Gentry Spirit Award David Cleveland, Executive Director
6. Public Comments

Guidelines: Citizens may address the Executive Committee concerning any item included on this agenda. All Public Comments shall be taken at the Chairman's discretion under the following guidance:

- a) All individuals desiring to make a public comment must sign in on the "Public Comment Sign-in Sheet" at least 5 minutes prior to start of the meeting and should identify himself/herself before providing his/her Public Comment.
- b) If your comments pertain to a matter included as part of a Public Hearing, please share your comments during the public hearing.
- c) Each speaker will receive three minutes, and no portion of a speaker's allotted time may be given (assigned, relinquished, or donated) to another speaker.
- d) If you are speaking on the same item and share the same viewpoint, you must select a spokesperson to represent your group.
- e) Written comments may be sent by email to: PublicComments@etcog.org. Comments received by 5:00 pm, Thursday, March 5, 2026, will be incorporated into the meeting record.
- f) Public comments on issues and concerns NOT included on this agenda may be taken at the Chairman's discretion.

7. BUSINESS SESSION & REGIONAL AWARDS PRESENTATION

Note: All Voting Members of the ETCOG Board of Directors received a poker chip today. As a voting member, if you make a motion, please identify your name and county/city affiliations to help with minutes. Thank you.

- a) Consider approval of September 18, 2025, Board of Directors' Meeting minutes (Enclosure #1) Chairman Wansley
- b) Presentation of Regional Awards Chairman Wansley
 1. Regional 1st Responder of the Year
 2. Regional Citizen of the Year
 3. Regional Corporate Citizen of the Year
 4. Regional Committee Service Award
 5. Regional Shining Star Award
 6. Regional Statesman of the Year Award

8-10. CLOSURE OF MEETING

8. Special announcement(s) concerning upcoming events and opportunities
9. Discussion and announcement regarding September 2026 Board of Directors' Meeting
10. Adjourn

**Minutes of
East Texas Council of Governments
108th Semi-Annual Board of Directors' Meeting
3303 FM 13 West, Henderson, TX
Thursday, September 18, 2025**

1. Call to Order:

Chairman Dunn called the meeting to order at 12:20 p.m.

2 Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor James Wansley, City of Whitehouse brought the invocation, and the pledges were led by Commissioner Robert Kuykendall, Rusk County.

3.. Public Comments

Guidelines: Citizens may address the Board of Directors concerning any item included on this agenda. All Public Comments shall be taken at the Chairwoman's discretion under the following guidance:

- a) All individuals desiring to make a public comment must sign in on the "Public Comment Sign-in Sheet" at least 5 minutes prior to start of the meeting and should identify himself/herself before providing his/her Public Comment.
- b) If your comments pertain to a matter included as part of a Public Hearing, please share your comments during the public hearing.
- c) Each speaker will receive three minutes and no portion of a speaker's allotted time may be given (assigned, relinquished, or donated) to another speaker.
- d) If you are speaking on the same item and share the same viewpoint, you must select a spokesperson to represent your group.
- e) Written comments may be sent by email to: **PublicComments@etcog.org**. Comments received by 5:00 pm, Thursday, September 18, 2025 will be incorporated into the meeting record.
- e) Public comments on issues and concerns NOT included on this agenda may be taken at the Chairwoman's discretion.

4. Welcoming Remarks

Chairman Dunn called upon Rusk County Judge Joel Hale to bring welcoming remarks. Judge Hale said he was pleased everyone is here and that the meeting could be held in our newest facility. It is a beautiful facility, and we are very proud of it. Judge Hale introduced all the people from the county that had joined him to support this Board of Director's meeting.

Chairman Dunn then introduced City of Henderson, Mayor Henry Pace to bring welcoming remarks. Mayor Pace expressed his desire that everyone's stay would be a pleasant one. You are invited to come any time and spend time and money in Henderson. We have a lot to offer. Mayor Pace also introduced members from the City and the Economic Development Corporation.

5. Introductions:

Chairman Dunn introduced the head table; you have previously been introduced to Rusk County Judge Joel Hale and City of Henderson Mayor, Henry Pace. We also have City of Whitehouse Mayor James Wansley, 2nd Vice Chairman of Executive Committee, Rusk County Commissioner Robert Kuykendall, 1st Vice Chairman of Executive Committee, and ETCOG Executive Director David Cleveland.

Mayor Dunn then asked the current members of the Executive Committee to stand and be recognized. Other dignitaries were introduced in attendance: In addition to Rusk County Judge Joel Hale, Anderson County Judge Carey McKinney, Board of Directors and CEO/RTPO Board

Member, Camp County Judge A J Mason, Board of Directors and Executive Committee 3rd Vice Chairman and also Vice Chair on CEO/RTPO Board; Marion County Judge, Chairman of CEO/RTPO Board and Board of Directors member Leward LaFleur, and Rains County Judge Brent Hilliard, Board of Directors and CEO/RTPO Board member.

Chairman Dunn continued his introductions with special guests, Ms. Anna Thomas, East Texas Staff Assistant to U. S. Senator John Cornyn, Ms. JoAnne Shofner, Texas House of Representative District 11, Mr. Reese DeWoody, Texas Senator Bryan Hughes' District Director, Ms. Elizabeth Cockerham, Texas Representative Cole Hefner Office, Mr. Claude Figueroa, Workforce Solutions East Texas Board Chairman, Mr. Gene Keenon, Vice Chairman, Workforce Solutions East Texas Board, Dr. Robert Haberle, Workforce Solutions East Texas Board Member, Ms. Bonnie Geddie, Workforce Solutions East Texas Board Member, Ms. Keri Perot-Vance, Executive Director of the Panola County Chamber of Commerce and Carthage Convention/Visitors Bureau, and Former Rusk County Commissioner Bill Hale, retired Commissioner and ETCOG Executive Committee and Board of Directors Member. We are pleased to welcome you all.

6 Roll Call:

Mr. Cleveland came forth to call the roll and present the winner of the Paula Gentry Spirit Award. Mr. Cleveland admitted this is one his favorite portion of the program. The counties present were:

Anderson	Gregg	Harrison	Marion
Camp	Panola	Marion	Henderson
Cherokee	Rains	Rusk	Wood

Gregg County was the winner of the traveling Commissioner Paula Gentry Spirit Award.

7. Business Meeting:

Note: All Voting Members of the ETCOG Board of Directors received a poker chip today. As a voting member, please identify your name and the County or City you represent when offering a motion on an agenda item. Thank you.

a. Consider approval of March 23, 2024, Board of Directors' Meeting minutes: Chairman Dunn

After a review of the minutes, Anderson County Commissioner Rashad Mims moved to approve the minutes. Smith County Commissioner Ralph Caraway Sr. seconded; motion passed.

b. Consider Recommendations for ETCOG Executive Committee Service for 2-Year Service:

Mayor Dunn called upon Rains County Commissioner Jeremy Cook to present. Commissioner Cook stated, he as the Nominating Committee Chairman and members Mayor Randy Dunn, City Commissioner Tate Barber, Commissioner Robert Robet Kuykendall and Councilman Bob Tardiff met and reviewed the nominations for 7 cities and counties up for a 2-year renewal. We are pleased to present for consideration the following:

Anderson County	Commissioner Rashad Mims
Camp County	Judge A. J. Mason
Harrison County	Commissioner William Hatfield
Henderson County	Chuck McHam
Rusk County	Commissioner Robert Kuykendall
Van Zandt County	Judge Andy Reese
Wood County	Mayor Randy Dunn

Gregg County Cities had one remaining year of an unexpired term. Mayor Kristen Ishihara was tapped to fill the remaining year.

Anderson County Judge Carey McKinney moved to approve the nominated people as stated. City Commissioner Tate Barber seconded; motion passed.

c. Consider Recommendations for FY 2025-2026 Executive Committee Officers:

Commissioner Cook continued to present the names of officers for the 2025-2026 term.

Chairman	Mayor James Wansley
1 st Vice Chairman	Judge A. J. Mason
2 nd Vice Chairman	Commissioner Ralph Caraway Sr.
3 rd Vice Chairman	City Commissioner Tate Barber
Secretary-Treasurer	Commissioner Rashad Mims

Smith County Commissioner Caraway moved to approve the recommended officers. Rains County Commissioner Cook seconded; motion passed.

d. Consider approval of Vendor for Office Renovation for Area Agency on Aging:

Chairman Dunn called upon Brandy Brannon to present. Ms. Brannon explained that the ETCOG team has been reviewing 4 proposals received for the renovation of the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) space which is located in the space previously occupied by the Transportation Division. The RFP closed on August 28, 2025.

Based on the team's review, the top choice was Casey Stone Construction. The vendor's cost to complete this project is \$206,860.50 which includes a \$18,805.50 cost for contingences and \$3500 for hardware. In addition, our architectural firm, Harris-Craig, has been instrumental in developing the plans for this project and will work alongside our Facilities team throughout its completion. The architect and engineering fees are 7% of the project costs, which will add \$14,480.24 to the overall cost for this project.

We are requesting approval from the Board of Directors to move forward with Case Stone Construction as the vendor chosen for the AAA renovation at a cost not to exceed \$221,341. If negotiations with Casey Stone Construction fail, we request that the Board give the ETCOG Executive Director authority to move forward with our second-highest proposer and allow us to ratify that decision at the following ETCOG Executive Committee meeting.

Judge A. J. Mason moved to approve as requested. Commissioner Kuykendall seconded; motion passed unanimously.

e. Chairman’s Report on Accomplishments in FY 2025

Chairman Dunn thanked everyone for their support during the year and wanted to congratulate ETCOG staff on a great year. A video was shown documenting many of the events and accomplishments from the current year. Rousing applause was given.

f. Consider approval of FY 2026 Budget:

Chairman Dunn called upon Wendi Horst to present. Ms. Horst stated this is the largest budget ever for ETCOG although it represents only a 1% increase from the current year FY2025 budget. The recommended total budget for FY 2026 is \$86,053,366 and supports a 2% across the board increase for staff, it continues the match of 2 to 1 for TCDRS and supports an indirect cost rate of 21.20%. We are proud that our health insurance renewal cost increased only by 5.1% this year over last year’s cost. We have 146 FTEs although we are authorized for 163.50 FTEs (6 FTE are reserved for TARC, as we serve as employer of record).

The majority of our revenue, 76.9% is federal funds and 8.9% are state and the remainder is distributed between local funds, in-kind contributions and more. We currently manage 102 different funding streams. Ms. Horst reviewed the revenue by source and division as well as a breakdown of expenditures by service program. Ms. Horst noted significant increases in funding were from childcare, new broadband funding and 911 Emergency Communications. We experienced decreases in the Senior Meal Programs, AAA Caregiver funding and Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding.

David Cleveland shared information about new and continuing initiatives planned for FY 2026. Those include ongoing planning for Piney Woods 911 District, growth of the Regional Technology Solutions program, which among many other things, supports RingCentral phone systems. We are on the verge of moving forward with Regional Employers’ Health Insurance Consortium that will conduct a feasibility study later this year. Mr. Cleveland said he believes this will be the year our Regional Housing Program takes a major step forward. We plan to apply for a 501 c 3 and reconnect with the Federal Home Loan Bank in Dallas for housing repair grants. We narrowly missed out on a Senior Housing Repairs grant from Housing & Urban Development, but they provided us with great feedback on our application that will help us when the next round of funding is announced.

Mr. Cleveland continued by saying the ETCOG Strategic Agenda will be presented soon and will contain plans for the next several years. We have already today received the Executive Committee’s approval to launch the Veteran’s Directed Care Program and there is so much more! Mr. Cleveland concluded by summarizing the following: total budget is \$86,053,366 for 146 positions, a proposed salary adjustment of 2% ABI, a 2 to 1 match for the TCDRS retirement plan, fringe benefit rate of 18.53% and an indirect rate of 21.20%. It should be noted this is our lowest Indirect Rate in over 10 years.

Panola City Commissioner Barber moved to approve the proposed FY 2026 budget as submitted. Smith County Commissioner Caraway seconded; motion passed.

8. Presentation of Chairman’s Service Award:

Chairman Dunn came forth to reveal the Chairman’s Service Award. The person who was chosen always says “yes”. Whether it is a need to service on a new committee, serve on a

Regional committee or ask the question you wanted to ask, but did not; James Wansley is your man. I admire Mayor Wansley for his energy, his wit and his leadership. I am proud to have selected Mayor Wansley for this award. Mayor Wansley accepted the award with gratitude.

9. Recognition of Chairman Dunn

David Cleveland came forth to recognize the service of Chairman Dunn. He stated in his 18 ½ years, he has not worked with a more kindhearted and passionate leader. Mayor Dunn has been great to work with. He would see a need and fill it. He leads with a servant’s heart, putting our citizens’ needs ahead of his own. Thank you, Mayor Dunn, for all you have done.

Chairman Dunn commented that he was glad to be outgoing chairman. He has enjoyed his tenure and has not been prouder to server as the ETCOG Board and Executive Committee Chairman.

10. Discussion and announcement regarding March 2026 Board of Directors Meeting

The next Board of Directors’ Meeting will be held in Smith County.

11 Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.