

**BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

December 12, 2013

Georgia Public Safety Training Center-Forsyth, Georgia

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mr. Wayne Abernathy  
Chief Danny Bowman  
Mr. Daniel M. Bryant  
Retired Sheriff Steve Cronic  
Mr. C. Murray Kight  
Sheriff Dane Kirby  
Commissioner Brian Owens  
Mr. Lester L. Rampy, Jr.  
Chief Mark Revenew  
Chief Craig Tully  
Mr. Ellison G. Wood

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Mr. Kacy Cronan  
Mr. Brian Rickman  
Sheriff Joey Terrell

**OTHERS:**

Mr. Joe Drolet, Senior Assistant Attorney General  
Ms. Cheryl L. Buie, Board Liaison  
Commissioner Mark W. McDonough, Department of Public Safety  
Lt. Colonel Russell D. Powell, Department of Public Safety  
Major Eddie Grier, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Captain Lewis Young, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Captain Tommy Waldrop, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Captain Johnny Jones, Department of Public Safety/MCCD  
Lt. James Steen, Department of Public Safety/MCCD  
Mr. Peter Adams, Department of Public Safety  
Mr. Joe Hood, Governor's Office of Planning and Budget  
Mr. Gordy Wright, Department of Public Safety  
Director Vernon M. Keenan, Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
Mr. Dan Kirk, Assistant Director, Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
Director Tim Bearden, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Mrs. Cindy Franklin, Comptroller, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Mr. Kenneth Mantle, Department of Corrections  
Sgt. Mike Earley, Fannin County SO  
Mrs. Rachel Kight  
Mrs. Maureen Bryant  
Mrs. Irene Pennington  
Mr. Frank Pennington  
Mrs. Donna Bowman

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Board of Public Safety meeting to order and asked all to remember the reason for this special season and noted everyone has a lot to be grateful for and thankful for the focus at Thanksgiving and thankful for the focus at Christmas.

Dr. Rick Lanford gave the invocation and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked those present to introduce their selves.

Commissioner McDonough stated there have been Chiefs of Police that have served with distinction on the BPS, but the one thing that could be said when Chief Pennington came on the BPS is that she took interest in all people that wore the uniform and the badge, not just the people the BPS oversees. Commissioner McDonough stated Chief Pennington was a person that looked at officer safety and what DPS did for PEER Support with specific interests and was very supportive of DPS's efforts and very supportive in how those things in today's environment could mean very specific and important things to all people that wore the uniform. Commissioner McDonough personally thanked Chief Pennington for her support and presented Chief Pennington with a Resolution from the BPS.

Chief Pennington commented the BPS is very valuable to the state of Georgia and stated when she first became aware of the BPS, she did not have a full picture of what the BPS does and accomplishes. Chief Pennington stated she believes the BPS is an important faction for the state government. Chief Pennington stated Vice-Chairman Wood is tremendous serving as the Vice-Chairman of the BPS as well as each of the members that are serving on the BPS and wished the members well. Chief Pennington stated serving on the BPS is the way to help the public servants. Chief Pennington thanked the BPS members for making her feel so welcome when she came on the BPS and felt like each of the members was part of a family and thanked the BPS for the Resolution.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the November 2013 minutes. Chief Mark Renew made the motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Chief Craig Tully and voted approved by the BPS members.

### **DIRECTOR REPORTS**

Commissioner Mark McDonough, Department of Public Safety began by introducing Capt. Tommy Waldrop, Troop B Commander for the northeast section of the state. Commissioner McDonough stated in September 2012, an initiative was started within the State Patrol to work 100% more accidents than was worked in the past and asked the Troop Commanders if they would start out with one post in their troop where they could achieve the 100% goal. Commissioner McDonough acknowledged that Capt. Waldrop is not the type of person that does one post at a time, as Capt. Waldrop took his whole troop and achieved the 100% goal. Commissioner McDonough noted the task that was set forth for Troop B has been taken on and no longer is Cartersville or Villa Rica king for accident investigations, now Athens with only 14 troopers will work upwards of 4500-5000 accidents this calendar year. Commissioner McDonough stated this is quite an accomplishment for Troop B and thanked Capt. Waldrop for his hard work. Retired Sheriff Cronin stated he had the honor of having Captain Waldrop as a Post Commander while serving as sheriff of Hall County and credits or blames

him for spoiling the deputies because not only was Capt. Waldrop always there when he was needed, but would show up and asked what was needed even when the Sheriff's office was not in need. Sheriff Cronin stated Captain Waldrop set a wonderful example and is very proud of the progress Capt. Waldrop has made and thanked Capt. Waldrop for his contributions to the state.

Commissioner McDonough advised all of the Fallen Trooper Road Memorial Dedications have been completed for this year finishing up with Lt. Joey Boatright. Commissioner McDonough noted that Lt. Boatright was not remembered as a line of duty death, he was a trooper that had a tremendous impact on the patrol and his dedication was held this past Monday.

Commissioner McDonough shared the DPS would have three pieces of legislation this next year; the annual MCCD bill which takes any changes in federal regulations and puts them in Georgia law. Commissioner McDonough added the second will be a PEER Support piece of legislation which is mirrored after a law from North Carolina that protects the language that occurs between a sworn officer and PEER Support and then will finish up with Resolutions for the remaining 13 line of duty deaths for road dedications next year.

Commissioner McDonough advised himself, Joe Hood and Peter Adams will meet with the Southwest Regional Commission in Camilla, GA tonight to discuss a joint project between the state and the Southwest Regional Commission to establish a joint law enforcement and EMS aviation unit to service trauma care needs for southwest Georgia. Commissioner McDonough noted when asking for a partnership to ask for prayer as this joint project is a big thing, a huge commitment for the agriculture community in this section of the state to bring access to trauma care. Commissioner McDonough asked the BPS for their support and their prayers.

Commissioner McDonough stated the sworn count for GSP is the highest it has been in nine years by one trooper. Commissioner McDonough stated the GSP is moving towards increasing their strength in the state when the next school graduates March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014, and starting Sunday, January 2, 2014, the 95<sup>th</sup> trooper school which has 97 cadets starting and hoping to graduate half of the 97. Commissioner McDonough thanked Director Bearden for his continued support.

Commissioner McDonough wished everyone Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Chief Mark Renew commented that he is sure Captain Waldrop does a great job with his troop and noted that Post 42 Rincon has helped Pooler PD tremendously, especially with the death of a Bryan County deputy who was killed by a drunk driver in Pooler's jurisdiction and could not have done it without Sergeant Nease's peoples' help and understands from the prosecutor, they have a very strong case. Chief Renew stated the assistance of the GSP is being felt statewide.

Mr. Lester Rampy stated as far as Captain Waldrop is concerned, it makes him proud as when Capt. Waldrop was in trooper school, Mr. Rampy was the Major for the GSP and did not have the dropout rate and if they had, does not think Captain Waldrop would have been in trooper school and told Commissioner McDonough he hopes the upcoming trooper school does a whole lot better.

Mr. Wayne Abernathy stated he had the opportunity to meet Training Director, Captain Scott Woodell and he appears to have it all on the ball about what makes a good trooper and feels sure they are getting good training.

Director Vernon M. Keenan, Georgia Bureau of Investigation stated he wanted to speak to the BPS about the Kendrick Johnson case, the 17 year old Valdosta High School senior who was found dead in a rolled up gym mat at the school. Director Keenan noted there has been a tremendous amount of publicity given to this case, public information that has come out pieced meal. Director Keenan stated he met yesterday with the governor's senior staff and gave them an update on the Johnson case. Director Keenan stressed it is not uncommon in the GBI for the type of work the GBI does, to have families that disagree with the investigative findings; families will disagree with the cause and manner of death found by the medical examiners. Director Keenan acknowledged what is unusual about this case is the high profile which it has received in the media and the aggressiveness of the family in attacking the findings of the Lowndes County Sheriff's Department and the GBI Medical Examiner's office. Director Keenan noted there have been many cases over the years, some that the GBI is still dealing with, and there is one case the GBI has been dealing with for ten years where the family disagreed with the medical examiner and in this case a young man died in a traffic accident, but had been in a fight with some younger men earlier that evening and the family is convinced he was beaten to death when in fact he died in a traffic accident the GSP worked and the GBI did the pathology. Director Keenan declared the families do not accept the findings, many times this is when it involves a suicide and the family does not want to accept the loved one committed suicide. Director Keenan stated some of the most problematic cases the GBI has start out being simple and what should be a simple suicide then becomes a complicated case because of the attention the case gets. Director Keenan stated the Kendrick Johnson case is not simple; a complex case and on January 10<sup>th</sup>, Kendrick Johnson went to the high school and did not return home. Director Keenan stated his family reported him missing and the next date, some students found his body in a rolled up gym mat that was standing vertical along the wall of the gym. Director Keenan declared when the call goes out that there is a death in a school, the GBI will respond even when the GBI is not requested and in this case the agents heard the radio traffic and went to the school. Director Keenan stated the Lowndes Sheriff's Dept. is quite capable of handling the investigation as Sheriff Jim Prine runs a good agency; has many resources, so he does not need the GBI to conduct the investigation although the GBI assisted at the death scene. Director Keenan stated the GBI's responsibility is to do the medical examiner work; the Sheriff's department did a detailed investigation at the scene notwithstanding the criticism they have received from the family about there being an inept death scene investigation which is not the case. Director Keenan advised Kendrick Johnson's body was sent to the GBI in Macon, where the GBI medical examiner, Dr. Gaffney-Kraft received the body and did the autopsy. As Director Keenan has reported to the BPS before, the medical examiners do not operate in a vacuum, they operate in a team and in this case Dr. Gaffney-Kraft was working under the supervision and in consultation with Dr. Kris Sperry, Chief Medical Examiner. Director Keenan advised Dr. Gaffney-Kraft did the autopsy, reviewed all of the investigative files, all the photographs, talked with the investigators, and asked for some additional work up of the evidence as there were some spots of blood found on a wall near the gym mat. Director Keenan stated Dr. Gaffney-Kraft wanted the blood analyzed for DNA which did not belong to Kendrick Johnson, and does not know who the blood belongs to as there are several

thousand students going through the gym. Director Keenan stated after consultation with Dr. Sperry, Dr. Gaffney-Kraft ruled the cause of death as positional asphyxia, which was reported to the family. Director Keenan stated the family disagreed and the family's position is that Kendrick Johnson was murdered. Director Keenan declared the Lowndes Co. Sheriff's Office has their files, has dealt with the family numerous times, and the GBI has talked to all the officials involved. Director Keenan advised the family got a court order and had the body exhumed which was sent to a private pathologist in Florida who is paid to do the autopsy; the autopsy is performed and the pathologist gave a report saying the victim died from blunt force trauma to the head. Director Keenan stated now there is a situation where you have dueling medical examiners and the GBI stands fully behind their medical examiner and in the case of positional asphyxia, Dr. Sperry is a national expert on this. Director Keenan added during the autopsy, it was determined that Kendrick Johnson's body did not have its internal organs; the body was stuffed with newspaper. Director Keenan advised the entire story that he is telling the BPS members is coming out pieced meal on different types of media reports and each time something comes out it is a big news story. Director Keenan declared the GBI does not have any idea why the victim was stuffed with newspapers; the funeral home in their interview are saying when they picked up the body, the GBI did not turn over the personal effects of the victim and the GBI knows this is not correct as the GBI has a signed receipt for the released property and the established policy for the GBI is that we do not maintain internal organs. Director Keenan shared that during an autopsy, the organs are removed from the body, examined by the pathologist and then the organs are placed in a plastic bag and the bag is placed in the cavity of the body. Director Keenan add the clothes are put in a bag which also go into the body bag and then released to the funeral home or the coroner, whoever is coming to retrieve the body. Director Kennan advised the GBI does not know what happened once the body left the GBI morgue, but does know the internal organs are in a plastic bag in the cavity of the body and the GBI did not stuff the body with newspapers. Director Keenan advised the GBI had no reason to keeps the organs; has no way to dispose of the organs and the GBI does not do this. Director Keenan stated this has become a major news story and the GBI does not have an explanation as to why the body was stuffed with newspapers; this is something between the funeral home and the family. Director Keenan advised yesterday there was a rally at the state capitol where the family and about 200 supporters were calling on the governor to order a coroner's inquest of the Johnson case and an investigation of the death which was also a major news story. Director Keenan stated he has had conversations with the governor's staff, the special agent in charge for the FBI, the US Attorney for the Middle District of Georgia, Sheriff Prine several times, DA David Miller, and everyone that has an interest or part in the investigation. Director Keenan stated the US Attorney, Michael Moore is doing a review of the case and has talked to himself and Sheriff Prine and explained because of the high profile of the case, his office will conduct a review. Director Keenan advised the family had already gone to the US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division in Washington asking for a civil rights investigation and were turned down as there is not a civil rights aspect with the case. Director Keenan reaffirmed the US Attorney is doing a review and the FBI is doing an assessment; they are talking to the Lowndes County Sheriff's Department investigators, will be talking to the GBI medical staff and will conduct some of their own interviews to determine if the federal government has an interest in what has happened. Director Keenan stated he welcomes the federal inquiry, welcomes the assessment where everyone in the world can look at this as the records are public and if there is work to be done, we will address that when we come to that. Director Keenan stated he feels confident

that Kendrick Johnson kept his gym clothes as did other students on top of the mats, up off the floor out of sight. Director Keenan stated apparently Kendrick Johnson's tennis shoe slipped down into the cavity of the mat rolled up hole and Johnson reached inside the mat, crawled inside the mat trying to retrieve the tennis shoe and got trapped. Director Keenan stated according to Dr. Sperry, when a person is upside down in a confined space like this, one will live about four minutes and then will die. Director Keenan stated there are u-tube videos that have been posted where some college students wanted to react this and took a rolled up gym mat and had one of their party crawl into the mat and stood the mat up vertically; timed it for one minute and when they took the mat down, the student was already in duress. Director Keenan stated day before yesterday the family was saying the victim's fingernails had been removed by the killer or the parties who dealt with body, but the autopsy report states the fingernails were intact, well-kept and clean. Director Keenan added if the fingernails had not been there, it was due to body decomposition, and not that something sinister had happened. Director Keenan stated the GBI has been very guarded in what has been said publicly about the case because it is not an argument or debate the GBI has had with the family; the family believes one thing, where the findings are different, although there will not be any acceptance of that. Director Keenan stated as he advised the governor's staff, the proper position for the state of Georgia and all the officials is the federal government, the US Attorney, the FBI are making an assessment and review of the findings of the case and see what they say and anything said before their work is completed would be very detrimental. Director Keenan stated he does not believe the case will go away; as CNN has a reporter assigned to the case and tracks every move. Director Keenan advised the GBI has been transparent with the case with everything that has been done; the records are available and the GBI stands fully behind it. Director Keenan declared the only interview that has been done by the GBI from the medical examiner's office was done by Dr. Kris Sperry, who is a national expert and his statement to the reporter was that he states his reputation behind the findings of the autopsy.

Director Tim Bearden, Georgia Public Safety Training Center welcomed the BPS to the GPSTC. Director Bearden asked the BPS members to thank his executive assistant, Mrs. Sharla Shockley for all of her hard work with the Governor's Public Safety Awards ceremony as she has worked hard and put in countless hours to make the ceremony successful.

Director Bearden gave an update in regards to on-line classes since January 1, 2013, and stated there have been over 101,000 classes taken on line for the 33 classes offered online. Director Bearden stated the GPSTC is looking at expanding the classes, expanding from 1-2 hour blocks to 4-8 hour blocks and maybe even more hours and is working with Macon State College for one block of instruction to make sure their server can do that in the near future. Director Bearden stated from GPSTC's standpoint and working with GSP and GBI, on Due Regard Training there have been 500 agencies to take the class, have had 439 agencies take the Elderly Abuse Training, and 187 agencies involved in Active Shooter Training. Director Bearden stated working together, they are reaching all the law enforcement agencies across the state to make sure they get the best training they can have on these very high profile subjects.

Director Bearden advised Atlanta Gas Light sent 85 of their employees through the on-line Due Regard Training at \$15.00 each which totaled \$1275.00 for the GPSTC.

Director Bearden shared the GPSTC met with the Air Force in Warner Robbins on November 22, 2013, who has a lot of security forces that need a lot of training; brought them to the GPSTC, gave them a tour, spoke to them about the GPSTC curriculum and will be working together to meet some of their training needs at the GPSTC. Director Bearden noted they are our neighbors and they have an important job defending us nationally and we want to help in any way we can.

In regards to the Air Force at Warner Robbins, Vice-Chairman Wood asked Director Bearden would this training involve the security staff at Warner Robbins and Director Bearden responded it would involve their military police. Director Bearden added the Air Force is looking for training involving vehicle pullovers and criminal investigations.

Chief Revenew asked Director Bearden if there are any plans to expand the number of courses on line and Director Bearden responded yes they are. Director Bearden stated Macon State College is important in this aspect as they have the server involved to put the longer classes on line and may be able to put a lot of the basic training classes for those that want to become a police officer, take some of the basic classes on line then come to the GPSTC for a shorter version of the class and get their certification out of the way. Director Bearden added Macon State College is working with SACs to make this part of their diploma program so we can offer college credits through Macon State College, so that when an officer graduates from a police academy or fire academy the college hours continue on, working on their secondary degree.

Vice-Chairman Wood thanked Director Bearden and Mrs. Sharla Shockley for hosting the BPS meeting today and for the lunch.

Mr. Wayne Abernathy stated the outside of the GPSTC was looking very nice.

Director Bearden added the kitchen remodel has almost been completed, waiting for the equipment to come in within the next couple of weeks. Director Bearden advised construction on the outside live fire shoot house should begin next week and be completed by the middle of January; the carpet was picked out yesterday to replace the tile out front which will give a whole new look and quieter sound. Director Bearden thanked his people in fiscal planning who have done a great job making sure the projects are getting done.

Vice-Chairman Wood thanked Commissioner Owens and his department for the maintenance and cleanup at GPSTC.

### **DONATIONS**

Lieutenant Colonel Russell Powell, Department of Public Safety requested approval of the following donations:

Three LWRC M6 Patrol Rifles	\$	5,850.66	Braselton Police Department
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Two MPH Ranger Radars	\$	2,300.00	Douglasville Police Department
One TASER X-26	\$	836.00	Jonesboro Police Department
One SMS 4000 Mobile Communication System to include Heavy Duty ¾ ton Pick-up Truck	\$	267,000.00	Bibb County Sheriff's Office
One TASER X-26	\$	200.00	Broxton Police Department
One TASER X-26P	\$	1,119.89	Monroe County Sheriff's Office

The motion to accept these donations was made by Mr. Danny Bryant, which was seconded by Chief Craig Tully, and voted approved by the Board members.

Mr. Dan Kirk, Assistant Director, Georgia Bureau of Investigation requested approval of the following donation:

One Dell Laptop Computer	\$	600.00	Pickens County Sheriff's Office
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The motion to accept this donation was made by Mr. Lester Rampy, Jr., which was seconded by Mr. Danny Bryant, and voted approved by the Board members.

Mrs. Cindy Franklin, Comptroller, Georgia Public Safety Training Center requested approval of the following donation:

1045 gals of AR-AFFF Foam	\$	26,469.85	Sentry Fire Protection
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The motion to accept this donation was made by Chief Craig Tully, which was seconded by Chief Mark Revenew, and voted approved by the Board members.

Vice-Chairman Wood reminded the BPS members to thank Director Tim Bearden and Mrs. Sharla Shockley for what they have done for this day.

Vice-Chairman Wood reminded the BPS members of the Governor's Public Safety Awards ceremony this afternoon at 4:00 p.m.

Commissioner Brian Owens advised the Department of Corrections Board would be meeting on January 9<sup>th</sup> in the Atlanta DOC Board room so BPS would have to select another venue or time for their meeting. Vice-Chairman Wood advised he would follow up with further information on the location and time for the BPS meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Brian M. Rickman  
Secretary