

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY

February 13, 2025
Virtual and Call-In Meeting

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Willie Bolton
Mr. Roy H. Fickling
Mr. Richard Hyde
Sheriff E. Neal Jump
Sheriff Jimmy McDuffie
Chief Leonard “Dee” Meadows
Commissioner Michael Nail
Mr. Billy New
Mr. Charles D. Sikes
Ms. Susan K. Treadaway
Chief Craig Tully
Mr. Ellison G. Wood

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. Stacey Cotton
Chief Janet L. Moon
Commissioner Tyrone Oliver

OTHERS:

Ms. Deborah Gore, Attorney General’s Office
Mrs. Jennifer Pendarvis, Board Liaison
Commissioner Billy Hitchens, Department of Public Safety
Lt. Colonel Kendrick Lowe, Department of Public Safety
Lt. Colonel Josh Lamb, Department of Public Safety
Major Doug Wilson, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major David Bryant, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Captain Chris Rodewolt, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Captain Mark Riley, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Captain Jonathan Huff, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
Lieutenant Richard Sikes, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lieutenant Chad Gray, Department of Public Safety/GSP
SFC Billy Schwab, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Sgt. Brody Head, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Assistant Director Scott Dutton, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Deputy Director Cleveland Miles, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Deputy Director Rhonda Westbrook, Georgia Bureau of Investigation/GCIC
SAC Lindsay Smith, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
ASAC Danielle O’Conner, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Deputy Director Cheryl Greathouse, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Mrs. Lorri Smith, Department of Public Safety
Ms. Clare McGuire, Department of Public Safety
Mrs. Kelly Ward, Department of Public Safety
Ms. Connie Buck, Georgia Bureau of Investigation

Ms. Cindy Jones, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Angela Batey, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Madison Dysart, Georgia Department of Agriculture

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the February 13, 2025 Board of Public Safety meeting to order.

Lieutenant Richard Sikes gave the Invocation and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice-Chairman Wood introduced new Board member, Sheriff Neal Jump, and administered the Oath of Office.

Sheriff Jump addressed the Board, stating it is an honor to be part of a great group of members, adding he has always admired the Board and always wanted to be on it and God has put it in the next plan of his life. Sheriff Jump stated he is a born and bred “blue shirt” and always believed in the State Patrol and all the other agencies that represent us in public safety.

Vice-Chairman Wood introduced other guests in the room, Lieutenant Chad Gray, Lieutenant Richard Sikes, and Captain Chris Rodewolt.

Mr. Charles Sikes introduced his guests, SAC Lindsay Smith and ASAC Danielle O’Conner, from the Statesboro GBI office.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the December 12, 2024 BPS minutes. Chief Craig Tully made the motion to approve the December 12, 2024 minutes. This was seconded by Chief Dee Meadows and voted approved by the Board members.

DIRECTOR REPORTS

Commissioner Billy Hitchens, Georgia Department of Public Safety, welcomed Sheriff Jump to the Board. Commissioner Hitchens announced Lt. Col. Joshua Lamb has been appointed the Director of GEMA/Homeland Security, stating he is excited for new opportunities to work with him, but in the Department of Public Safety it will be a loss, noting Lt. Col. Lamb has been with DPS for 27 years and he bleeds blue and gray.

Commissioner Hitchens asked if Lt. Col. Lamb would like to say anything. Lt. Col. Lamb stated he bleeds blue and gray, and it is all he has ever known and it is bittersweet, but he is excited for the opportunity and is honored the Governor saw something in him to afford him the opportunity. Lt. Col. Lamb welcomed Sheriff Jump stating Sheriff Jump trained him as a new Corporal in Hinesville and Sheriff Jump showed him the ropes on how to be an effective NCO. Lt. Col. Lamb added it doesn’t seem like too long ago he showed up at Mr. Charles Sikes’ GBI office as an Intern and it never ceases to amaze him just how small the world is that we live in and how important the relationships are that we build every day.

Commissioner Hitchens reported the 118th Trooper School has 23 Cadets in its 29th week and is currently in field training, with graduation scheduled for March 14th. Commissioner Hitchens stated the 119th Trooper School has completed driving and is currently in the first week of firearms with 34 Cadets. Graduation will be on September 5, 2025. Commissioner Hitchens advised the 13th Motor Carrier School is in its 4th week and currently has 11 Cadets and is scheduled to graduate July 11th. Commissioner Hitchens added there are 4 Capitol Police Cadets in school, so we are adding to our sworn numbers.

Commissioner Hitchens stated January has been a busy month for DPS, noting the month of January wrapped up the New Year's holiday period with 5 fatalities across the state. Commissioner Hitchens stated this low number is due to personnel being out there enforcing the law and being visible. Commissioner Hitchens shared some of the activity included 19,000 vehicles stopped; approximately 9,000 citations issued; 14,000 warnings; 388 crashes investigated; and 270 impaired drivers taken off the roadway.

Commissioner Hitchens reported on the snowstorm that impacted the state, advising the Motor Carrier Compliance Division was utilized to assist DOT in brining the roads, allowing GSP to focus on crashes and traffic issues. Commissioner Hitchens stated this worked very well, and he received some very positive comments from DOT Commissioner Russell McMurphy about the assistance MCCD provided. Commissioner Hitchens advised this is probably a model that will continue to be utilized.

In response to the tragic events in New Orleans prior to the Sugar Bowl, Commissioner Hitchens reported DPS has significantly increased presence around Mercedes Benz stadium in the Metro Atlanta area. Commissioner Hitchens shared the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl on January 1st was a collaboration with GBI, Atlanta Police Department, Fulton County Sheriff's Office, Georgia World Congress Center, federal partners, and MARTA. Through the collaboration of everybody, there were no incidents.

Commissioner Hitchens reported there has been an increase in visitors and protestors at the Capitol due to the start of the legislative session. Commissioner Hitchens stated extra screening entrances had to be opened to move people faster through security.

Reporting on stats, Commissioner Hitchens shared Aviation had 74 flights conducted in January, 25 were searches and in 11 of them, the person was found; the K-9 unit still has 53 dogs. Commissioner Hitchens added the K-9 injured from a shooting during a pursuit is recovering well and is expected to return to duty. Commissioner Hitchens stated the K-9 unit has had 207 deployments during the month of January; CIU has had 7 criminal apprehensions and 3 stolen vehicles recovered, valued at \$24,000; SWAT has had 18 calls for service so far this year and the Dive team has had 1. Commissioner Hitchens noted at the end of January, SWAT had apprehended 5 murder suspects year-to-date; and there was a shooting with the SWAT team from a callout in Calhoun; and crime suppression details continue in the metro Atlanta area.

Regarding fleet, Commissioner Hitchens shared almost 104 recalls have been completed on Dodge Durango's so they can stay in service; DPS is working to purchase 88 2023 Dodge Chargers that are brand new which will help fill the gap between our current inventory and the next generation of Chargers, adding they hope to be able to order them at the end of this calendar year, and this will be the new Dodge Charger with the 6 cylinder engine; and 5 Ford Explorers are being purchased to test and see how they will do as a patrol unit.

Commissioner Hitchens stated one of the things DPS always tries to do is increase the morale of personnel, and one way is to make sure they have what they need to do their job. Commissioner Hitchens shared they are testing a new stretch uniform that will allow them to be more flexible in their job and so far, there has been nothing but positive remarks on the stretch uniform and hopefully in the future we will move towards that and be more comfortable in uniform. Commissioner Hitchens added one of the things he wants to stress to everyone is the one thing we are not willing to do is change the appearance no matter how comfortable it is, and we will keep that tradition going. Commissioner Hitchens also noted there has been an issue of getting the straw to make the "big hats" as there is a shipment delay of 6-9 months, so we have to take care of them.

Concerning communications, Commissioner Hitchens stated about 95% of agencies who want to be on our radio system and communicate with us have done so and the remaining patches will be connected as soon as we work through the setup. Commissioner Hitchens reported the statewide radio system is working extremely well.

Regarding facilities, Commissioner Hitchens reported the Headquarters Hangar project is scheduled to be completed in early March; Post 8, Madison's renovation is almost complete; Post 21, Sylvania's land has been transferred and approved by the State Properties Commission; Post 32, Oconee should start site work soon; Post 40 in Worth County should be completed around April 2025; and the Mansion Post is almost complete.

Mr. Charles Sikes asked if DPS provided personnel for President Carter's funeral and the Presidential Inauguration. Commissioner Hitchens responded a large number of DPS personnel assisted from Day 1 to Day 9 with the funeral and everything went well, and it was a great sendoff for a deserving President Carter. Commissioner Hitchens remarked DPS personnel performed extremely well, noting Captain Waller and Lieutenant Ensley did a tremendous job. Commissioner Hitchens also reported Lt. Col. Lamb took a group of 45 Troopers to Washington D.C. for the Presidential Inauguration, and they represented us tremendously well and did a great job.

Regarding manpower, Mr. Charles Sikes if there have been any "stop hiring" directives to which Commissioner Hitchens said no, and they are planning future Trooper Schools.

Mr. Willie Bolton asked what percentage of candidates is lost during the academy, to which Commissioner Hitchens stated the current class started with 60 and it is now at 34. Commissioner Hitchens noted most of those are people who walk out the door by deciding it is not for them or it is too tough, not people who fail.

Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, welcomed Sheriff Neal Jump to the Board, stating he has always been a good friend and partner in Glynn County, and congratulated Lt. Col. Lamb on his appointment, adding he has been a great friend and partner, and he looks forward to working with him in his new position.

Regarding activity within the Investigative Division, Director Hosey reported the investigation in Douglas with the funeral home, as of January 24th, the Crime Lab and Medical Examiner's office have identified all the remains of the 18 bodies recovered, noting this is some closure for the families. Director Hosey added that individual has been charged with multiple counts of abuse of a dead body. Director Hosey reported the Region 4 office also worked an investigation where they charged an individual with insurance fraud, noting this stemmed from an individual fraudulently obtaining additional life insurance proceeds by altering a cause of death on death certificates, and this investigation was worked in conjunction with the Office of Insurance.

Director Hosey shared the Child Exploitation Unit continues to do great work, reporting they completed an operation in January as part of an ongoing investigation to identify those that are involved in the trade of child sex abuse material, and they made an arrest of an individual in Dade County and charged them with sexual exploitation of children.

Director Hosey reported as of January 31st there have been 8 officer involved shootings, adding this was an 18% decrease from last year.

Regarding vacant Crime Lab Scientist positions, Director Hosey stated they are at 19 vacancies, and 22 Chemists are currently in training and will be complete with their training about June. Director Hosey explained of the 19 open Scientists positions, they are all in some stage of the hiring process. Director Hosey shared for Fiscal Year 2022 through Fiscal Year 2024, there was a 56% decrease in turnover in lab personnel. Director Hosey explained this can be attributed to the Legislature and Governor giving pay increases. Director Hosey also noted there was a 35% reduction of turnover in the Investigative Division.

Director Hosey reported cases being worked by the Investigative Division continues to be largely Crimes Against Person and Other Crimes.

Director Hosey advised interviews were held in Forsyth with a little over 80 candidates for the Agent position, and of that, around 39 passed the interview process. Director Hosey explained those 39 will be interviewed by the Command Staff and then based on testing, a hiring pool will be created to fill vacant positions.

Reporting on Crime Lab statistics, Director Hosey shared for the third month in a row, October through December, the Crime Lab is completing and getting out more reports than submissions coming in. Director Hosey stated there is still a backlog in Chemistry that will be addressed with new thoughts and new ideas.

Director Hosey reported the ME's office autopsies for December were up to 354 for the month, which is about 329 autopsies being conducted by a Medical Examiner per year. Director Hosey advised this is down from calendar year 2023 when it was at 418. Director Hosey noted the recommended average is still 250. Director Hosey stated they are currently at 15 doctors and have 4 vacant positions in the ME's office right now and the hope is by the end of the calendar year there will be 2 added, maybe 3 to bring the total to 17 doctors.

For GCIC, Director Hosey advised there was over 59 million CJIS transactions processed for the month of December.

Concerning projects, the Region 1, Calhoun Field Office is scheduled for completion in February.

Mr. Charles Sikes asked what an Off-Line Search Request consists of, to which Ms. Rhonda Westbrook, GCIC, replied when a method or request is received from local agencies conducting an investigation and the serial number is provided, GCIC is able to go into the system and look for inquiries conducted on the message switch. Ms. Westbrook explained they are utilizing the law enforcement method switch and also utilizing GCIC in those parameters in order to search and find out who conducted the inquiry and who possibly received the "hit" on that information.

Mr. Willie Bolton asked for an update on cold cases, to which Director Hosey stated since the unit and website to enter cold case requests began in June 2023, there are 38 cold cases being reviewed or reinvestigated at this time. There have been 15 requests from designated family members and 23 initiated from GBI. They have opened 12 cold cases of unidentified remains.

Mr. Roy Fickling asked where the new Medical Examiners are coming from, to which Director Hosey stated they have recruited the most from the fellowship program and others have come from a variety of other places.

Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, welcomed Sheriff Jump to the Board and congratulated Lt. Col. Lamb on his appointment.

Director Wigginton reported they are near the end of Week 5 of the Basic Mandate expansion, adding they have restructured the whole delivery of the course and the feedback being received is very positive. Director Wigginton noted they are finding some challenges along the way, but they are being assessed as they go.

Regarding the Fire Academy, Director Wigginton advised the field delivery has hit 174 different agencies and over 3,000 students have been impacted. Director Wigginton noted the biggest on-campus requests being received are the trench rescue program and the pressurized container program.

Concerning the Police Academy, Director Wigginton shared the Training Center has partnered with the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council next week to host a Gang Investigators Conference for District

Attorneys, Assistant District Attorneys, and Gang Investigators from all over the state with speakers from all over the country.

Director Wigginton reported on construction projects, advising the expansion to the driving training high speed course has been completed, the water renovation project at the main campus has started, and several other projects are ongoing as the Training Center continues to grow and meet demands.

DONATIONS

Ms. Lorri Smith, Georgia Department of Public Safety, requested approval of the following donations:

One (1) DataWorks Plus Rapid ID Digital Fingerprint Scanner	\$2,944.00	Alma Police Department
Three (3) Stalker LIDAR RLR Units	\$7,647.00	Treutlen County Sheriff's Office
Two (2) Evolution 2 Mobile Rapid ID FBI FAP-30 Fingerprint Scanners	\$5,888.00	City of Dahlonega

The motion to accept these items was made by Mr. Roy Fickling, which was seconded by Mr. Willie Bolton and voted approved by the Board members.

Ms. Cindy Jones, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, requested approval of the following donations:

Six (6) Crown Victoria Police Sedans	\$3,000.00	Carrollton Police Department
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The motion to accept these items was made by Chief Craig Tully, which was seconded by Chief Dee Meadows and voted approved by the Board members.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Director Wigginton presented the names for the Georgia Public Safety Line of Duty Deaths Memorial for approval by the Board of Public Safety.

The motion to accept the names was made by Mr. Charles Sikes, which was seconded by Mr. Willie Bolton and voted approved by the Board members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Craig Tully
Secretary