

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY

April 13, 2023

Georgia Southern University

Statesboro, Georgia

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Willie C. Bolton
Chief Stacey Cotton
Mr. Roy H. Fickling
Mr. Richard Hyde
Chief Janet L. Moon
Commissioner Tyrone Oliver
Mr. Charles D. Sikes
Sheriff Joey Terrell
Mr. Ellison G. Wood

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Sheriff Dane Kirby
Chief Leonard "Dee" Meadows
Commissioner Michael Nail
Mr. Billy New
Mr. Samir J. Patel
Chief Craig Tully

OTHERS:

Ms. Tina Piper, Attorney General's Office
Mrs. Jennifer Pendarvis, Board Liaison
Commissioner Christopher C. Wright, Department of Public Safety
Lt. Colonel Billy Hitchens, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lt. Colonel Josh Lamb, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Kendrick Lowe, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Robert Balkcom, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Steve Harrison, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Thornell L. King, Department of Public Safety/Capitol Police
Major Andrew Montgomery, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
Captain Clay Kicklighter, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Captain Chris Rodewolt, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Captain Marcus DeLoach, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
Lieutenant Michael Burns, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lieutenant Brad Mosher, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lieutenant Chris Nease, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lieutenant Chad Gray, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lieutenant Chris Black, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lieutenant Phillip Blackburn, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
SFC Jeremy Maybin, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
TFC Brent Hammond, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Cadet Brandon Cutler, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Director Michael Register, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Asst. Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
SAC Lindsay Smith, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Deputy Director Cheryl Greathouse, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Mr. Ara Baronian, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Mr. Bruce Stanford, Georgia Public Safety Training Center

Mr. Hal Braswell, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Mr. Bert Flewellen, Georgia Department of Community Supervision
Ms. Joan Boyd, Georgia Department of Public Safety
Ms. Cindy Jones, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Kathleen Jacobs, Attorney General's Office
Sheriff Mac Edwards, Evans County Sheriff's Office
Chief Deputy Chris Moser, Evans County Sheriff's Office
Mr. John Edwards, Peace Officers Association of Georgia

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the April 13, 2023 Board of Public Safety meeting to order.

Captain Clay Kicklighter gave the Invocation and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the March 9, 2023 BPS minutes. Mr. Willie Bolton made the motion to approve the March 9, 2023 minutes. This was seconded by Sheriff Joey Terrell and voted approved by the Board members.

DIRECTOR REPORTS

Commissioner Wright, Georgia Department of Public Safety, reminded the Board this week is National Telecommunicators Week and publicly recognized all the communications personnel across the state, indicating they are very much invaluable to the Department by keeping sworn members safe and keeping them up to date with information, adding 911 operators across the state are so valuable and are the lifeline for all sworn members.

Commissioner Wright reported the DPS Awards Ceremony was successful, noting several Board members, two former Commissioners, the Speaker of the House, and Attorney General Chris Carr were in attendance.

Commissioner Wright reported the 114th Trooper School is in week 13 with 38 Cadets remaining, and the 9th Motor Carrier School graduated on March 31st with 13 new Motor Carrier Officers. Commissioner Wright added the 10th Motor Carrier School starts this Sunday with 12 Cadets.

Commissioner Wright shared on Friday, March 17th, DPS assisted Savannah Police Department with the St. Patrick's Parade by providing security and Motor Carrier providing a NRAD unit; also, the DPS Honor Guard, Motor Unit, and a couple of patrol vehicles were present to showcase the Department.

On Friday, March 31st, DPS conducted a 22-hour state-wide concentrated patrol that was an effort from one end of the state to the other in conjunction with spring break, a heavy travel day. Commissioner Wright shared some of the activity from this date alone, reporting Troopers/Officers generated over 10,500 vehicle stops, issuing almost 6,000 citations, and making 167 DUI arrests, issuing 428 citations for distracted driving, and issuing 8,500 warnings. Commissioner Wright shared on that same weekend, there were crime suppression details in the city of Atlanta and the city of Savannah and some of the activity in Atlanta included 732 vehicle stops, 22 vehicle pursuits, 489

citations issued, including 18 for DUI, 11 for stunt racing, and the apprehension of 12 wanted people. In Savannah, Commissioner Wright shared there were 196 traffic stops, 7 pursuits, and 166 citations issued, including 26 DUI arrests, and the apprehension of 5 wanted fugitives. Commissioner Wright noted he is thankful for all the efforts members put on the road every day.

Commissioner Wright also shared they are looking to assist the cities of Albany, Thomasville, and Columbus over the next few months with crime suppression efforts, adding those respective Police Chiefs have reached out to DPS asking for help with some areas they have been having issues with.

Commissioner Wright advised the 2023 legislative session ended on March 29th and there were several crucial impacts that affected DPS. Commissioner Wright summarized them, indicating the Department's only two items on the amended FY23 budget were \$515,000 to procure and train 10 additional k-9s in the state and \$30.3 million for a new statewide radio system, noting this radio system will be a game changer for communications.

For FY24, Commissioner Wright added they are very thankful for the cost-of-living raise, \$2,000 for all civilian employees across the state, and \$4,000 and \$6,000 salary increases for state law enforcement officers, adding that amount varies upon the officer's assigned division. Commissioner Wright noted these increases will bring the starting salary for Cadets in Trooper School to \$58,350. Additionally, Commissioner Wright stated DPS was given \$2 million for FY24 to continue upgrades for the new radio system; \$1.3 million for new vehicles and equipment; \$13.5 million for new helicopters. Commissioner Wright noted there is a team out in Texas and California starting to look at what is on the market for helicopters with hopes to be able to make those purchases in July. Commissioner Wright advised they are looking at purchasing a 412 helicopter and adding a couple of 407s to the fleet, sharing they are trying to diversify the Aviation unit since the SWAT team is being utilized more and more across the state and the 412 can hold up to 15 passengers. Commissioner Wright also noted adding a 412 to the fleet will also give pilots the opportunity to lift people out of the mountains, as there has been an increase of people who are injured in the mountains and the only aircraft currently able to do that is the 429 and when it is down for maintenance, there is no one else in the state that can do those jobs.

Commissioner Wright continued by indicating \$1.2 million was given for the new Buckhead patrol post, adding the Department has been communicating with the Governor's office to find a location, and no decisions have been made yet. Commissioner Wright advised DPS has been given \$1.8 million for a new patrol post in Oconee County, which will be located on the same site that has been designated for a DDS facility; given \$235,000 for furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FF&E) for the new Post 35; \$115,000 for FF&E for Post 40, Sylvester; and some money for communications towers and also money for major maintenance and repairs for statewide facilities.

Commissioner Wright shared one of the big things DPS is excited about is HB 824 which was dropped to help make changes to the state law enforcement officers retirement plan, adding this is something they have been trying to get done for quite some time and it will be an actuarial study that will be conducted over the summer and prior to the 2024 legislative session they will have a better idea of

what the impact will look like. Commissioner Wright advised one of the things DPS has been constantly talking about is retirement and how it will help retain people in state law enforcement, and it is probably the key thing that has been hurting the most, explaining the current retirement system, a 401(k) system, is portable so employees can take it with them to the private sector, federal government, etc., indicating that is something that has hindered us and we are excited that we have legislators and the Speaker of the House very interested in helping with retirement this year. Commissioner Wright noted Speaker Burns created a study committee on state law enforcement officers' salaries and retirement to assist with recruiting and retaining officers and he has assigned Representative Hitchens to chair that committee and it will be specific to state law enforcement and he is hopeful there will be some positive impacts.

Regarding construction projects, Commissioner Wright reported the new Headquarters project is almost complete, noting material completion is scheduled for April 27th and the furniture installation is about 60% complete. Commissioner Wright noted there are still a lot of punch list items being worked on and the tentative timeframe for employees to begin moving into the facility is the first week of June. Commissioner Wright shared groundbreaking has taken place for Post 35, Jekyll Island and tentatively that facility will be ready the second quarter of 2024; the new Post in Sylvester has the site work completed and pouring of the footers is being done, which has been delayed by inclement weather; Post 18, Reidsville will be awarded soon. Commissioner Wright stated it looks like there will be money left over from the Headquarters project and DPS is working toward putting a hanger on site at Headquarters, indicating it will be very beneficial to construct a hanger there. Commissioner Wright explained Aviation currently operates out of Kennesaw and the lease will be up in 2024. Commissioner Wright stated it will be more cost effective to move and have a hanger at Headquarters, which will be secure with a fuel source.

Mr. Willie Bolton asked if the new Post in Oconee County will be a relocation or an addition, to which Commissioner Wright advised it will be a relocation, moving the Athens Post to Oconee County.

Chief Stacey Cotton asked where we stack up nationally in regard to our aviation fleet, to which Commissioner Wright stated our surrounding states are making the same purchases, indicating everyone has seen a need to increase their aviation units, adding South Carolina and Tennessee have purchased new helicopters.

Commissioner Wright introduced Trooper First Class Brent Hammond, who was requested to address the Board Members about a recent traffic stop that resulted in a large amount of drugs being seized. TFC Hammond is a Trooper at Post 45, Statesboro.

TFC Hammond reported to the Board on the day of the drug seizure, April 2nd, he was on I-16 patrolling for equipment and traffic violations when he noticed a particular eastbound vehicle with illegal window tint and conducted a traffic stop. TFC Hammond advised during the stop, 15.4 kilos of methamphetamine, which is roughly 34 pounds, and 8.6 kilos of cocaine, which is roughly 20 pounds, was discovered in the vehicle.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked what the estimated street value of the stop would be, to which TFC Hammond responded the Drug Task Force indicated it was roughly \$447,000.

Mr. Charles Sikes asked if there was any cash, to which TFC Hammond advised there was no cash, just a little bit the driver had on her, but nothing substantial.

Director Mike Register, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, provided an update from Region 10 and the APD Training Center, indicating the Agency is moving forward with the RICO charges, working with the AG's office. Director Register reported Dekalb County wanted to drop the charges on the attorney from the Southern Poverty Law Center who was arrested from this incident, and the Attorney General said no. Director Register stated the Bureau continues to work closely with the city of Atlanta and they continue to find items that would do harm to the public, like syringes that has a mixture of urine and fentanyl in them, and noting every time the Agency goes to the area, they find something else from boobytraps to ballistic vests.

Director Register advised these subjects have a communications campaign that contains some misinformation, and they are trying to capture law enforcement's personal information and put it on their campaign site. Director Register shared the website posted the lead agent's name and a similar address to his personal residence; however, the address that was listed is not a valid numerical address for that specific street.

Director Register reported Region 1 and the Bartow County Sheriff's Office arrested a Cartersville man in connection to a 15-year-old murder investigation. Director Register explained the murder occurred in 2008 and the GBI has been working the case; and recently one of the Agents received some information and went to talk to an individual that was known to have had contact with the deceased person and during the conversation was able to get a confession from this person.

Director Register reported Region 12 in Dublin investigated a home invasion and arrested several individuals aged 15-21 years of age who are gang members that participated in the home invasion that led to the victim's death. Director Register advised this is an indication that gangs continue to be very violent throughout the state.

Director Register advised Region 3 arrested an Americus Police Officer and charged him with one count of Criminal Damage to Property 2nd Degree, one count of Making False Statements, and one count of Violation of Oath of Office after damaging a complainant's vehicle for reporting him for reckless driving.

Director Register noted at the time of the Board Report, there had been a total of 25 Officer Involved Shootings (OIS), but since March 31st, there have been 4 more.

Director Register reported Region 3 was requested by Americus PD and the US Treasury Inspector General to assist in an investigation of a criminal street gang. Director Register explained the investigation involved the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and agents worked with federal partners

and were able to charge 15 defendants with RICO. Directed Register noted the PPP loan fraud they were orchestrating had gained about \$300,000 to date.

Director Register reported Region 9 was requested by the Lowndes County Sheriff to investigate the Lowndes County School Superintendent, which is a current investigation on an allegation of getting county funded gas and putting it in his personal vehicle. Also in Region 9, Director Register shared on April 7th, agents investigated an OIS in Seminole County where a subject was being transported to jail for DUI when an altercation occurred, leading to the shooting.

Director Register updated the Board on the OIS involving the Trooper on January 18th, stating agents met with the DeKalb County Medical Examiner's office last week and received the finalized autopsy report on the shooter. Director Register stated the Medical Examiner from DeKalb County met with the deceased's family and the report is being released. Director Register noted if you remember the first autopsy that was conducted was by a private medical examiner the shooter's parents had obtained, and it showed there were 14 bullet wounds. Director Register shared this report from the DeKalb County Medical Examiner's office shows there were around 27 and when you look at the amount of people that fired shots, with an average round count of 5, that in no way indicated the officers out there just started pulling the trigger; Director Register stated it shows there was disciplined return fire.

Director Register advised on April 17th, Region 10 was requested by South Fulton to investigate an OIS that involved a 17-year-old who pulled a gun on officers, and they fired back. Director Register explained Atlanta PD responded to an accident and as the officers arrived and made contact with the driver, the officer was met with violent resistance and the officer shot the individual.

Director Register reported Region 11 was requested by the Madison County Sheriff in reference to material being given to the company that was awarded a contract to dismantle a bridge, noting this is an active investigation involving an elected official.

Concerning the Legal Division, Director Register stated implementation began on their first case management system which will ensure more efficient case management.

Director Register reported Medical Examiners completed mock trials for GBI scientists to testify.

Director Register advised the Bureau continues to work with the AG's office at their Anti-Gang Networking Meetings across the state.

Director Register shared the Legal Division is working to develop a "Cyber" subject matter expert in their division for assistance in Cyber/Technology related cases.

Regarding the Division of Forensic Science, Director Register reported they are working with the Crime Lab and Medical Examiner's Office for upgrade of the case management system. Director Register announced they did bring aboard Dr. Anthony Clark and there are three more MEs slated for employment. Mr. Charles Sikes asked if this would bring them back to full staff, to which Director

Register stated no, there are 19 authorized positions and with the four being hired, that will give 12 and 7 are still needed, but this will certainly help. Director Register further explained they are working with Mercer University Medical School to create a forensic pathology track in their medical school and that will impact the state in coming years, as well as help with the Medical Examiner's shortages across the United States.

Director Register reported the Basic Agent Academy for 11 new hires started March 26th with 9 Department of Corrections (DOC) personnel attending.

Director Register shared Special Agent Jason Nipper graduated from Polygraph Examiner Training; Special Agent/Crime Scene Specialist Seth Allen graduated from the 60th Session of the National Forensic Academy at the University of Tennessee; and Inspector Mitchell Posey graduated from the FBI National Academy on March 16th.

Director Registered advised the Bureau continues to team up with local partners on some outreach programs by getting out and connecting with the community.

Director Register reported on promotions during March and April, announcing Stacey Cheeks was promoted to Assistant Special Agent in Charge in Region 10; Justin Lowthorpe to Assistant Special Agent in Charge in Region 13; and Chris Hosey was promoted to Assistant Director, assuming the second-in-command position, replacing John Melvin.

Regarding facilities updates, Director Register shared the new Region 1 Field Office continues to move forward; the Headquarters Medical Examiner addition had a design services contract kickoff meeting on March 24th; the Region 10 Field Office is proceeding with the site analysis for a new office and also a fence around the current office that will integrate with the new building; the facility hardening projects are proceeding with headquarters and regional offices access controls and security protocols in place.

Concerning the legislative session, Director Register reiterated the pay raises for law enforcement Commissioner Wright had shared; the bill for loan forgiveness for Medical Examiners up to \$120,000 was passed, indicating the average loan debt for a ME is anywhere from \$180,000 to \$400,000; the legislative body awarded the Agency \$5.49 million for a Cold Case Unit which will consist of 19 personnel; \$170,000 for outsourcing training for scientists; and \$1.79 million for additional personnel.

Director Register shared Open Records requests continue to climb and they are at almost 4,000 for this fiscal year. Director Register also noted Crimes Against Persons make up about 40% of investigative hours; the Medical Examiners' backlog is around 38 and 3,678 exams have been conducted this year, and the CODIS coordinated DNA index continues to get hits, and 97 hits were received in February.

Director Register advised the report turnaround for February 2023 is low due to manpower shortages and equipment issues; and regarding the crime lab reports, there were 10,451 requests processed in the month of February.

Mr. Roy Fickling asked if there are any objective criteria for GBI to get involved in a local investigation, to which Director Register responded there are some state-mandated criteria, but we look at priority and solvability factors and we try to put the power back in the Region SACs hands.

Deputy Director Cheryl Greathouse, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, announced the Georgia Public Safety Memorial Ceremony at GPSTC will be held on May 5th at 10:00AM, honoring 24 fallen officers.

Deputy Director Greathouse updated the Board on some ongoing projects around the Center, reporting the Training Center is partnering with other educational organizations, such as the University of West Georgia to have a partnership where GPSTC will assist to deliver a basic mandate course as part of their final requirements for a four-year Criminal Justice Degree, so when a student graduates mandate, they will be graduating college with a four-year degree. Also, Deputy Director Greathouse shared the School Resource Officer initiative was funded to be able to build a School Resource Officer training facility on the GPSTC campus and that building is in progress with hopes to be completed no later than June 30th, with an open house planned for some time in July; Deputy Director Greathouse also reported the use of force regional training approach is operational and units are working throughout the state, noting the units are designed, equipped, and ready to deliver use of force training at local agencies and it is a matter of making contact with your regional representative to request that training.

Regarding the fire services, Deputy Director Greathouse reported the First Responder Expo was held in Appling County on April 5th and the Training Center was one of 50 agencies that participated and there were at least a thousand attendees, and GPSTC provided training through the use of force unit as well as the fire academy's pressurized container fire attack and firefighter safety, adding the use of force was dealing with conflict resolution and de-escalation.

In reference to National Telecommunicators Week, Deputy Director Greathouse noted there are four employees at GPSTC who have different roles in 911 training throughout the state and they are being honored this week.

Deputy Director Greathouse added a law was passed last year that required mandatory training for 911 Directors and it goes into effect on January 1, 2024, but the program has already been built and has been offered a couple of times, noting the class in March had 16 new 911 Directors attend.

Deputy Director Greathouse reported the GA Fire Academy and GA Emergency Management have partnered to deliver training on risk-based response to (electric) battery emergencies. Deputy Director Greathouse noted batteries are becoming a hot topic and the Training Center is trying to get training put together on responding to those emergencies.

DONATIONS

Lt. Colonel Josh Lamb, Georgia Department of Public Safety, requested approval of the following donations:

One (1) Stalker DSR 2X Radar	\$3,300.00	Effingham County Sheriff's Office
One (1) Stalker XLR Radar	\$2,421.50	Liberty County Sheriff's Office
One (1) Snooker 500lb. Freestanding Ice Machine	\$3,559.87	Glynn County Police Department

The motion to accept these donations was made by Sheriff Joey Terrell, 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:

One (1) 2000 Ford Expedition	\$999.00	Prosecuting Attorney's Council
One (1) 2005 Ford Taurus SE	\$999.00	Prosecuting Attorney's Council

The motion to accept these donations was made by Sheriff Joey Terrell, which was seconded by Chief Janet Moon and voted approved by the Board members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Craig Tully
Secretary