

## **BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

April 8, 2021

Virtual and Call-in Meeting

### **BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mr. Willie C. Bolton  
Chief Bruce Carlisle  
Lt. Nicholas D. Ellis  
Mr. Richard Hyde  
Sheriff Dane Kirby  
Chief Leonard “Dee” Meadows  
Commissioner Michael Nail  
Mr. Rossie Ross  
Mr. Charles D. Sikes  
Chief Craig Tully  
Commissioner Timothy C. Ward  
Mr. Ellison G. Wood

### **BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Chief Stacey Cotton  
Mr. George Hartwig  
Sheriff Joey Terrell

### **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 Stephanie Stallings, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Major Josh Lamb, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Major Mark Perry, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Major Al Whitworth, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Captain Daniel Carrol, Department of Public Safety/MCCD  
Ms. Joan Crumpler, Department of Public Safety  
Mrs. Lorrie Smith, Department of Public Safety  
Ms. Clare McGuire, Department of Public Safety  
Ms. Kaycee Larson, Department of Public Safety  
Director Vic Reynolds, Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
Mr. John Melvin, Assistant Director, Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
Mr. Chris Hosey, Deputy Director, Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
Ms. Rhonda Westbrook, Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
Director Chris Wigginton Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Ms. Cindy Jones, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Mr. John Monroe  
Mr. Blaine Salter  
Ms. Cheryl Buie

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the April 8, 2021 Board of Public Safety meeting to order.

Chief Craig Tully gave the Invocation and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice-Chairman Wood recognized Mr. Blaine Salter as being present in the room. Mr. Salter worked in the Senate as an Aide during this past legislative session and lives in Bulloch County.

Vice-Chairman Wood also recognized Mr. John Monroe being in attendance virtually.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked Mr. Charles Sikes to provide a remembrance for Vietnam War Veterans Day. Mr. Sikes shared 61 years ago, in the 1960's, our parents/grandparents said our country is coming apart; it can't survive. Mr. Sikes recalled the United States had a President assassinated; a civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, assassinated; Robert Kennedy assassinated; the civil rights movement was underway; the drug cartel was beginning; a decline in morality was taking place; and the Vietnam War was tearing the country apart, and our parents and people in that era said our country cannot survive this. Mr. Sikes noted we are 61 years later, we survived it, and here we are, and it seems often, we are in decline, but we have survived. Mr. Sikes reminded the Board when we see a veteran wearing a Vietnam War veteran hat, to tell that veteran, "Thank you for your service to our nation during very trying times". Mr. Sikes noted President Obama declared March 29<sup>th</sup> Vietnam War Veterans Day and President Trump continued it.

Mr. Sikes also reminded the Board that we should stop and remember May 15<sup>th</sup>, Peace Officers Memorial Day and the week in which it falls, Police Week, where recognitions are held nationwide throughout the week.

Vice-Chairman Wood notified the Board that an application for Relief of Disabilities under OCGA 16-11-131 has been received for the Board's consideration. Vice-Chairman Wood advised the application pertains to a felon's inability to possess a firearm. Vice-Chairman Wood noted Mr. John Monroe is present as a representative of the applicant and asked Mr. Monroe to address the Board.

Mr. Monroe informed the Board he represents Dr. Rick Kuhlman, who has applied for relief from disabilities under OCGA 16-11-131. Mr. Monroe pointed out Dr. Kuhlman pleaded guilty 6 days after being charged for Health Care Fraud, quickly accepting responsibility, and quickly paying almost \$3 million in restitution. Mr. Monroe stated the federal judge was so impressed with Dr. Kuhlman, he sentenced him initially to credit for time served and 6 months' probation, stating he had never seen someone pay so much restitution in such a short amount of time, noting Dr. Kuhlman had also been voluntarily engaged in community service activities. Mr. Monroe stated the federal government appealed the sentence stating it was not severe enough, so the court of appeals reversed it, and, on a remand, Dr. Kuhlman was sentenced to 30 months incarceration followed by 3 years of supervised release. Mr. Monroe noted Dr. Kuhlman's supervised release was terminated early because he voluntarily engages in extensive community service and speaks to medical students, nursing students, physical therapist students, and chiropractic students about the importance of accurate insurance billing and the dangers of engaging with insurance fraud. Mr. Monroe added Dr. Kuhlman's license to practice chiropractic was suspended when convicted but was reinstated the next year on a probationary basis and one of the terms of the probation is that he continues to give the seminars; therefore, his license has been reinstated to full time. Mr. Monroe concluded by noting there are recommendations

in the application packet attesting to Dr. Kuhlman's good character and it is believed Dr. Kuhlman is fully rehabilitated and therefore, is asking the Board to reinstate his rights to possess firearms.

A motion to take the application for relief of disabilities under consideration and legal guidance from the Attorney General's office was made by Chief Craig Tulley, which was seconded by Chief Dee Meadows and voted approved by the Board.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for nominations for the election of officers. Lt. Nick Ellis nominated Chief Craig Tully be re-elected as Secretary, which was seconded by Chief Bruce Carlisle and voted approved by the Board members.

Secretary Tully called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman. Lt. Nick Ellis nominated Mr. Ellis Wood to continue to serve as Vice-Chairman of the Board of Public Safety. This was seconded by Chief Dee Meadows and voted approved by the Board members.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the March 11, 2021 BPS minutes. Mr. Charles Sikes made the motion to approve the March 11, 2021 minutes. This was seconded by Chief Craig Tully and voted approved by the Board members.

### **DIRECTOR REPORTS**

Commissioner Wright, Georgia Department of Public Safety, updated the Board on the lawsuits regarding the 106<sup>th</sup> Trooper School, stating the "Whittaker Lawsuit", which involved 28 of the former Troopers has been settled. Commissioner Wright notified Board members the press release encompassed all the information that can be discussed at this time. The total monetary settlement was \$850,000 as stated in the press release. Commissioner Wright reported the AJC (Atlanta Journal-Constitution) erroneously reported the \$850,000 was awarded to each person and DPS immediately reached out and asked them to correct it, which they did. Commissioner Wright noted as part of the settlement, DPS is starting the re-hire process with 17 former Troopers, meeting next week with 2 more; and 2 other former Troopers have already been re-hired, stating they had dropped their lawsuit prior to the settlement. Commissioner Wright added there are 3 other individual lawsuits still pending on the case and additional details cannot be discussed at this time. Commissioner Wright called for Board members to reach out to him if they have any further inquiries.

Commissioner Wright advised the Board on the 110<sup>th</sup> Trooper School by noting the class is currently at 38 cadets. Commissioner Wright stated the application process for the 111<sup>th</sup> Trooper School has closed with 1,296 applicants and the application period for the 112<sup>th</sup> Trooper School is currently open, noting 107 individuals applied the first week.

Regarding the legislative session, Commissioner Wright stated the Department has scaled back its presence at the Capitol since the session has ended. Commissioner Wright informed the Board the legislators provided DPS with \$977,000 to implement a pay increase for Senior Troopers/Officers and Master Troopers/Officers. Commissioner Wright explained this will consist of a 5% pay raise at 12 years of service and a 5% pay raise at 20 years of service. Commissioner Wright advised DPS was

also provided an additional \$1.5 million for a 75-person Trooper School. Commissioner Wright added legislators also approved a bond package to provide \$56.4 million for construction of a new headquarters facility, which is anticipated to begin construction in July or August of this year and information regarding a groundbreaking ceremony will be communicated when finalized.

Regarding the COVID situation, Commissioner Wright noted DPS has coordinated 148 COVID vaccine transports throughout the state during the month, and DPS has conducted 122 of those transports, adding 4 were conducted through Aviation. Commissioner Wright shared DPS held a COVID vaccine clinic at their headquarters, which included staff from DOT and GEMA, who have offices on the premises, and had 216 civilian employees receive the first vaccine and those employees will receive their second shot next week.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked for questions from the room. Sheriff Dane Kirby asked where the new headquarters will be, to which Commissioner Wright stated it will be on the property where the old police academy used to be. Commissioner Wright noted that building has already been torn down and the property is ready for the new building. Mr. Charles Sikes asked what the acreage is for the new facility to which Commissioner Wright responded it is around 14+ acres.

Director Vic Reynolds, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, announced the Agency's GBI school has started with 17 new agents and they are anticipating starting a second school in September with an additional 20-22 new agents. Director Reynolds also reported several new scientists have been hired and they anticipate hiring another 8 or 9 in the month of May, indicating this should assist the Agency in clearing up the backlog on DNA. Director Reynolds advised the Agency has reached a new contractual agreement with a private lab in Colorado to assist with DNA requests, which is aiding in pushing the numbers downward as well.

Director Reynolds stated the new Gang Task Force is staying busy as well as the new Trafficking Task Force. Director Reynolds shared agents have worked 19 Officer Involved Shootings as of the end of March and this number is trending to be lower than what it was last year, which ended with 95 OIS.

Regarding the legislative session, Director Reynolds advised the Agency had a good session and the House and Senate funded 3 additional positions to support the Legal Division, the Gang Task Force, and most importantly the legislators agreed to fund about \$1.6 million in the recruitment and retention of medical examiners, which is an area of concern. Director Reynolds noted since the Agency could raise the salary of these doctors, there is now a position at GBI headquarters being filled this summer and a position in Pooler that has an offer being made. Director Reynolds advised the Macon office still has a position open and the Agency is entering into a partnership agreement with Mercer Medical School to fill that position.

Director Reynolds also informed the Board the legislators have agreed to add additional funding to a fellowship program with Augusta Medical College, which has already led to a new hire at headquarters. Director Reynolds stated he feels like these partnerships will assist with getting positions filled.

Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, reported the Center's student numbers are beginning to rise to pre-pandemic times.

Regarding the legislative session, Director Wigginton reported they were able to add 2 positions to their Volunteer Fire Service training that is taught off-site and throughout the state to ensure volunteer fire fighters get the training they need. Director Wigginton also reported the Center was able to secure a 5% pay raise for fire fighter instructors, and the SRO program was funded for 2 positions, allowing the Center to move forward with SRO certification training. Director Wigginton stated the Center is working with agencies in rural Georgia for locations to teach "gap" basic training academies to allow agencies to meet the demand of getting newly hired officers trained in a timelier manner.

Director Wigginton announced the Georgia Public Safety Memorial Service will be on Tuesday, May 18<sup>th</sup> at 1400 hours. Director Wigginton explained this year will include 2 years of memorials, recognizing 29 individuals, noting 19 are from the current year, with 1 historical, and 9 individuals from 2019 are being recognized.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked for questions from the room for Director Wigginton. Mr. Charles Sikes asked Director Wigginton if there is a follow-up on the price increase in the cafeteria, to which Director Wigginton responded that prices were raised the following week and across the board it was an average of a 20% increase. Director Wigginton stated they did see an increase in revenue in the cafeteria, noting there was also an increase in the number of students for the month. Mr. Willie Bolton stated he noticed the food cost index is up about 20-25%, and agreed Director Wigginton is right on track with his increase.

Lt. Nick Ellis took the opportunity to thank all agency directors for their leadership and service to law enforcement, the Board, and the citizens of Georgia, noting he hears positive remarks from colleagues about their leadership.

### **DONATIONS**

Major Mark Perry, Headquarters Adjutant, Georgia Department of Public Safety, requested approval for the following donation:

Two (2) Stalker DSR 2X Radar Units	\$6,375.00	Camden County Sheriff's Office
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The motion to accept this donation was made by Lt. Nick Ellis, which was seconded by Mr. Willie Bolton and voted approved by the Board members.

Director Vic Reynolds, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, requested approval for the following donation:

2021 Honda Odyssey EX-L Mini Van	\$38,101.00	Pickens County Sheriff's Office
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The motion to accept this donation was made by Mr. Charles Sikes, which was seconded by Chief Dee Meadows and voted approved by the Board members.

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

One Thousand Dollars Cash	\$1,000.00	Georgia Fire Investigators Assoc.
Twenty-Four (24) Enforcer MP Riot Suits	\$10,200.00	Haven Gear LLC
Three (3) 2012 Dodge Chargers	\$2,700.00	Monroe County Board of Commissioners

The motion to accept these donations was made by Mr. Willie Bolton, which was seconded by Lt. Nick Ellis and voted approved by the Board members.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked Department of Community Supervision Commissioner Michael Nail if he had any comments to share on behalf of the Department of Community Supervision, to which Commissioner Nail responded he had nothing significant to report.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked Department of Corrections Commissioner Ward if he had any comments to share on behalf of the Department of Corrections. Commissioner Ward reported the Department of Corrections is starting to get back to normal as 3 of their major facilities are doing mass COVID vaccines of the offender population. Commissioner Ward also noted this past weekend, in-person visitation was allowed, and on Monday they are starting back with all their outside details for those that have not started back. Commissioner Ward shared they have about 5,000 vaccinated and hope to get everything fully opened by the end of the month.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Craig Tully  
Secretary