

**BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

August 19, 2021

Georgia Department of Public Safety

Atlanta, Georgia

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mr. Willie C. Bolton  
Chief Bruce Carlisle  
Chief Stacey Cotton  
Capt. Nicholas D. Ellis  
Mr. Richard Hyde  
Chief Leonard "Dee" Meadows  
Mr. Samir Patel  
Mr. Rossie Ross  
Mr. Charles D. Sikes  
Sheriff Joey Terrell  
Chief Craig Tully  
Commissioner Timothy C. Ward  
Mr. Ellison G. Wood

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Sheriff Dane Kirby  
Commissioner Michael Nail

**OTHERS:**

Ms. Amy Radley, 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 Kendrick Lowe, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Major Robert Balkcom, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Major Mark Perry, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Major Al Whitworth, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Captain Clay Kicklighter, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Major Jeremy Vickery, Department of Public Safety/MCCD  
Ms. Joan Crumpler, Department of Public Safety  
Ms. Lorri Smith, 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  
Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Mr. Tony Hightower, Deputy Director, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Mr. Chadd Wilson, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Mrs. Cindy Jones, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Mr. Steve Cronic, Former BPS Member  
Mr. Mark Renew, Former BPS Member  
Mr. Gary Vowell, Former DPS Commissioner  
Representative Bill Hitchens, Former DPS Commissioner

Senator Billy Hickman  
Senator Tyler Harper  
Commissioner John King, Office of Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner  
Lt. Al Miller, Covington Police Department

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the August 19, 2021 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 recognized the guests in the room: former Commissioner Bill Hitchens, Senator Tyler Harper, Senator Billy Hickman, former Commissioner Gary Vowell, former Board Members Mark Revenew and Steve Cronic, Office of Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner John King, and Covington Police Department Lieutenant Al Miller.

Chief Tully presented former BPS member, Mr. Steve Cronic, with a Resolution honoring his years of service to the State of Georgia and the Georgia Board of Public Safety.

Mr. Cronic shared while he enjoyed serving on the Board of Public Safety, what he enjoyed the most is the people he met and the relationships he built and thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve.

Mr. Sikes presented former BPS member, Mr. Mark Revenew, with a Resolution honoring his years of service to the State of Georgia and the Georgia Board of Public Safety.

Mr. Revenew shared his appreciation to the Board and former Commissioner Bill Hitchens for friendships developed over the years.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the May 18, 2021 BPS minutes. Mr. Rossie Ross made the motion to approve the May 18, 2021 minutes. This was seconded by Sheriff Joey Terrell and voted approved by the Board members.

### **DIRECTOR REPORTS**

Commissioner Wright, Georgia Department of Public Safety, thanked everyone for attending the groundbreaking ceremony earlier and noted the new DPS headquarters has been a long time coming.

Commissioner Wright thanked former DPS Commissioners Hitchens and Vowell for being present as well.

Commissioner Wright updated the Board on the 110<sup>th</sup> Trooper School, indicating the cadets are in field training with 34 cadets remaining. Commissioner Wright notified everyone graduation for the 110<sup>th</sup> Trooper School is on September 17<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m. at GPSTC and the Board members are welcome to attend.

Commissioner Wright noted the 7<sup>th</sup> Motor Carrier School began on July 11<sup>th</sup> with 21 cadets and currently stands at 17 cadets. Regarding the 111<sup>th</sup> Trooper School, Commissioner Wright stated there are 72 active candidates, and 3 candidates on a medical hold, and the School will start on August 29<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Wright stated the application period for the 112<sup>th</sup> Trooper School closed with 506 applicants, noting this is the accelerated school, which will begin on January 9<sup>th</sup>.

In reference the Atlanta Crime Suppression Details, Commissioner Wright reported to-date, over the past 16 weekends, there have been over 9800 traffic stops, 251 pursuits, 6800 citations, 146 fugitives apprehended, 45 stolen weapons recovered, and 86 stolen vehicles recovered. Commissioner Wright noted the value of the 86 stolen vehicles recovered is over 2 million dollars.

Commissioner Wright asked the Board to approve a revised DPS Organizational Chart, that is included with the Board Report. Commissioner Wright informed the Board after last year's increase of events during the legislative session, it seems appropriate to have a command staff level individual directly involved in the day-to-day operations on Capitol Hill, indicating it is essential for someone on the Command Staff be able to communicate directly with the Governor's office, Lt. Governor's office, and the Speaker's office to coordinate needed resources on certain issues. Commissioner Wright reminded the Board last year there was an increase in threats on legislators, which required a lot of communication of intel, coordination of resources, and conversations with the legislators. Commissioner Wright also noted this change will have all three DPS divisions under the direct supervision of an adjutant (major). Commissioner Wright also noted the revised chart will move the Training Division from the Director of Support and Administrative Operations to the Special Operations Adjutant; and the Facilities and Communications Divisions will move from Administrative Services to the Headquarters Adjutant. Additionally, Commissioner Wright requested the Comptroller and Finance Division move from the Headquarters Adjutant to the Commissioner's Office. Finally, Commissioner Wright stated the chart has a full-time Crime Suppression Unit, which will tackle the violent crime and street racing issues in the City of Atlanta.

Mr. Richard Hyde inquired if the Crime Suppression Unit will be a Post, to which Commissioner Wright responded it will be a Special Unit, similar to the Criminal Interdiction Unit and will be run by NCO's (supervisors) and will be overseen by the Troop C Commander. Mr. Hyde asked if the Department would continue to pull from other Troops for personnel, to which Commissioner Wright explained funding for 10 positions was allocated for the Department which will fund these positions and will be specifically dedicated to the mission of Crime Suppression. Mr. Hyde asked what shifts the unit will run, and Commissioner Wright stated it will primarily be evening shift but will follow intel.

Sheriff Joey Terrell asked Commissioner Wright what the allowable number of personnel for the accelerated Trooper Schools will be, to which Commissioner Wright advised the goal was to get 100 in each of the two allotted schools. Commissioner Wright stated the Department could have allowed well over 100 in each class, but they were not comfortable putting that many in the first class, due to them not interviewing well or other factors, so this made the Department fall short of the 100 goal. Commissioner Wright shared what he hoped to do with the 112<sup>th</sup> Trooper School is try to add over

100, if possible. Commissioner Wright explained there will be some candidates drop out and if there are over 100, there could be a cushion to keep the number around 100.

Mr. Willie Bolton inquired if there are any “lessons learned” from how the trooper school program is set up that the Department would do differently. Commissioner Wright stated the Department has been looking at the hiring process, not just on the sworn side but also on the civilian side and have made some changes on both sides to make it more efficient without overlooking any steps that need to be taken. Commissioner Wright explained one of the current struggles is Troop Communications Dispatchers, noting the Department is allowed 180 positions and right now there are 123 filled positions, which has put a strain on the radio division. Commissioner Wright stated one of the steps taken recently to assist is to reduce the number of personnel by two in each Communications Center and took the funding for those positions and raised the salary for the Dispatchers, rewarding them with a pay raise and are trying to attract more people. Commissioner Wright noted in the past it took 5-6 months to hire a dispatcher and now it takes about 2-3 weeks.

Mr. Charles Sikes asked Commissioner Wright, Director Reynolds, and Director Wigginton about the security/surveillance at their facilities, referencing a criminal act that took place outside a business next to the GBI Regional Office in Statesboro. Investigators checked to see if the GBI Office had security cameras that could have captured the act, and there were none. Commissioner Wright explained a couple of years ago, DPS started the process of placing cameras on each Patrol Post and Weigh Station. Commissioner Wright reported later during the meeting that all DPS facilities are live with exterior security cameras, with the exception of 4 patrols posts and 3 weigh stations.

Captain Nick Ellis made the motion to approve the Department of Public Safety’s Organizational Chart changes. This was seconded by Mr. Willie Bolton and voted approved by the Board members.

Regarding Mr. Sikes’ question on security, Director Vic Reynolds, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, noted as part of the Agency’s long-range plan, every GBI Regional Office will have cameras installed.

Director Reynolds congratulated Commissioner Wright and the Department of Public Safety on the new headquarters facility and indicated he was glad to see Chief Cotton and Chief Carlisle.

Director Reynolds reported the Agency worked its 62<sup>nd</sup> officer involved shooting yesterday. Director Reynolds advised the Agency is a little ahead year-to-date, where the Bureau worked 96; and if the numbers keep running, the Bureau could reach 100 officer involved shootings for this year.

Director Reynolds reported the Agency’s Gang Unit, which started in the Summer of 2019, has been involved in 884 gang-related/motivated investigations around the state during the last two fiscal years, which ran July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2021. Director Reynolds indicated most of the investigations were with the assistance of local partners and Director Reynolds expressed his appreciation for their help. Director Reynolds advised the goal is to grow the task force where there are two separate stand-alone units.

In regard to the Human Trafficking Unit, Director Reynolds announced the Agency had its first labor trafficking case and is currently being prosecuted. Director Reynolds explained a gang-financed company was using youths to sell magazines and were not paying the individuals and were working them several hours each day. The investigation resulted in several arrests.

Director Reynolds added the Agency is setting up labor trafficking investigations throughout middle and south Georgia, with some of it centered around the agricultural business. Director Reynolds noted during their investigations, it has been determined labor trafficking and sex trafficking often intersect.

Concerning the Agency's Crime Lab, Director Reynolds reported the numbers are down and 87% of the backlog remains in two areas: drug identification and forensic biology. Director Reynolds announced the Agency has recently hired a number of DNA scientists and is hopeful the numbers will come down. Director Reynolds stated the next area of concern for the crime lab is ballistics. Director Reynolds noted the concern is the fact that ballistic testing often holds up cases.

Director Reynolds shared the GCIC division is continuing to telework and is doing well.

Chief Carlisle congratulated the GBI for being the recipients of the Curtis McClung Award presented by the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police. Chief Carlisle noted outside of the Chief of the Year, this is probably the most prestigious award given, focusing on public relations. Director Reynolds thanked Chief Carlisle, adding Public Affairs does a tremendous job.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked Director Reynolds to update the Board on an award presented during the POAG conference this week. Director Reynolds announced Region 10 Assistant Special Agent in Charge, Lisa Vorrasi received an award for her dedication to service and being involved in several charitable organizations in the community.

Mr. Samir Patel thanked Director Reynolds for their Agency's assistance to DA offices to get cases brought to trial. Mr. Patel asked Director Reynolds if the Agency has been receiving frantic phone calls from DA offices for labs since courts are opening back up, and also asked if the out of state contracting services has assisted with the backlog. Director Reynolds advised the outsourcing has helped tremendously. Director Reynolds further advised he is hopeful additional funding will be available to continue the outsourcing. Director Reynolds added they have been getting calls from DA offices, asking for expedited cases.

Mr. Charles Sikes asked Director Reynolds about pathologists and if AFIS is still in the system, to which Director Reynolds responded the Agency does utilize the AFIS (Automated Fingerprint Identification System), and also advised with the recent pay raises for pathologists, the positions are being filled quickly.

Mr. Richard Hyde asked Director Reynolds and Representative Hitchens if there has been any discussion on a loan forgiveness incentive for the medical examiners, to which Representative

Hitchens responded he believes it would be very effective, but the acceptance is the recent pay raise for medical examiners has been successful.

Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, welcomed Chief Carlisle and Chief Cotton back to the Board meetings.

In reference to hardening the campus, Director Wigginton shared with the Board several years ago at the Training Center, there was a firearms ban put in place on the Campus. Director Wigginton announced this ban has been lifted, on the condition that the individual has to be in uniform, training uniform, or have a badge displayed. Director Wigginton explained this is a safety issue in the event of an active shooter. Director Wigginton added there have been cameras added around campus, which has caught several contraband drops. Director Wigginton further stated the gates are closed after the morning rush and the back gate is no longer keypad accessed. Director Wigginton noted the off-site campuses have robust camera systems as well.

In reference to programs being offered at the Training Center, Director Wigginton announced funding is now available for NARCAN training. Director Wigginton explained the Training Center staff will come to any agency in the State, that is a public safety agency, and instruct the four-hour course; after the course, they give students two doses of NARCAN. If the doses are administered, they will replace the NARCAN free of charge.

Director Wigginton took a moment to brag on the Center's instructors and how they are utilized in other arenas, by informing the Board of the Training Center's instructors "packing" the POAG conference this week to provide instruction to attendees and an instructor is going to the FBI National Academy since GPSTC was one of the agencies that looked at UAS Drones and implemented the use of drones to law enforcement and fire agencies. Director Wigginton added the Training Center sends instructors to FLETC and vice versa for instructor development.

Director Wigginton shared the Center has picked up three positions for the volunteer fire services and have hired individuals to send throughout the state to train and teach classes on weekends and after hours.

Director Wigginton also announced they received funding from the legislators for a new use of force facility at the Center, which will be a state-of-the-art facility to conduct training.

Chief Tully commended Director Wigginton and his staff on implementing the Regional Volunteer Fire Service program and commented on how it will benefit the volunteer fire departments tremendously.

Mr. Hyde stated he had training at the Center this week and sat in a class with several instructors, noting all the instructors were exceptional, specifically Mr. Chadd Wilson

Regarding basic training academies, Director Wigginton asked for the Board's approval to approach entities to be a satellite campus for holding one or two academies during the year for agencies/departments that have a need to hire or to send someone to the academy outside of the regularly scheduled academies that are held twice a year. Director Wigginton advised the Board their first two satellite campuses have been launched starting next Monday, in Bainbridge and Camden County.

Mr. Rossie Ross made the motion to allow Director Wigginton to engage certain entities to serve as a satellite location for basic training academies in Coweta County and Gordon County. This was seconded by Mr. Willie Bolton and voted approved by the Board members.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked Commissioner Wright to give a brief overview of the circumstances surrounding the Trooper Ramirez receiving a valor award at the POAG Conference. Commissioner Wright advised Trooper Aaron Ramirez was involved in a pursuit where the violator had kidnapped his girlfriend at gun point. Commissioner Wright advised the violator started shooting at Trooper Ramirez, where he was grazed in the head by the violator's bullet. Commissioner Wright advised Ramirez continued pursuing the violator, who was ultimately killed.

Captain Nick Ellis commended agency heads on their leadership within their agencies and support of each other.

### **DONATIONS**

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

Eight (8) Gamma Crystals	\$80,000.00	Department of Homeland Security
Two (2) Kustom ProLaser 4 LIDAR Units	\$6,589.00	Turner County Sheriff's Office
Eight (8) Sets of Rear Window Bars for Dodge Chargers and One (1) Set for a Ford Explorer	\$1,900.00	Pooler Police Department
Travel and Per Diem for Two (2) Troopers to Attend the 102 <sup>nd</sup> American Legion National Conference in Phoenix, Arizona	\$3,268.00	The American Legion, Department of Georgia

The motion to accept these donations was made by Sheriff Joey Terrell, which was seconded by Mr. Rossie Ross and voted approved by the Board members.

Chief Craig Tully made a motion to adjourn the Board of Public Safety meeting and go into the Georgia Crime Information Center Council, which was seconded by Captain Nick Ellis and voted approved by the Board Members.

**GEORGIA CRIME INFORMATION CENTER COUNCIL**

Director Reynolds, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, presented the FY2021 CJIS Security Policy Violations report for the Georgia Crime Information Center, which involves unauthorized access and dissemination of criminal justice information. Director Reynolds noted there were 17 violations for 17 agencies reported during FY2021. Director Reynolds presented the request for approval of actions taken to resolve security policy violations for FY2021 to the BPS members for their approval.

Chief Stacey Cotton made the motion to accept the GCIC's recommendations for the FY2021 CJIS Security Policy Violations, which was seconded by Chief Craig Tully and voted approved by the Board members.

Chief Craig Tully made a motion to adjourn the GCIC Council and return to the Board of Public Safety meeting, which was seconded by Chief Bruce Carlisle and voted approved by the Board members.

Chief Bruce Carlisle provided an update on his daughter, Jamie, who was injured in a crash earlier this year.

Chief Stacey Cotton provided an update on his health.

Chief Joey Terrell provided an update on his church's assistance to Haiti following the recent earthquake.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked Commissioner Ward if he had any updates from the Department of Corrections to share, to which Commissioner Ward reported the DOC has vaccinated almost 31,000 offenders statewide. Commissioner Ward asked for prayers for two officers who were assaulted last week at one of the facilities, one of whom will have a very long road of recovery.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Craig Tully  
Secretary