

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY

December 10, 2020

Virtual and Call-in Meeting

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Willie C. Bolton
Chief Bruce Carlisle
Chief Stacey Cotton
Lt. Nicholas D. Ellis
Mr. George Hartwig
Mr. Richard Hyde
Chief Leonard "Dee" Meadows
Commissioner Michael Nail
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

OTHERS:

Ms. Tina Piper, Attorney General's Office
Ms. Cheryl Buie, Board Liaison
Mrs. Jennifer Pendarvis, Department of Public Safety
Commissioner Christopher C. Wright, Department of Public Safety
Lieutenant Colonel Billy Hitchens, III, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Josh Lamb, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Robert Balkcom, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Kendrick Lowe, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Mark Perry, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Al Whitworth, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Jeremy Vickery, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
Major Billy Boulware, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
Captain Wayne Mobley, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
Ms. Lorrie Smith, Department of Public Safety
Ms. Clare McGuire, 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
Director Chris Wigginton Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Mr. Tony Hightower, Deputy Director, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Mrs. Sharla Shockley, Georgia Public Safety Training Center

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the December 10, 2020 Board of Public Safety meeting to order.

Lt. Colonel Billy Hitchens gave the Invocation and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice-Chairman Wood introduced Mr. Willie C. Bolton. Mr. Bolton was recommended by the Governor's Office to fill the Member-At-Large vacant Seat #8. Chief Carlisle made the motion to approve Mr. Bolton's appointment. This was seconded by Sheriff Joey Terrell and voted approved by the Board members.

Vice-Chairman Wood invited Mr. Bolton to address the Board. Mr. Bolton thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve. Mr. Bolton stated he served 41 years with Clarke County government and his last assignment was as the Clarke County Director of Corrections. Mr. Bolton stated he was also the County Warden.

Vice-Chairman Wood then swore in Mr. Bolton.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for any Board comments on behalf of Mr. Bolton. Commissioner Ward noted that he has known Mr. Bolton for several years, being a member of the Georgia Prison Warden Association, and he is a man of high integrity and high character and we are glad to have someone of his caliber on this Board. Commissioner Ward welcomed Mr. Bolton aboard.

Vice-Chairman Wood recognized special guest Major Robert Balkcom, DPS South Adjutant.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the November 12th, 2020 BPS minutes. Sheriff Joey Terrell made the motion to approve the November 12th, 2020 minutes. This was seconded by Chief Craig Tully and voted approved by the Board members.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked Mr. Charles Sikes to provide a remembrance for Pearl Harbor Day. Mr. Sikes stated that we have different dates in our lives that are significant to us, with September 11, 2001 being a date where we remember where we were and what had occurred with watching the news reports. Mr. Sikes also noted that November 22, 1963 is a significant date for some when the President of the United States was assassinated. Mr. Sikes stated the news reporters did a tremendous job of advising the nation of what had occurred and also advising the nation of what was occurring for a peaceful transfer of power from the deceased President to the Vice President of the United States. In reference to Pearl Harbor Day, Mr. Sikes noted we just recognized December 7, 1941, which is probably not a significant date to many, but it was a significant date to some of our parents and grandparents, and they remember where they were when they received word that America had been attacked at Pearl Harbor. Mr. Sikes mentioned in that era, we must remember there was not the instant communication we have today on the news media. It took some time - hours if not days, for the news to travel throughout the country and the impact it had on our nation, with major battleships of America being either sunk (Arizona) or tremendously damaged. Mr. Sikes stated those battleships were named for states that had ships on "battleship row" at Pearl Harbor and two thousand plus individuals lost their lives on that day. Mr. Sikes stated he just wanted to make note of this for the Board to remember December 7, 1941 and what this nation became aware of on that Sunday morning. Mr. Sikes noted it

was sometime on Monday before word got to mainland America that America had been attacked. Mr. Sikes stated battleships are no longer in existence for the states representing America, but they were America's power back in Pearl Harbor's era. Mr. Sikes expressed none of us remember December 7, 1941 but our grandparents and parents remember when our country was drawn together to face what was ahead of them, which was quite a long period of war.

DIRECTOR REPORTS

Commissioner Christopher Wright congratulated and welcomed Mr. Bolton and stated he looks forward to his leadership and insight. Commissioner Wright also thanked the Board for the tremendous support this year as the Department of Public Safety faced the challenges of the pandemic and civil unrest. Commissioner Wright noted the Department had to cancel its Christmas lunch at Headquarters due to the rise in COVID cases and advised as soon as the numbers diminish and start looking better, they will plan a holiday luncheon at DPS Headquarters, hopefully in the Spring. Commissioner Wright shared while the civil unrest related to law enforcement and the use of force incidents has diminished, focus has now turned toward the election. Commissioner Wright stated the Department is continuing to provide protection to the Secretary of State and is also closely monitoring the residences of two legislators and has also increased the level of protection normally provided to the Lieutenant Governor. Commissioner Wright stated the Department has seen numerous groups assemble at the State Capitol over the last month to express their concerns over the election and voting proceedings, noting during the week of November 24th, a "Stop the Steal" protest with opposing groups converged on Washington and Mitchell Streets at the Capitol. Commissioner Wright stated Lt. Col. Stallings, Major Whitworth, Major Lowe, Major Lamb, Troop Officers from Troop C, and the Capitol Police Division put a very well executed plan together to keep those groups separate as they exercised their first amendment rights. Commissioner Wright further noted the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Emergency Operations Center, DNR, and DCS also assisted with the large protest and Commissioner Wright expressed his thankfulness for the unbelievable partnerships in state government. Commissioner Wright noted because of the trust and relationships shared between state agencies and the leadership of Governor Kemp, the Department did not see the violence at the protest that has been there in the past.

In reference to the November monthly report regarding enforcement activity and staffing levels for the Department of Public Safety, Commissioner Wright announced he is exceptionally proud of the dedication DPS personnel have put forth despite the extra duties they have taken on. Commissioner Wright added DPS personnel continue to provide and maintain normal duties and requirements. Commissioner Wright gave an update on the 110th Trooper School, beginning January 3rd. Commissioner Wright announced there are 94 final offers for the School, with 8 still pending medical results. Commissioner Wright stated this will be tremendously helpful for personnel if most of these cadets successfully complete the school.

Commissioner Wright updated the Board on the new patrol posts. Commissioner Wright advised the post in Hazlehurst is about 75% complete and state funds were allocated for new patrol posts in Milledgeville and Reidsville. Commissioner Wright stated the plans have been finalized to begin construction on the Milledgeville facility and the Department is currently waiting on a Resolution from

the Tattnall County Board of Commissioners to present to the Board for a land donation for the Reidsville post. Commissioner Wright also stated there has been indication from Worth County they would like to provide a new patrol post. Commissioner Wright announced the architect is finalizing plans for the new Headquarters facility, and the Department will be presenting a bond package for consideration during this year's legislative session on the project.

Regarding the COVID situation with DPS employees, Commissioner Wright shared there are currently 22 employees confirmed positive with the Coronavirus and are out of work, and there are two employees currently hospitalized. Commissioner Wright noted the Department has had a total of 99 employees confirmed and 77 of those have returned to full duty.

In closing, Commissioner Wright wished all Board members and state partners a Merry Christmas and a prosperous and safe New Year, hoping to see everyone in person soon. Commissioner Wright expressed his commitment from the Department to help and support state partners anytime they are called upon. Commissioner Wright declared the command staff is committed to work and create positive relationships across the state. Commissioner Wright then thanked Ms. Cheryl Buie for her dedication and support of the DPS Board and wished her all the best in retirement.

Vice-Chairman Wood echoed Commissioner Wright's sentiments on Ms. Cheryl's retirement, noting that she will continue to be "in the loop" for a while.

Vice-Chairman Wood stated he has had three conversations since Saturday in reference to the tragic death of Mr. Harrison Deal, expressing concern about speed of heavy vehicles and distractions, as well as speed of light-duty vehicles on I-16. Vice-Chairman Wood recognized low personnel and safety barricades being obstacles to enforcement, and Captain Lacienski had shared with him technology that offenders are continuing to improve on and use to their advantage, but Vice-Chairman Wood stated he wanted to thank the Department on their continuing efforts to ensure I-16 does not get known as a "death zone" through any of our counties. Vice-Chairman Wood stated it seems like the Pooler area has had what appears to be an unusually high area of fatalities and anyone that travels I-16 are familiar with commercial motor vehicles movements and what appears to be infractions of speed with light-duty and heavy-duty vehicles and Vice-Chairman Wood thanked the Command Staff for their focus on the area.

Director Vic Reynolds, Georgia Bureau of Investigations, welcomed Mr. Bolton to the Board and stated he is looking forward to getting to know him better and working with him in the future. Director Reynolds also thanked the Board for their support during 2020 and for their involvement with the GBI. Director Reynolds also thanked the partnerships they have with Colonel Wright, Director Wigginton, Commissioner Ward, and Commissioner Nail who are always willing to assist and stand with the GBI shoulder to shoulder. Director Reynolds added that he is appreciative of local partnerships as well.

Director Reynolds announced a major round-up of violent repeat offenders from the Albany-Dougherty County area this past week. Director Reynolds stated violent repeat offenders is an area the GBI is going to start keying up on and noted Dougherty County is one of the counties where they

worked with the locals to round up the individuals that have outstanding warrants with an emphasis on violent repeat offenders. Director Reynolds stated the success of the operations is from the partnership with federal and local agencies and is proud of the men and women of the Albany GBI regional office.

Director Reynolds updated the Board on the request from the Governor offering GBI assistance to the Secretary of State to work potential voter fraud issues and Director Reynolds announced they have a team together and asked for the Board to keep them in their prayers during this time while they do the job, they have been asked to do by assisting the Secretary of State.

Director Reynolds shared that today is Awards Day for National Fusion Centers around the country and GISAC is nominated for one or two awards. Director Reynolds thanked everyone on the Board and partner agencies for their support of GISAC as they are a tremendous part of the GBI.

Director Reynolds stated one of the goals that he had as Director was to pay attention and start concentrating on “cold cases” around the state. Director Reynolds shared while visiting and getting to know personnel around the state, he discovered there are a number of unsolved homicides in every region of the State. Director Reynolds noted while this is not unusual, he wanted to concentrate on the cold cases. Director Reynolds announced that this morning is the first official meeting of the Cold Case Unit within the Bureau. Director Reynolds explained they have reached out to retired agents, ASACs, and SACs, and have chosen a group of individuals to help begin working cold cases around the state by beginning to triage them and start with those they believe have an evidentiary value left they believe are solvable. Director Reynolds expressed he is confident this unit will solve some cases from around the state.

Director Reynolds wished all the Board members a Merry Christmas and Happy Holiday and a prosperous New Year and thanked everyone on behalf of the entire GBI for its support during 2020. Director Reynolds stated it has been an interesting year and if nothing else it has strengthened our resolve and partnerships with local, state, and federal folks around Georgia. Director Reynolds shared we are very blessed to have these partnerships and federal personnel he works with tell him often they do not see those relationships in most other states. Director Reynolds gave credit to agency directors like Commissioner Wright and Director Wigginton, as well as Commissioners Ward and Nail.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked Mr. Charles Sikes to comment on the loss of former GBI Agent, Captain Johnny Dixon. Mr. Sikes shared that Georgia Southern University in Statesboro has a unique monument next to the Marvin Pittman Administration Building called “Builders of a University”. Mr. Sikes explained there is a plaque placed on the monument every year with names of individuals, their service, their role, etc. that are “retiring” from Georgia Southern. Mr. Sikes added it doesn’t matter what role they held at Georgia Southern, they are considered “builders” of the University. Mr. Sikes noted one such “builder” was Captain Johnny Dixon, who was a member of the community and recently passed away at the age of 101. Captain Dixon retired from the GBI in 1974. Mr. Sikes stated when you talk about Captain Johnny Dixon, you have to talk about the Department of Public Safety and the GBI, who was under the same entity upon being founded in 1937.

Mr. Sikes noted Captain Dixon was a graduate of Pierce County High School in the late 1930's or early 40's and he had a career goal to join the DPS, which was being formed. Mr. Sikes explained while working at a theater in Blackshear during high school, Johnny Dixon saw a correspondence course advertised in a police detective magazine for fingerprint identification and decided to take that course to further his education. Mr. Sikes stated during a personal interview with Captain Dixon, the course was \$10 per month for a 10-month period and Captain Dixon stated he had no idea how he was going to pay for it with the little salary he was drawing working at the theater. However, he took the course and graduated, then took an internship with the Savannah Police Department in their recently established Identification Bureau where he gained some experience. Mr. Sikes stated from there, Captain Dixon was able to get hired by the Department of Public Safety, in the GBI division and helped establish the fingerprint identification system within that entity.

Mr. Sikes noted Captain Dixon was called to serve in the Navy for a four-year period during WWII in the 1940's. Mr. Sikes explained the Navy had the responsibility for identifying human remains and because of Captain Dixon's skill, he was sent to Washington D.C. to the Pentagon to identify deceased personnel of the military from all branches. Mr. Sikes stated after the War, Captain Dixon returned to DPS in its GBI division to continue his career. Mr. Sikes noted Captain Dixon served in that career until around 1973, retiring as Deputy Director, which is a Captain's rank. Mr. Sikes stated we remember Captain Johnny Dixon as a builder within the Department of Public Safety and Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, thanked the Board and partner agencies for their support during 2020. Deputy Director Tony Hightower presented the report to the Board. Deputy Director Hightower announced their enrollment numbers are in line with their numbers from last year, indicating that people are still seeking training, on-line and in person. Deputy Director Hightower announced they are adding to the Savannah Academy, which indicates the Training Center is growing.

Regarding COVID, Deputy Director Hightower shared they are still abiding by the protocols established by the CDC and DPH to ensure staff and students are safe. Deputy Director Hightower stated they are going above and beyond to ensure their personnel are being taken care of during these trying times.

Deputy Director Hightower wished everyone a Merry Christmas and safe and happy holiday.

Vice-Chairman Wood commended the GPSTC staff for the Governor's Public Safety Awards ceremony last week and for keeping the program active.

DONATIONS

Major Mark Perry, Headquarters Adjutant, Department of Public Safety requested approval of the following donations:

\$300.00 of Fuel Per Month

\$300.00 Per Month

Cohutta Police Department

\$200.00 of Fuel Per Month	\$200.00 Per Month	Tunnel Hill Police Department
Ten (10) Nightstick Flashlights	\$450.00	Tallulah Falls Police Department
One (1) Cuisinart Gas Grill	\$400.00	Wal-Mart Toccoa
Forty (40) Gallons of Fuel Per Month for Seven (7) Months	\$560.00	Chattahoochee County Sheriff's Office
\$80.00 of Fuel Per Month for Seven (7) Months	\$560.00	Clay County Sheriff's Office
Three (3) Stalker DSR 2X Radar Units	\$9,885.00	City of Dahlonega Marshal's Office
\$1,050.00 of Fuel	\$1,050.00	Barrow County Sheriff's Office
Two Thousand (2,000) Gallons of Fuel	\$4,000.00	Bartow County Commissioner's Office

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

Deputy Director Tony Hightower, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, requested approval of the following donations:

Rain Suit	\$1,200.00	A.D.A. Supplies, Inc.
\$460.00 Currency to Purchase Paint Supplies	\$460.00	GPSTC Sessions 319 & 320

The motion to accept these donations was made by Sheriff Joey Terrell, which was seconded by Lt. Nick Ellis and voted approved by the Board members.

Vice-Chairman Wood proposed a motion to present a Resolution to former board member Kacy Cronan for his service to the Board of Public Safety. Chief Craig Tully made a motion to approve the Resolution, which was seconded by Sheriff Joey Terrell and voted approved by the Board members.

Vice-Chairman Wood notified the Board one of its responsibilities is approving members to the Georgia Coroner's Training Council upon appointment by the Governor's office. Vice-Chairman Wood stated the Board is working with the Governor's office to confirm appointees to be presented to the Board for approval.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked Major Robert Balkcom to present enforcement activity resulting from a recent concentrated patrol in Bulloch County the previous day. Major Balkcom noted GSP partners with the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, who gives the grants for funding the Nighthawks DUI

Task Forces across the state, to hold special operations around the state. Major Balkcom stated there was an operation last weekend in Liberty County that resulted in 37 DUI arrests in three nights; and wrote over 557 contacts (citations and warnings). Major Balkcom announced the previous day in Statesboro, in five hours, 9 Troopers made 217 traffic stops, issued 198 citations, and 89 warnings. Major Balkcom noted these details will be held around the state, with another one being held in Pooler on Friday night and Savannah Saturday night.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked Chief Craig Tully to make a special presentation on behalf of the Board. Chief Tully presented Ms. Cheryl Buie, outgoing Board Liaison, and Mrs. Jennifer Pendarvis, incoming Board Liaison, with tokens of appreciation.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked Department of Corrections Commissioner Timothy Ward if he had any comments to share on behalf of the Department of Corrections. Commissioner Ward stated they are keeping things “held in the road”.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Craig Tully
Secretary