

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY
December 13, 2023
Georgia Department of Public Safety
Atlanta, Georgia

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Stacey Cotton
Mr. Roy H. Fickling
Sheriff Jimmy McDuffie
Chief Janet L. Moon
Mr. Billy New
Mr. Samir J. Patel
Mr. Charles D. Sikes
Chief Craig Tully
Mr. Ellison G. Wood

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. Willie Bolton
Mr. Richard Hyde
Chief Leonard “Dee” Meadows
Commissioner Michael Nail
Commissioner Tyrone Oliver
Sheriff Joey Terrell

OTHERS:

Ms. Tina Piper, 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 Rusty Harrelson, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Andrews Montgomery, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
Lieutenant Jonathon Huff, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
SFC Billy Schwab, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Assistant Director Scott Dutton, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Deputy Director Rhonda Westbrook, Georgia Bureau of Investigation/GCIC
Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
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
Ms. Lorri Smith, Georgia Department of Public Safety
Ms. Cindy Jones, Georgia Public Safety Training Center

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

Major Rusty Harrelson gave the Invocation and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

DIRECTOR REPORTS

Commissioner Billy Hitchens, Georgia Department of Public Safety, congratulated Major Thornell “T.K.” King on his service retirement effective December 31st.

Commissioner Hitchens noted the Special Legislative Session just concluded and extra personnel were brought in to ensure things went smoothly on the Capitol grounds.

Commissioner Hitchens advised since October 7th, the Department has been working with GISAC, APD, and other Intel groups to keep an eye out for any protests or potential hotspots at the Capitol. So far, all the gatherings that have occurred have been peaceful with no issues.

Commissioner Hitchens reported the 115th Trooper School is currently in the FTO phase and has 42 active cadets, and the 116th will graduate 14 Troopers in Perry on Friday, December 15th. Commissioner Hitchens added the Department is currently recruiting for the 117th Trooper School and has seen an increase in applicants after the viral video of the street racing arrest, noting the anticipated start number is 74.

Commissioner Hitchens shared the 11th MCO school started on October 29th and there are currently 9 cadets still in school.

Commissioner Hitchens stated DPS continues to schedule crime suppression details in the metro area, with great success.

Commissioner Hitchens reported Lt. Lance Scott and Sgt. Paul Wofford traveled to California and picked up the Bell 412 helicopter, which is now at the Kennesaw hangar. Commissioner Hitchens noted the Department will be receiving the 2nd and final Bell 407 helicopter very soon, and this will complete the purchase upgrades from last year's appropriation, adding there will be some money left to do some outfitting and upgrades.

Commissioner Hitchens advised the most recent group of K-9 handlers just graduated, bringing the K-9 number across the state to 46.

Commissioner Hitchens shared GSP Post 42-Rincon and the Nighthawks South DUI Task Force Troopers assisted GOHS and the Savannah Police Department with a Rolling Thunder Detail in Chatham County that ran from Thursday, December 7th until the early morning hours of Sunday, December 10th. Commissioner Hitchens reported during the three-day operation, Savannah Police Officers and Troopers arrested 66 impaired drivers, and a total of 594 citations and 158 warnings were issued during this operation, in addition to 11 felony arrests, 6 drug arrests, and 4 wanted persons being apprehended.

Commissioner Hitchens advised he, along with Assistant Director Dutton of the GBI, did an update on the Department's activities for the House Public Safety Committee, noting some of the items reported were the increase in SWAT calls, up 550+% from 2018 (36 calls to 195), Aviation (hours are up, but call number is down a little, which indicates different types of calls), Crime Suppression updates, Office of Public Safety Support (4,779 PEER contacts for the year), and Protests (58, 4077 man hours in Troop C).

Concerning the radio system upgrade, Commissioner Hitchens advised the entire south division is finishing up and feedback is positive on coverage and interoperability.

Regarding construction projects, Commissioner Hitchens reported Post 40, Sylvester has electrical, and plumbing installed, and is about 50% complete, with a possible July completion date. Post 18, Reidsville has an April 2024 completion date, noting roofing with shingles has been completed and the electrical, plumbing, and HVAC are currently being installed. Commissioner Hitchens shared we are at a standstill with the City of Reidsville installing water service for this project, and the project is 50% complete. Commissioner Hitchens reported the Tifton Hanger is waiting for the lease to be finalized. Commissioner Hitchens advised a second quarter 2024 ribbon cutting for Post 35, Jekyll Island is expected, and the metal framing has been installed and the electrical and plumbing are being done now. Commissioner Hitchens advised the new Post 32, Oconee is still in the early phase of the civil drawings with GA DDS. Commissioner Hitchens shared the Phase 2 Headquarters project is still waiting on the City of Atlanta, noting they have received the permit request and it is in a 10-day approval process.

Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, thanked Commissioner Hitchens and Director Wigginton for the partnership and friendship between agencies.

Director Hosey reported on December 21, 1988, Ware County Sheriff's Office requested GBI to assist with a death investigation. Director Hosey noted remains were found in the woods of a small girl located in a container encased in concrete, and in 2019, genealogy services determined a certain family tree from the Albany area was likely related to the child. Director Hosey stated in 2022, after a news story aired on the anniversary of the child's death, a tip was received from a member of the public, and the child was able to be identified as Kenyatta "KeKe" Odum of Albany, who was 5 years old when she was found. Director Hosey shared on November 9, 2023, the mother, Evelyn Odom, and live in boyfriend, Ulyster Sanders, both of Albany, were arrested and charged with felony murder, cruelty to children in the first degree, aggravated battery-family violence, concealing the death of another person, and conspiracy to conceal the death of another person.

Director Hosey also reported on November 13, 2023, Talbot County Sheriff's Office requested GBI to investigate allegations of threats made online in a social media post by an unknown subject against an unidentified student at Central High School in Talbot County. After several interviews, a 16-year-old subject was identified. Director Hosey indicated the target of the threat was identified as the 16-year-old brother of a member of a local gang, the 4 Baby Gang, and on November 24, 2023, the subject turned himself into the Talbot County Sheriff's Office and was arrested and charged with Terroristic Threats and Acts (Felony).

Director Hosey advised the Cold Case Unit has 19 cold cases are being reviewed at this time; 6 were requests from designated family members and 13 were self-initiated.

Director Hosey reported the Officer Involved Shootings (OIS) count as of today is 100, with the last occurring in Spalding County.

Director Hosey shared the 52nd Special Agent Class will graduate on Thursday, December 21, 2023, and 14 new agents will begin the first of the year and will attend the Spring Basic Agent Class.

Concerning the Medical Examiner's Office, Director Hosey reported a recent news article reported on the retirement of the Macon part-time Medical Examiner, and the GBI has been aware for a while and already has a plan in place.

Director Hosey stated the Bureau is continuing to build the Medical Examiner Fellowship Program and develop scholarships with hopes these efforts will grow and sustain the program for the future.

Director Hosey noted on November 13, 2023, GBI's Medical Examiner Office Director of Medical Operations and one of the Medical Examiners met with several partners at Emory to discuss possible research collaborations.

Mr. Samir Patel asked if the compensation of Medical Examiners with the GBI is comparable with other states throughout the nation, to which Director Hosey indicated it is.

Regarding Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC), Director Hosey reported Idemia & Security USA LLC has been awarded the Georgia Applicant Print System (GAPS) bid.

Director Hosey shared during the Criminal Case Data Exchange (CDX) Board Meeting, the draft Uniform Standards for the Creation and Transmission of Electronic Criminal History Data document was approved and adopted on November 16, 2023, noting this will aid in accurate dispositions being reported to GCIC.

Regarding Facilities, Director Hosey reported the Macon Morgue building renovation is scheduled to begin in early January 2024, adding it is not an expansion, but involves much needed repairs; the footings for the mausoleum have been poured for a new canopy; and the site grading operations at the Calhoun Regional Office started December 4, 2023.

Director Hosey noted the 2nd Leadership Academy Graduation will be held this afternoon in Pooler, indicating the participants are staff from the Investigative Division and the Crime Lab; and regarding the Resiliency Program, Director Hosey reported staff from the Crime Lab and GCIC will attend a Train the Trainer class after the first of the year.

Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, recognized Bruce Stanford and Mike Blute for appointments to the International Association Chiefs of Police, noting Mr. Stanford was appointed to the Technical Advisory Panel for Drug Evaluation and Classification Program, and Mr. Blute was appointed to the Technical Advisory Panel for Highway Safety.

Regarding the possible expansion of the Basic Law Enforcement Training Course, Director Wigginton stated he met with a committee of 5 chiefs and 5 sheriffs to advise on the curriculum topics and hours.

Director Wigginton reported the end result will be letters of support from the Georgia Sheriffs Association and the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police for the funding through the legislature.

Mr. Charles Sikes commended Director Wigginton for the continuous innovation the Training Center displays, and Chief Craig Tully thanked Director Wigginton for the fire service training being provided locally for career and volunteer fire services.

REAPPOINTMENTS

Vice-Chairman Wood informed Board members that Governor Kemp has reappointed him, Mr. Roy Fickling, Chief Leonard “Dee” Meadows, and Chief Craig Tully to the Board of Public Safety.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for a motion on the reappointment of Mr. Charles Sikes. Chief Craig Tully made the motion to reappoint Mr. Charles Sikes to the Member-at-Large #7 Seat. This motion was seconded by Mr. Roy Fickling and voted approved by the Board members. Mr. Charles Sikes abstained from the vote.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the October 12, 2023 BPS minutes. Mr. Roy Fickling made the motion to approve the October 12, 2023 minutes. This was seconded by Mr. Stacey Cotton and voted approved by the Board members.

DONATIONS

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

Two (2) ProLaser 4 Lidars, Two (2) Inspector II-TM 2000 Tint Meters, Three (3) Enforcer II-TM 1000 Tint Meters	\$5,725.00	Bartow County Commissioner’s Office
Nine (9) Mobile Wireless Fingerprint Scanner Devices	\$18,084.00	Southwestern Regional Drug Enforcement Office
Twelve (12) 5.11 Tactical Prime Bookbags	\$1,786.56	Glynn County Police Department
One (1) FLIR EX Series Handheld Device	\$1,624.93	Glynn County Police Department
Four (4) DeWalt Power Station DXAEPS14 Jump Packs	\$795.72	Glynn County Police Department
Two (2) Stalker DSR 2X Direction Sensing Radars	\$6,595.00	Glynn County Police Department
Two (2) Stalker DSR 2X Radar Units with Instant On Remote	\$6,550.00	City of Dahlonega

The motion to accept these donations was made by Mr. Stacey Cotton, which was seconded by Mr. Samir Patel and voted approved by the Board members.

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

One (1) Kustom Signals Golden Eagle Control Head	\$300.00	McLaggan Communications
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The motion to accept this donation was made by Mr. Roy Fickling, which was seconded by Chief Janet Moon and voted approved by the Board members.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Major Andrew Montgomery, Georgia Department of Public Safety Motor Carrier Compliance Division, requested approval of the issuance of an Administrative Order extending the temporary hours of service variance adopted by the Georgia Department of Public Safety through section 395.341 of Chapter 1 of the Georgia Department of Public Safety's Transportation Rulebook for a period expiring on December 31, 2024.

Mr. Roy Fickling made the motion to approve the issuance of an Administrative Order extending the temporary hours of service variance. This motion was seconded by Mr. Samir Patel and voted approved by the Board members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Craig Tully
Secretary