

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY

February 11, 2021

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. Charles D. Sikes
Sheriff Joey Terrell
Chief Craig Tully
Commissioner Timothy C. Ward
Mr. Ellison G. Wood

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Sheriff Dane Kirby
Mr. Rossie Ross

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 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
Captain Dawn Arrowood, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
Captain Daniel Carroll, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
Captain Clint Durrence, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
Lt. Mark Riley, 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
Ms. Kelly Ward, Department of Public Safety
Mr. Brentwood Smith, Department of Public Safety
Mr. John Melvin, Assistant Director, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Director Chris Wigginton Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Cindy Jones, Georgia Public Safety Training Center

Ms. Meaghan Carver, Office of Planning & Budget
Ms. Danielle Robbins, Attorney General's Office
Richard Belcher, WSBTV
Ms. Cheryl Buie

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the February 11, 2021 Board of Public Safety meeting to order.

Lieutenant Nick Ellis gave the Invocation and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice-Chairman Wood recognized Lt. Colonel Billy Hitchens and Major Robert Balkcom as being present in the room.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the January 14, 2021 BPS minutes. Chief Dee Meadows made the motion to approve the January 14, 2021 minutes. This was seconded by Sheriff Joey Terrell and voted approved by the Board members.

DIRECTOR REPORTS

Commissioner Christopher Wright, Georgia Department of Public Safety, reported the 110th Trooper School had to be paused on January 15th due to a COVID outbreak, but it is back in session. The class resumed on February 8th and currently has 46 cadets remaining.

Commissioner Wright announced the Department of Public Safety purchased two used Bell Ranger helicopters last week through the United States Army Executive Office Aviation Exchange and Sales Program for \$180K each. Commissioner Wright stated at the beginning of last year, the Department of Public Safety sold its only Bell 206 that was being used for pilot training. Commissioner Wright noted if DPS had not replaced the aircraft, training would have to have been conducted in the Bell 407 helicopters, which are more costly to operate. Commissioner Wright explained operating costs per hour in a Bell Ranger is approximately \$300 less than the Bell 407. He stated both helicopters are equipped with new instruments and components and one has a new engine.

Commissioner Wright shared the Department of Public Safety has coordinated 62 transports of the COVID vaccines and DPS has conducted 42 of those transports.

Regarding the COVID situation with DPS employees, Commissioner Wright noted there are currently 15 employees confirmed positive with the Coronavirus and to-date, there have been 193 DPS employees confirmed with the virus.

Commissioner Wright presented a correlation of traffic fatalities and Trooper staffing for the years between 2010 and 2020 for the Board to review. Commissioner Wright stated Georgia remains one of the fastest growing states in the U.S. and its ten-year growth rate of 14.4% is more than 1.5 times that of the U.S. population growth rate. Commissioner Wright stated at 10.6 million residents, Georgia now ranks #8 in the nation. Commissioner Wright noted from the presentation, the Department of Public Safety has not increased its manpower in 10 years and in fact, it is decreasing. Commissioner

Wright stated recruiting and retention has been, and continues to be, a problem and the Department has been looking at other states to see how they are moving the needle. Commissioner Wright expressed the Department simply cannot continue to do business in the same manner it has been, and the Command Staff is committed to moving the agency forward in a manner that recruits the most talented and capable employees. Commissioner Wright announced effective today, the DPS uniform and appearance policy will be updated to hopefully increase recruiting with the 111th Trooper School. Commissioner Wright explained in the past, members were not able to have tattoos that were visible in a Class B, short sleeve, uniform. Commissioner Wright noted the policy update will allow members to have tattoos on their arms if they are willing to wear the Class A, long sleeve, uniform. Commissioner Wright expressed there will be no visible tattoos; however, potential employees will be considered for employment if they are willing to wear the Class A uniform year-round. Commissioner Wright stated the Class A uniform is the most professional uniform and it represents the best of DPS; it is our brand, and the Department is proud of it and will welcome qualified applicants willing to wear it. Commissioner Wright also shared he hopes to encourage more applicants with prior military service, stating these men and women with real life experience is something the Department desperately needs. Commissioner Wright stated he wants DPS to be a home for our military heroes.

Commissioner Wright presented a change to the Board on how the Department of Public Safety administers the Academy in the future. Commissioner Wright stated beginning with the 112th Trooper School, the Department would like to incorporate an accelerated Trooper School model. Commissioner Wright explained this Trooper School would be for applicants who are POST certified with at least two years of patrol experience. Commissioner Wright further explained the school would be completed in 13 weeks, followed by the traditional 3 months of field training. Commissioner Wright noted DPS would like to remove the Basic Mandate portion of the school because candidates would have already completed this training. Commissioner Wright stated this change would save money on lodging, meals, and salaries. Commissioner Wright shared other states have had success with similar accelerated schools and this would not take away from Trooper School, as the Cadets would be receiving the advanced training each traditional Trooper class receives. Commissioner Wright added the accelerated model will not take the place of the traditional Trooper School model; it will simply be another alternative. Commissioner Wright added the Command Staff, as well as the Troop and Region Commanders unanimously support the changes and requests that Board's consideration and approval of an accelerated Trooper School model for future Schools.

The motion to approve the Department of Public Safety's accelerated Trooper School was made by Chief Bruce Carlisle, which was seconded by Sheriff Joey Terrell and voted approved by the Board members.

Mr. John Melvin, Assistant Director, Georgia Bureau of Investigations, announced Ms. Rhonda Westbrook has been promoted as the Deputy Director of GCIC, replacing Terri Fisher, who retired after 38 years of service. Mr. Melvin shared Ms. Westbrook has been with the GBI since 1989 and was instrumental with the development, implementation, and training of the Superior Court Clerks where they interface on the electronic submission of final dispositions of criminal histories; additionally, she handled the Plans and Program Development Unit, where she was a lead analyst /

project manager, responsible for writing and managing many of the national criminal history improvements, along with GEMA grants that funded criminal history improvement projects. Mr. Melvin further stated in 2011, Ms. Westbrook became the CJIS Operations Manager and handled the Sex Offender Registry database. Mr. Melvin added Ms. Westbrook obtained her Bachelor of Science degree at Georgia College, Masters in Business Administration at Troy State, and her Masters of Public Administration at Command College. Mr. Melvin stated he is thankful to leave GCIC in very capable hands. Mr. Melvin also announced the Bureau's Firearms Manager Amanda Bazzanini has stepped down to take care of family issues, and the Bureau has promoted Ms. Jennifer Murphy, the Assistant Manager of the Firearms Unit, to that position.

In reference to the Crime Lab backlog, Mr. Melvin stated there has been a minuscule uptick, but when you a deep dive into the numbers it can be attributed to leave being take during the Christmas and New Year's Holidays. Mr. Melvin expressed the Bureau is still on target to address the backlog and continue to provide needed services to the citizens of Georgia.

Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, sadly announced GPSTC employee / instructor Richard Odom, who worked in the Training Center's CIT section, passed away yesterday from COVID-19 complications. Director Wigginton shared that Mr. Odom started his career in 1984 with Appling County then worked 25 years with Athens-Clarke County and had been with GPSTC for three years. Director Wigginton added that arrangements would be forthcoming.

Director Wigginton noted from the Board Report, the Training Center had over 35,000 students last month, with a good deal of those classes being Use of Force Instructor classes around the state. Director Wigginton stated some of those classes have been pushed out to the Regional Academies so they can meet the demands of agencies in the field, and to prevent attendees from traveling to Forsyth due to it being a two-week course. Director Wigginton shared to-date, the Training Center has taught 11 courses in the field and have 8 more scheduled before the end of the budget cycle of July 1. Director Wigginton added the Center is also teaching Supervision in the field, which is another high-demand course, allowing agencies to meet the demands for training.

Director Wigginton shared that the Center received an email earlier this week from the federal government partners there is a great deal of money about to come down the pipeline to state and local agencies that are doing use of force training, de-escalation training, and scenario-based training, which will help supplement what the Center is already teaching.

DONATIONS

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

One (1) NexGrill Gas Grill and One (1) Propane Tank Bottle	\$349.00	The Home Depot Blue Ridge
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One (1) Hyundai EDR Kit, One (1) Hyundai EDR Annual Software Update, One (1) Kia EDR Kit, and One (1) Kia EDR Annual Software Update	\$14,390.00	Augusta Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office
One (1) BEE III Ka-Band Radar Unit	\$1,595.00	Tunnel Hill Police Department
One (1) ProLaser III	\$449.00	Tunnel Hill Police Department

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

Ms. Clare McGuire of DPS Legal Services presented a Resolution requesting the Board of Public Safety authorize the Commissioner of Public Safety to enter into negotiations, appropriate agreements, and all contracts and supporting documents as necessary to enable Tattnall County to convey by warranty deed to the State of Georgia that certain 3.783 acres of unimproved real property located at 130 Mike Eason Drive, Reidsville, Georgia, 30453 for the purposes of and on which to construct a new GSP Post 18, and further to enable DPS to facilitate the improvement of such land for and the construction of such new headquarters and barracks for Georgia State Patrol Post 18- Reidsville.

The motion to accept this Resolution was made by Lt. Nick Ellis, which was seconded by Mr. Charles Sikes and voted approved by the Board members.

Ms. Clare McGuire of DPS Legal Services presented a second Resolution requesting the Board of Public Safety authorize the Commissioner of Public Safety to enter into negotiations, appropriate agreements, and all contracts and supporting documents as necessary to enable Worth County the provision to construct such building(s) upon such property to be acquired by Worth County for the purposes stated; and further, to take those steps necessary, including any steps necessary on behalf of the Board of Public Safety, to acquire, by long-term lease and then by deed, the improved property located at Land Lot 375 – 7th Land District, Sylvester, Georgia 31791, located within the borders of Worth County, being approximately ten (10) acres for use as a headquarters and barracks for State Patrol Post 40- Sylvester.

The motion to accept this Resolution was made by Chief Craig Tully, which was seconded by Lt. Nick Ellis and voted approved by the Board members.

Director Wigginton presented the names for the Georgia Public Safety Line of Duty Deaths Memorial for approval by the Board of Public Safety.

The motion to accept the names was made by Mr. Willie Bolton, which was seconded by Mr. Charles Sikes and voted approved by the Board members.

Director Wigginton also presented an additional name submitted and approved after the Memorial Committee met and requested the Board of Public Safety approve Mr. John Kevin Cash.

The motion to accept Mr. Cash's approval to the Georgia Public Safety Line of Duty Deaths Memorial was made by Chief Craig Tully, which was seconded by Chief Dee Meadows and voted approved by the Board members.

Vice-Chairman Wood presented the names of appointees to the Georgia Coroner's Training Council. The Council is asking the Board of Public Safety to approve the appointment of Honorable Mark Savage of Banks County to succeed the Honorable Edgar F. Perry; the appointment of the Honorable Janice Brown of Wilcox County for the seat vacated by the retirement of Honorable Ralph Wilson, Butts County; and to reappoint the Honorable Richard Stanley of Laurens County.

The motion to accept the names presented was made by Lt. Nick Ellis, which was seconded by Mr. Charles Sikes 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. Commissioner Nail reported the DCS has had the number of COVID cases reduced from 28 last week to 13 this week. Commissioner Nail also announced the Department has selected a new Director of Field Operations effective today and that information will be forthcoming. Commissioner Nail noted everything is going well with their budget and the only item presented was for replacement vehicles and it appears that will go forward without any issues.

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 COVID vaccinations started last week with the Department and the recovery rate is above 90% in each category, staff and offender. Commissioner Ward was pleased to announce a 10% across the board pay raise for all corrections officers and noted it is much needed and deserved, and DCS now has a competitive salary to be able to recruit.

Vice-Chairman Wood reported the pending thank you resolutions are continuing to be completed and there are plans to have them presented at future meetings.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked Commissioner Wright if there is an update on the 106th Trooper School. Commissioner Wright shared that DPS is still in the mediation and litigation process and cannot publicly comment and hopes to have it resolved soon and will be able to update the Board.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked Mr. Richard Belcher, with WSBTV, if he had any comments. Mr. Belcher advised he had no questions or comments and was just listening for anything newsworthy.

Mr. Charles Sikes reminded the Board members that Chief Stacey Cotton is seeking Vice Presidency with the International Association Chiefs of Police and asked for everyone's support.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Craig Tully
Secretary