

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY

February 8, 2024
Virtual and Call-In Meeting

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Willie Bolton
Mr. Stacey Cotton
Mr. Roy H. Fickling
Mr. Richard Hyde
Sheriff Jimmy McDuffie
Chief Janet L. Moon
Commissioner Michael Nail
Mr. Billy New
Commissioner Tyrone Oliver
Mr. Charles D. Sikes
Ms. Susan K. Treadaway
Chief Craig Tully
Mr. Ellison G. Wood

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Chief Leonard “Dee” Meadows
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 Robert Balkcom, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Doug Wilson, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major David Bryant, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Gary Langford, Department of Public Safety/Capitol Police
Major Andrew Montgomery, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
Captain Chris Rodewolt, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lieutenant Richard Sikes, Department of Public Safety/GSP
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
Ms. Lorri Smith, Georgia Department of Public Safety
Ms. Clare McGuire, Georgia Department of Public Safety
Ms. Kaycee Larson, Georgia Department of Public Safety
Mr. Samir Patel, Superior Court Judge, Cherokee Judicial Circuit

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the February 8, 2024 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 introduced the guests in the room, Captain Chris Rodewolt and Lieutenant Richard Sikes. Vice-Chairman Wood asked Mr. Samir Patel to introduce newly appointed Board Member, Susan Treadaway. Mr. Patel stated he has known Ms. Treadaway for about 22 years, since law school and she has helped him over the years, noting Ms. Treadaway's heart is in prosecution, and her passion is to support the men and women who have dedicated their lives to protect our citizens. Mr. Patel stated Ms. Treadaway will be a great addition to the Board of Public Safety.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked Ms. Treadaway if she would like to address the Board. Ms. Treadaway stated it is an honor to be on the Board of Public Safety. Ms. Treadaway commented she grew up in a law enforcement household, the daughter of a police chief, so she backs the blue 100% and after getting her law degree all she wanted to do was felony prosecution, representing the state of Georgia. Ms. Treadaway shared she feels honored to be selected by Governor Kemp for the position and she looks forward to serving.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the December 13, 2023 BPS minutes. Mr. Charles Sikes made the motion to approve the December 13, 2023 minutes. This was seconded by Chief Craig Tully and voted approved by the Board members.

DIRECTOR REPORTS

Commissioner Billy Hitchens, Georgia Department of Public Safety, welcomed Ms. Susan Treadaway to the Board, and thanked Mr. Samir Patel for his time on the Board.

Commissioner Hitchens reported on the death of Trooper Jimmy Cenescar on January 28th during an attempt to apprehend the driver of a fleeing motorcycle. Commissioner Hitchens announced after extensive work by several agencies, the violator was identified and arrested. Commissioner Hitchens stated a lot of people brought their expertise to help, advising the Gwinnett Police Department dedicated several resources to assist and Commissioner Hitchens stated he will be forever grateful for their actions. Commissioner Hitchens noted he found out today former GBI Assistant Director John Melvin is the ADA that will handle the case.

Commissioner Hitchens shared the legislature is in full swing and 8 additional Troopers and Motor Carrier Officers are detached to help secure the building and grounds at the Capitol and to help keep elected officials and visitors safe.

Commissioner Hitchens reported the 115th Trooper School is currently in the FTO phase and has 39 active cadets, with 9 of those already being sworn in and are out patrolling. Commissioner Hitchens advised those 9 will return for graduation on March 8th. Commissioner Hitchens noted the 117th Trooper School is in week 3, which is driving and shooting, and there are 52 active candidates in that class. Commissioner Hitchens advised the Department is currently recruiting for the 118th Trooper School.

Commissioner Hitchens also reported the 11th MCO School started on October 29th and there are 9 candidates remaining, who will graduate on April 26th.

Commissioner Hitchens stated 10 new K9s recently graduated at the Governor's Mansion bringing the K9 count to 47 across the state, noting they are spread out to every corner of the state to be used by everyone who has a need for narcotics, apprehension, or explosive detection calls.

After a request from Director Hosey, Commissioner Hitchens announced DPS is in the process of selecting 2 Troopers to partner with the GBI Gang Task Force that will work out of the Macon area, sharing he is very excited to partner with GBI on this very important public safety initiative.

Commissioner Hitchens advised the entire south division just finished with the new radio system installs and currently Troop/Region D is being installed, which is the I-20 west corridor. Commissioner Hitchens stated everything he has heard so far is positive regarding coverage and interoperability, and they just tested the Aviation unit, which was a concern, and it passed with flying colors.

Regarding construction projects, Commissioner Hitchens reported Post 18, Reidsville is scheduled for completion in May 2024; Post 32, Oconee is still in a design phase; Post 35, Jekyll Island is designed as a multi-function joint facility to include Jekyll Fire Department is scheduled to be completed in July 2024; Post 40, Sylvester is being constructed by a DOC construction team and the building is nearly dried in and scheduled for completion in September 2024; and the final drawings for the Headquarters hangar should be moving forward soon.

Mr. Charles Sikes asked about the status of the memorial for the old police academy at DPS Headquarters, to which Commissioner Hitchens stated workers are there today adding the wording.

Mr. Ellis Wood asked if the Kennesaw hangar will be vacated and everything moved to Headquarters, to which Commissioner Hitchens responded that is part of the plan, but currently Cobb County is helping with the lease payment, and if the Department does stay, it will turn into a smaller hangar.

Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, welcomed Ms. Susan Treadaway to the Board and thanked Mr. Samir Patel for his service. Director Hosey also extended his thoughts and prayers to members of the Georgia State Patrol on the loss of Trooper Cenescar.

Director Hosey reported this past weekend GBI held an interview board for part of the agent hiring process and approximately 105 applicants came through the first stage of the interview process that will be going to background and polygraphs and continuing the hiring procedure. Director Hosey stated those that complete the process and get hired will be in the September Basic Agent Academy at GPSTC.

Director Hosey updated the Board on some significant cases from around the state, sharing the Region 8 Office in Cleveland made an arrest on an individual that provided fentanyl from within the county sheriff's jail and the victim overdosed and passed away. Director Hosey reported the Region 8 Office worked the case and charged the subject with felony murder, along with some additional charges. Director Hosey shared there have been several cases from around the state involving the drug offices,

two of which came out of the Southwest Regional Drug Enforcement Office in Albany. Director Hosey advised the significance in those cases that resulted in the seizure of over 1800 grams of suspected meth, along with heroine and numerous oxycodone pills, was the collaborative effort between many local agencies, along with federal agencies, and other state agencies, noting there continues to be a great partnership with GBI and local partners around the state.

Regarding the Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) Unit, Director Hosey reported during January 24-26 of this year, there was an investigation conducted with Bryan County Sheriff's Office, Richmond Hill Police Department, and the Georgia Department of Public Safety's Motor Carrier Compliance Division titled "Operation Not for Sale", which was a proactive operation targeting sex traffickers and sex buyers in that area. Director Hosey stated the goal of the operation was to draw in the buyers for demand reduction and draw in sex workers to offer services, adding the objective was to identify and make arrests on human traffickers, and those that were arrested ranged in age from 21 to 49 and there were 10 potential contacts of victims that were made during the operation.

Director Hosey advised the Office of Special Investigations Cold Case Unit working under the Coleman-Baker Act (CBA) has 23 cold cases being reviewed at this time and 7 of those requests were from family members who followed protocol of the CBA for review and 16 were self-initiated, adding seven of those cases have been in review status and are now being reopened for reinvestigation.

Director Hosey reported from January 1st to January 31st, the GBI has investigated a total of 5 officer involved shootings to the state, and one more can be added as of yesterday involving Columbus PD.

Regarding the Division of Forensic Sciences, Director Hosey reported the fellowship program for the ME's office continues to be successful and there is one ME currently in background from Texas who is not part of the fellowship program but heard about the program and became interested. Director Hosey noted she will be going to the Pooler ME's office, adding there is one doctor in the fellowship program that completes in July who will be going to Pooler. Director Hosey stated by this summer there should be two full-time medical examiners at the Pooler ME's office.

Director Hosey reported three additional Division of Forensic Science scientists have been hired for toxicology at the firearms section and began their employment in January of this year and are in training. Director Hosey advised statistics was pulled yesterday concerning the back log and since June of last year to January of this year there has been a 12% reduction in the back log and Director Hosey accredits that to the hiring of scientists. Director Hosey noted as recruiting continues for those positions, he believes the back log will continue to go down, and added the highest back log is in the chemistry section, which is 80% of the backlog.

Director Hosey shared at the time of the board report, whether it has been complete autopsies or consultation, there has been almost 3,400 autopsies or consultations conducted. Director Hosey stated based on the average of doctors, about 283 are being conducted by each doctor, noting the national average for doctors to conduct autopsies is supposed to be around 250 per year.

Regarding building projects, Director Hosey reported there have been some window replacements at Headquarters, along with more projects to secure the building a little better; the Macon Morgue renovation was completed last week and they are back fully operational; at the Region 1 Office in Calhoun, the grading operation continues; and some automation replacements are taking place at the Headquarters main building, along with the fire alarm system replacement that will begin this week.

Mr. Roy Fickling asked when the Drug Task Force unit in Macon will be operational to which Director Hosey stated they are operational now, but the building has not been opened yet.

Mr. Willie Bolton asked on the status of the Cold Case Unit and Director Hosey responded all the hiring has been completed for agents and there are a couple of vacancies for non-sworn that still need to be filled.

Ms. Susan Treadaway thanked the Bureau for all their hard work and commended them for combating the backlog. She asked about vacancies in the December versus November scientists' positions and if there was a 100% increase in vacancies, going from 19 to 38. Director Hosey responded that some of those vacancies are state positions versus grant positions, but in reporting, the numbers are not split up and they are non-funded vacant positions. Ms. Treadaway also applauded the Bureau's efforts to recruit medical examiners.

Mr. Charles Sikes remarked that the Bureau will be taking a big hit in Pooler in losing Director Butler and Mr. Akers, stating they have been a tremendous asset to the Crime Lab.

Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, congratulated Ms. Susan Treadaway and welcomed her to the Board and congratulated Mr. Samir Patel on his appointment. Director Wigginton sent condolences to Commissioner Hitchens, DPS, and Trooper Cenescar's family.

Director Wigginton thanked Colonel Hitchens, Director Hosey, and Commissioner Nail for offering assistance to protect the Training Centers around the state after some credible threats were received of possible protests stemming from the Atlanta Public Safety Training Center being built. Director Wigginton stated fortunately, to date, there has been no significant threat and the properties continue to be secured.

Director Wigginton reported the Training Center is at a little over 1,100 basic mandate students, noting this is indicative of a good recruitment effort, but the retention issue has not been resolved.

Regarding the volunteer firefighter program, Director Wigginton reported it is being changed to a field delivery program, sharing the Academy has started delivering the program out in the field for primarily the volunteer firefighters after overwhelming requests from full-time agencies from around the state.

Chief Craig Tully commended Director Wigginton for developing the system to deliver the firefighting program out to the field, noting this has been needed for many years.

DONATIONS

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

Two (2) Stalker DSR2X Radar Units	\$7,500.00	The Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement Office
Two (2) DragonEye DESL Lidar Units	\$4,200.00	The Appalachian Regional Drug Enforcement Office
Three (3) Stalker DSR 2X Radar Units	\$11,280.00	Hart County Board of Commissioners
Fuel for Helicopters and Hotel Rooms	\$4,500.00	The Atlanta Air Show
Jet Fuel and Hotel Rooms	\$4,000.00	The Vidalia Onion Festival Air Show
Fuel for Helicopters and Hotel Rooms Department	\$4,500.00	The Augusta Air Show

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

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Director Hosey requested approval of a Resolution that the State Properties Commission grant a Revocable License to the City of Calhoun for the installation of the new sewer line extension for the New Region 1 Georgia Bureau of Investigation property, and further seek approval of a Permanent Easement for the City to maintain and operate the line in the same area.

The motion to accept this Resolution was made by Mr. Richard Hyde, which was seconded by Mr. Roy Fickling and voted approved by the Board members.

Director Wigginton requested approval of an amendment to add language to the criteria of the second category of the Governor's Public Safety Award regarding guidelines for posthumous nominations.

Mr. Willie Bolton made the motion to accept this amendment, which was seconded by Mr. Roy Fickling and voted approved by the Board members.

Director Wigginton presented a recommendation for a citizen member position on the Memorial/Governor's Public Safety Awards Committee.

Mr. Willie Bolton made the motion to accept this recommendation, which was seconded by Chief Janet Moon 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 Chief Craig Tully, which was seconded by Sheriff Jimmy McDuffie and voted approved by the Board members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Craig Tully
Secretary