

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY

February 12, 2026

Virtual and Call-In Meeting

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Willie Bolton
Mr. Stacey Cotton
Mr. Roy H. Fickling
Mr. Richard Hyde
Sheriff E. Neal Jump
Chief Leonard "Dee" Meadows
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:

Sheriff Jimmy McDuffie

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
Major Walter Christian, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Andrew Montgomery, Department of Public Safety/CVE
Captain J.K. Crews, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Captain Crystal Zion, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Captain Jonathon Huff, Department of Public Safety/CVE
Lieutenant Dale Howell, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lieutenant Billy Schwab, Georgia Department of Public Safety
Lieutenant Dustin Jones, Georgia Department of Public Safety/CVE
Mrs. Lorri Smith, Georgia Department of Public Safety
Ms. Clare McGuire, Georgia Department of Public Safety
Assistant Director Scott Dutton, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Ms. Rhonda Westbrook, GCIC Director, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
SAC Lindsey Smith, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
ASAC Danielle O'Conner, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Deputy Director Cheryl Greathouse, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Mr. Ike McConnell, Bureau Director, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Cindy Jones, Operations Bureau Director, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Sharla Shockley, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Cheryl Buie

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the February 12, 2026 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 informed Board members that Governor Kemp has reappointed Chief Janet Moon to the Board of Public Safety.

Vice-Chairman Wood introduced guests in the room: Retired Board of Public Safety Liaison Cheryl Buie; GBI Special Agent in Charge of the Statesboro Field Office Lindsey Smith; and Assistant Special Agent in Charge Danielle O'Conner.

Regarding election of officers, Vice-Chairman Wood announced the Chairman of Public Safety has made a recommendation that Chief Craig Tully be re-elected as Secretary. Mr. Charles Sikes made the motion to re-elect Chief Craig Tully as Secretary. This motion was seconded by Chief Dee Meadows and voted approved by the Board members.

Secretary Tully announced the Chairman of Public Safety has made a recommendation that Mr. Ellis Wood continue to serve as Vice-Chairman of the Board of Public Safety. Chief Stacey Cotton made the motion to re-elect Mr. Ellis Wood as Vice-Chairman. This was seconded by Mr. Willie Bolton and voted approved by the Board members.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the January 8, 2026 BPS minutes. Mr. Charles Sikes made the motion to approve the January 8, 2026 minutes. This was seconded by Chief Dee Meadows and voted approved by the Board members.

DIRECTOR REPORTS

Commissioner Billy Hitchens, Georgia Department of Public Safety, reported the 120th Trooper School is currently in its 32nd week with 30 Cadets and will graduate on March 6th. The 121st Trooper School began with 68 Cadets in January and is in its 5th week of training with 44 Cadets and only 4 were lost in driving and 1 in firearms. The 15th CVE School began with 7 Cadets in January and all 7 are still there and they will graduate on June 5th.

Commissioner Hitchens advised winter storms in January hit the state pretty hard and it created a simultaneous demand on personnel across a very large portion of our state, and we all know winter storms like these significantly increase risk of public safety and we want to take every measure necessary to help ensure public safety while keeping the roadways open for our interstate and commerce. Despite the inherent challenges, Commissioner Hitchens stated Troopers and Officers worked extended hours without complaint. Troops and Regions expected to be impacted by the storms were placed on Phase A and in addition, IRT teams from all other Troops and Regions were ready to assist if there was a need. Commissioner Hitchens noted close coordination with GEMA, GDOT, and local partners have proven critical for an efficient and effective response. Commissioner Hitchens reported during the winter storm on January 24th, there was a total of 1,430 calls, and those calls

included 60 crashes, 162 motorists assists, and 9 road closures; the snowstorm on January 31st resulted in a total of 1,958 calls which included 189 crashes, 280 motorists assists, and several road closures.

Commissioner Hitchens shared on January 28th, the Command Staff, Troop C personnel, and DPS Honor Guard held a wreath laying ceremony at our Fallen Trooper Memorial outside DPS Headquarters for Trooper Jimmy Cenescar, stating we were honored to have 5 of Jimmy's family members in attendance, and we as a command staff, continue to honor Jimmy's life and sacrifice, and we want his family to know they will always be a member of our DPS family.

Regarding stats, Commissioner Hitchens reported Aviation had 58 flights during the month, including 22 searches and 14 of the subjects were located. Commissioner Hitchens added Aviation also assisted GEMA with the transport of Starlink devices prior to the major winter storms.

Reporting on protests, Commissioner Hitchens advised year to date, there have been 28 protests, with a little over 1,600 protesters, consuming about 499 manhours, which is a 460% increase in protests over last year to date numbers, and the good thing is there have been zero arrests; the people are coming, saying their peace and abiding by the rules and regulations.

Concerning fleet, Commissioner Hitchens shared 25 2026 Ford Mustangs should be coming soon, they are scheduled to be built during the months of January and February. Commissioner Hitchens added a second vendor has been located for the push bumper brackets who was able to produce it quickly. Commissioner Hitchens added 60 Durango pursuit vehicles are being purchased to be used across CVE and GSP, and Dodge was able to increase the top end speed limit on them; 2 Ford Broncos and 2 Ford F-150's are being purchased to try out on Jekyll Island; and some of the Command Staff and driving instructors were sent to Arizona and they saw the Ford Explorer and the Mustang GT operate and they were very impressed, adding the anti-slip anti-slide gear these vehicles have is very impressive. Commissioner Hitchens also stated the department is looking at 45 Ford Explorers coming into the fleet. Commissioner Hitchens shared the mobile spike strips that were supposed to be here in December still has not arrived, and as of February 5th the devices are in production, according to the company and should be here by end of February or early March.

Commissioner Hitchens reported on facilities, advising the Post in Sylvania has been awarded and a groundbreaking ceremony will be on February 23rd at the Post location. Commissioner Hitchens shared the statewide security fencing project which involves putting fencing around the back of all of our Posts is in progress; and the department is working with Apple and to get an app on phones that will have the ability to read a license, send it to our phones, and be able to incorporate it into our SmartCop and CAD vendor, so that will help solve the issue of having to be ready in 2027 to be able to use mobile driver licenses without having to buy a new device.

Mr. Charles Sikes asked if DPS always receives advanced notice on protests to which Commissioner Hitchens stated most of time, with information provided from Atlanta PD and GISAC.

Regarding Trooper Schools, Mr. Charles Sikes asked if a majority of those leaving have no prior law enforcement experience and Commissioner Hitchens responded yes, a lot of them who walk out have no previous experience.

Mr. Roy Fickling commented the Georgia State Patrol did an amazing job during the two winter storm events.

Assistant Director Scott Dutton, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, reported their Drug Enforcement and Gang Task Forces have been very proactive with a lot of really good results with the work they are doing and to recap over the past year, the 3 Gang Task Forces have operated in 71 counties across the state, have initiated 235 cases, and 371 felony arrests were a result of those, and contraband seized is in the neighborhood of about \$22 million. Assistant Director Dutton remarked the Gang Task Force initiative would not be as successful as they are without the support of the Sheriffs and Chiefs being part of these task forces as well as DPS and DCS.

Assistant Director Dutton added another aspect of the Gang Task Force is the training and outreach they do in the communities. Last year, Assistant Director Dutton shared there were 77 classes taught to groups, law enforcement, educators, and things of that nature to address the gang issue.

Assistant Director Dutton stated regional offices are staying very busy as well, adding since January, GBI has been requested to work 9 officer involved shooting/use of force cases, noting they are probably in the neighborhood of anywhere from 80 to a little over 100 officer involved shootings/use of force cases per year since we have been keeping track of it back in 2015, adding last year there were 102.

Regarding retention and turnover, Assistant Director Dutton noted there has been some improvement and the vacancy is 6.7%.

Assistant Director Dutton shared there is an Agent Academy in progress and the agency is at its max with Agent positions, stating there were 9 vacancies and there are 9 Agents going through the Academy currently. Also, there is a hiring weekend coming up this weekend in preparation for retirements and other vacancies that occur so those slots can be filled quickly.

Concerning the Crime Lab, Assistant Director Dutton noted staffing is currently at about 24 vacancies. We have 12 that we are putting on the payroll and they are in some form of hiring, with about 90% of the new hires going to Chemistry, which is the drug evidence discipline.

Assistant Director Dutton reported the backlog is highest as it has been in Chemistry, but it is coming down. If you look at the numbers, it is about 69%, which is about 9-10% from where it was a year ago, and a lot of that has to do with some of the strategies that have been put into place, which is the preliminary testing. Assistant Director Dutton added the next phase in that is trying to introduce a piece of equipment that would help Agents and Officers evaluate or field test drug evidence before it is actually submitted to the Lab, and then determination can be made as to what type of testing and which

items to test, hopefully helping with the compression so there is not as much evidence coming in as we try to get those numbers up.

Assistant Director Dutton advised within the Medical Examiner's Office, there are currently 16 Doctors in the position, leaving 3 vacancies. Assistant Director Dutton stated he thinks they are doing well, and he gave credit to the Medical Examiner's Office for the recruiting effort to get Doctors into Georgia to fill these critical vacancies. Assistant Director Dutton noted the preferred number of caseloads per Medical Examiner is around 250 cases per year and it is currently at 272, which is a little bit elevated, but it is much better than it was the previous year, which was 329.

Assistant Director Dutton announced a Forensic Anthropologist, Dr. Brittany Walter, has been employed on staff and is doing a great job.

Assistant Director Dutton reported GCIC is staying busy, noting GCIC is responsible for the Sex Offender Registry and the Protective Order Registry, and currently in the legislature there is a plan to create a Domestic Violence Registry. Assistant Director Dutton stated it is in the early stages of what it is going to look like and what the requirements are going to be.

Mr. Charles Sikes asked what Dr. Sandberg provided in the Neuropathology lecture, to which Assistant Director Dutton stated it is part of the Doctors' continuing education.

Mr. Charles Sikes asked if GBI still loses people to the Crime Lab in Atlanta to which Assistant Director Dutton stated maybe two years ago, we did have several leave in the firearms discipline, but as of late, no.

Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, reported on basic mandate training, stating the hours have been adjusted a couple of times and it is now down to 784. Director Wigginton stated that has allowed them to re-format the delivery into a 16-week delivery so each Academy around the state is able to offer 3 deliveries and on the main campus provide 5 to 6 deliveries to have some sessions in between the off-site delivery. Director Wigginton added this format has allowed them to make sure it does not create a backlog, and it allows 720 of those hours being delivered in person, so they are working 9-hour days over those 16 weeks and the other 64 hours is broken down over time as independent learning. Currently around the state and on the main campus, there are about 500 recruits in the basic mandate class.

Regarding the fire and law enforcement field delivery programs, Director Wigginton shared both have been huge successes, noting on the fire service side they have been able to fill about 90% of the requests and the law enforcement side is a little bit lower at about 50-60% because it is a newer program.

Director Wigginton announced on February 25th there will be an Extremism and Anti-Semitism Conference at the Center and on March 11th, the Center is partnering with the Governor's Office of Highway Safety on a live crash test involving a Polaris Ranger.

Director Wigginton shared there was a groundbreaking last Monday for the new basic training building.

Mr. Charles Sikes asked where the new basic training building will be on the campus, to which Director Wigginton stated it will be directly across from the DJJ building.

DONATIONS

Mrs. Lorri Smith, Georgia Department of Public Safety, requested approval of the following donation:

Two (2) PepperBall VK-SBL Pro Plus Launchers, One (1) PepperBall SCUBA Air Fill Kit, One (1) PepperBall VKS Maintenance Kit, Two Hundred (200) PepperBall VXR PAVA Live-X Powder Projectiles, and Two Hundred (200) PepperBall VXR INERT Projectiles	\$4,898.00	Liberty County Sheriff's Office
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The motion to accept these items was made by Mr. Roy Fickling, which was seconded by Mr. Willie Bolton and approved by the Board members.

Assistant Director Scott Dutton, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, requested approval of the following donation:

One (1) 2006 Honda Accord EX	\$3,000.00	LaGrange Police Department
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The motion to accept this item was made by Mr. Willie Bolton, which was seconded by Mr. Roy Fickling and approved by the Board members.

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

Three Hundred (300) Pallets	\$1,200.00	Green South Recycling
Furniture and Household Furnishings	\$1,000.00	Circle of Care Thrift Store

The motion to accept these items was made by Chief Craig Tully, which was seconded by Chief Dee Meadows and approved by the Board members.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Major Andrew Montgomery, Georgia Department of Public Safety Commercial Vehicle Enforcement, requested approval of Georgia Department of Public Safety's Vehicle Immobilization Maximum Rate Tariff No. 2 applying to Nonconsensual Vehicle Immobilization (Booting).

Chief Dee Meadows made the motion to approve the DPS Vehicle Immobilization Maximum Rate Tariff No. 2 applying to Nonconsensual Vehicle Immobilization (Booting). This motion was seconded by Mr. Stacey Cotton 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 Chief Craig Tully and voted approved by the Board members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Craig Tully
Secretary