

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY

January 14, 2021
Virtual and Call-in Meeting

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Willie C. Bolton
Lt. Nicholas D. Ellis
Mr. George Hartwig
Mr. Richard Hyde
Chief Leonard “Dee” Meadows
Mr. Rossie Ross
Mr. Charles D. Sikes
Sheriff Joey Terrell
Chief Craig Tully
Commissioner Timothy C. Ward
Mr. Ellison G. Wood

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Chief Bruce Carlisle
Chief Stacey Cotton
Sheriff Dane Kirby
Commissioner Michael Nail

OTHERS:

Ms. Tina Piper, Attorney General’s Office
Mrs. Jennifer Pendarvis, Board Liaison
Commissioner Christopher C. Wright, Department of Public Safety
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
Lt. Mark Riley, Department of Public Safety
Mrs. Lorrie Smith, Department of Public Safety
Ms. Joan Crumpler, Department of Public Safety
Ms. Kaycee Larson, Department of Public Safety
Ms. Franka Young, Department of Public Safety
Director Vic Reynolds, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Mr. John Melvin, Assistant 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
Director Mike Ayers, POST Council
Captain Greg Chastain, Habersham County Sheriff’s Office
Richard Belcher, WSBTV
Ms. Cheryl Buie

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the January 14, 2021 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 asked Sheriff Joey Terrell to introduce his special guest. Sheriff Terrell recognized Habersham County Sheriff's Office Captain of Patrol, Greg Chastain.

Vice-Chairman Wood recognized his special guest, Mr. Mike Ayers, Director of POST Council.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the December 10, 2020 BPS minutes. Sheriff Joey Terrell made the motion to approve the December 10, 2020 minutes. This was seconded by Chief Dee Meadows and voted approved by the Board members.

DIRECTOR REPORTS

Commissioner Christopher Wright, Georgia Department of Public Safety, reported that Lt. Colonel Billy Hitchens is doing much better but remains in Candler Hospital in Savannah. Commissioner Wright also reported that Lt. Colonel Stephanie Stallings is doing better after testing positive for COVID.

In reference to the December monthly report regarding enforcement activity and staffing levels for the Department of Public Safety, as well as enforcement efforts for calendar year 2020, Commissioner Wright announced he is exceptionally proud of the dedication DPS personnel have put forth despite the challenges of 2020. Commissioner Wright added DPS personnel continue to provide exceptional service to the citizens of Georgia.

Commissioner Wright gave an update on the 110th Trooper School, which began January 3rd. Commissioner Wright reported the class started with 92 cadets and the class currently stands at 56.

Commissioner Wright shared this Friday, the Department of Public Safety will graduate the 5th and 6th Motor Carrier Compliance Schools and will have 9 graduating cadets.

Regarding the COVID situation with DPS employees, Commissioner Wright shared there are currently 33 employees confirmed positive with the Coronavirus and to date, there have been 167 DPS employees confirmed with the virus and the Department of Public Safety has assisted with 18 COVID vaccine transports.

Commissioner Wright stated the recent unrest and breach, which occurred at the United States Capitol on January 6th has created a tremendous amount of hostile rhetoric across the nation. Commissioner Wright shared Federal law enforcement is reporting armed protests being planned at all 50 State Capitols and the United States Capitol between January 16th and January 20th. Commissioner Wright advised the Department of Public Safety Command Staff are monitoring the intel being received from GISAC and FBI and are continuously updating and evaluating the Department's security plan during this operational period. Commissioner Wright stated the Department has a plan that includes partners

to prevent any unlawful, violent, and destructive behavior. Commissioner Wright added the Department of Public Safety will continue to support lawful and peaceful assembly of citizens' first amendment rights but expressed the Department will not tolerate lawlessness or violent behavior. Commissioner Wright further stated the Department has increased its presence at the State Capitol on Monday, which was the beginning of the 2021 legislative session and felt it was necessary to protect legislators and the State Capitol.

Commissioner Wright presented an updated Department of Public Safety Organizational Chart for approval by the Board. Commissioner Wright explained in March of 2020 the Department had 26 Captain positions within the rank structure, and through attrition there are currently 17 Captains. Commissioner Wright stated the Department's goal is to reorganize and maintain a lower number of Captain positions while providing structure and management to several of the specialty units. Captain Wright added the proposed organizational chart will create Troop J and Troop K within the Field Operations Division. Commissioner Wright added each new Troop will be overseen by a Captain, who will support the 9 Field Troops and both Troops will report to the South Adjutant. Commissioner Wright further explained Troop J will consist of the Specialized Collision Reconstruction Team (SCRT), the Implied Consent Unit, and the Safety Education and Recruiting Units; Troop K will include the SWAT Team and the Criminal Interdiction Unit (CIU). Commissioner Wright noted these Units currently do not have a positive career path for those employees. Commissioner Wright shared the SCRT Team members are currently assigned to Troop Commanders and they cannot promote beyond the rank of Corporal. Commissioner Wright explained the SCRT Unit was created to provide expertise in crash reconstruction and the Command Staff has found the Troop Commanders simply do not have time to provide adequate and essential oversight that is required in that expertise. Commissioner Wright noted crash reconstruction within the 9 Troops needs to be consistent and with a superb quality, and just like a homicide investigator, knowledge is gained with tenure and experience, and the Department needs a career path to retain this experience within our Specialized Collision Reconstruction Team.

The motion to approve the Department of Public Safety's Organizational Chart, creating Troops J and K was made by Lt. Nick Ellis, which was seconded by Sheriff Joey Terrell and Chief Craig Tully and voted approved by the Board members.

Director Vic Reynolds, Georgia Bureau of Investigations, announced the GBI is planning to hold a GBI Agent School in March. Director Reynolds also announced at the end of the month, Deputy Director of GCIC, Terri Fisher, will be retiring from the Georgia Bureau of Investigations after 30 plus years of service. Director Reynolds stated he anticipates announcing a new Deputy Director as early as next week and will notify the Board at the next meeting who that individual is. Director Reynolds expressed Deputy Director Fisher will be missed and commented how the GCIC unit has done a really good job at getting the next generation ready.

Director Reynolds notified the Board the Bureau's Cold Case Unit is up and running. Director Reynolds stated 6 retired GBI personnel, along with a retired inspector, were brought back to the GBI to run the Unit together. Director Reynolds further noted that combined, these personnel average over

27 years experience working homicide cases around the state. Director Reynolds stated he is optimistic about solving some of the cold cases during 2021, with the availability of DNA evidence.

In regard to the election response, Director Reynolds reported the Bureau has been working on some issues and the Secretary of State's Office requested the GBI for assistance. Director Reynolds stated security issues are a big concern for the GBI, and GISAC has been very busy working together with federal, state, and local partners including the Department of Public Safety / Capitol Police. Director Reynolds expressed his confidence in the security of the buildings and promised his personnel will be available to provide the assistance DPS needs.

As of the end of December, Director Reynolds reported the Bureau had investigated 95 Officer Involved Shootings in 2020, which is up 11 from the year before. Director Reynolds noted the shootings are from all around the state, but the largest percent of them are in the Metro Atlanta area. Director Reynolds added he is hoping and praying this number will be lower in 2021.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked Director Reynolds if he knew the approximate number of cold cases they are focusing on and Director Reynolds reported the GBI has 450-500 cold case murders, from circa 1970 forward. Director Reynolds noted those are cases the GBI had roles in as either the lead agency or an assisting agency. Director Reynolds explained the Cold Case Unit created a "solvability criteria" and Regions were contacted by the Unit for 4-5 cases they believe are solvable based on their involvement, and now the Unit has begun looking into those cases, applying that criteria.

Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, asked for prayers for employee Richard Odom, who works in the Training Center's CIT section, who has been in the hospital in Walton County with COVID-19 and is on a ventilator.

Director Wigginton announced for December 2020, the Training Center offered 300 different courses, indicating the Center is continuing to serve citizens and customers in the state. Director Wigginton further stated the Center was able to obtain Chromebooks for Basic Mandate and every academy has started using this technology. Director Wigginton also announced Mental Health First Aid is being added to Basic Mandate, so all graduates will have this training.

In regard to the Police Academy, Director Wigginton reported the Training Center worked with instructors to re-vamp the School Resource Officer Program and added blocks of instruction on gangs, human trafficking, and how to interact with youths. Director Wigginton also reported, with the Fire Academy, at the close of business this year, the Training Center exceeded all previous years with the number of classes and students, hitting almost 30,000 students, which is almost a 50% increase. Director Wigginton expressed his appreciation for the Fire Academy for working to affect those classes.

DONATIONS

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

| | | |
|---|-------------|---|
| One (1) Kustom Signals LIDAR Unit | \$2,790.00 | City of Blackshear |
| One (1) VIZIO 50" M-Series Quantum Display | \$350.00 | Washington County Sheriff's Office |
| Window Tint, Spray-in Bedliner, Toolbox, and Weapons Storage Box for Two (2) Ford F-150 Patrol Trucks | \$4,6000.00 | White County Sheriff's Office |
| One (1) Large Granite Marker and Marker Engraving for Fallen Troopers | \$3,000.00 | Fraternal Order of Police, Georgia Lodge #100 |

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.

Director Mike Ayers of POST Council briefed the Board on the investigation of the 106th GSP Trooper School. Director Ayers announced at the December 9th Council meeting, the Council resolved their investigation and as a result, Director Ayers reported the Council took sanctions on four individuals. Director Ayers stated the investigation is now complete and explained those individuals do have the right to appeal those sanctions.

Lt. Nick Ellis asked Director Ayers how many individuals the POST Council investigated, to which Director Ayers advised they investigated three entire Trooper Schools: the 104th, 105th, and 106th; approximately 100 individuals.

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 reported the DOC has about 260 active COVID cases statewide in the offender population and has a 91% recovery rate. Commissioner Ward explained the DOC has had about 2900 positive cases statewide and of those, 2645 are considered recovered. Regarding DOC staff, Commissioner Ward stated their staff has been hit pretty hard, with about 1431 staff members out of approximately 10,000 having contracted COVID. Commissioner Ward noted out of those 1431, 1250 have recovered, which is about an 87% recovery rate within staff. Commissioner Ward further noted there are currently 5 offenders in the hospital and the Department of Corrections has had as many as 38 in the hospital at one time and have had at least 17 on ventilators at one point, but only 1 currently on a ventilator. Commissioner Ward reported the DOC has had 86 deaths statewide, with a standing population of 46,000 offenders, but when considering intake into the system and offenders being released from the system, the number of offenders during the entire pandemic is almost 71,000 offenders in DOC charge. Commissioner Ward expressed 86 deaths during this time is very low and praised his staff for doing a great job during this time. Commissioner Ward further stated the Department is starting to receive vaccines and are planning to vaccinate 1700 offenders starting the next week or two, those 65 and older.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Craig Tully
Secretary