

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY
July 10, 2025
Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Forsyth, Georgia

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Willie Bolton
Mr. Roy H. Fickling
Mr. Richard Hyde
Sheriff E. Neal Jump
Chief Leonard “Dee” Meadows
Chief Janet L. Moon
Commissioner Michael Nail
Mr. Charles D. Sikes
Ms. Susan K. Treadaway
Chief Craig Tully
Mr. Ellison G. Wood

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. Stacey Cotton
Sheriff Jimmy McDuffie
Mr. Billy New
Commissioner Tyrone Oliver

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 Robert Balkcom, Department of Public Safety
Major Walt Christian, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Chris Rodewolt, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major David Bryant, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Gary Langford, Department of Public Safety/Capitol Police
Captain Jonathon Huff, Department of Public Safety/CVE
Lieutenant Brandon Brown, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lieutenant Dustin Jones, Department of Public Safety/CVE
Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Division 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
Training Bureau Director Ike McConnell, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Operations Bureau Director Cindy Jones, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Clare McGuire, Georgia Department of Public Safety

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the July 10, 2025 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 called for approval of the May 8, 2025 BPS minutes. Mr. Willie Bolton made the motion to approve the May 8, 2025 minutes. This was seconded by Sheriff Neal Jump and voted approved by the Board members.

DIRECTOR REPORTS

Commissioner Billy Hitchens, Georgia Department of Public Safety, reported the 119th Trooper School is currently in its 26th week. It began with 60 Cadets and currently has 30. Commissioner Hitchens noted all 30 Cadets are in field training and will graduate on September 5, 2025, adding the prior sworn Cadets will pick up their vehicles on the 16th and then report to the field to work.

Commissioner Hitchens shared the 120th Trooper School will begin Sunday, July 13th and the plan is the begin with 65 Cadets; and the 13th Motor Carrier School has 7 cadets, which started with 12, and will graduate tomorrow.

Commissioner Hitchens announced effective July 1st, Motor Carrier Compliance Division is officially called Commercial Vehicle Enforcement. Commissioner Hitchens explained the idea of the name change was brought by Major Montgomery with the support of the men and women in the field, wanting a name that more accurately reflected the work the men and women do on a daily basis, so HB 116 was introduced and thanks to the support of the General Assembly, the bill passed and was signed into law by Governor Kemp. Commissioner Hitchens stated one of the things we talked about is who really knows what motor carrier means; people know what commercial vehicle enforcement means so it gives a better idea of what they are actually doing. Commissioner Hitchens stated you will see patches change and there will be a change on the vehicle. Commissioner Hitchens shared we got hit early on with social media posts about how much money we are costing people, but it has been very minimal.

Commissioner Hitchens reported during the week of June 9th there were multiple protests regarding “No Kings” groups and Group 5051. Commissioner Hitchens advised there were multiple IRT teams on standby to respond if needed and several deployed. On Saturday, June 14th, Commissioner Hitchens shared there was a “No Kings” protest at the Capitol, and the Liberty Plaza was packed and there were no issues, stating we actually had some people in the crowd come to our people and ask to have people removed. Commissioner Hitchens added also, on June 14th, there was a significant increase in the number of other protests across the state. Two of the protests were immigration protests in Brookhaven and one in Embry Hills Village, both in DeKalb County. Commissioner Hitchens noted both went off pretty well until it was time to end, and that is when the crowd was trying to disperse and protestors threw rocks, fireworks, and bottles at law enforcement, and in Brookhaven, protestors went around and found three police cars left unattended and damaged the police cars. Commissioner Hitchens stated Troop/Region C was deployed to assist with that crowd and ended up with 9 arrests. In Embry Hills Village, Troop/Region C, along with Troop K had 42 personnel there for two reasons: to keep them off the interstate and help DeKalb County PD with public safety issues. They arrested 29 suspects that day and DeKalb deployed gas.

Commissioner Hitchens reported the July 4th travel period began on Thursday, July 3rd and ended on Sunday, July 6th, and unfortunately, 13 lives were lost across the state. Commissioner Hitchens added there were over 20,000 traffic stops; almost 500 DUIs; 11,000 citations; 14,000 warnings; and 173 motorist assists.

Commissioner Hitchens shared on July 6th, DPS personnel wrapped up the FIFA World Cup which began when teams started arriving the second week of June. Commissioner Hitchens noted Mercedes-Benz stadium hosted 6 matches; Macon served as one of the base camps at the beginning of the tournament but moved to Atlanta. Commissioner Hitchens explained at all 6 of the matches, we either had personnel deployed or on standby just because we had no idea what to expect and we are happy to say we had no issues, which we are very proud of. Commissioner Hitchens added the other primary role during the event was escorts for the teams, officials, and tournament personnel and DPS worked with local, state, and federal partners to make sure it was done without any issues; and DPS also had the NASCAR Xfinity series race in Troop D, which was handled with 40 Troopers, and they did a tremendous job once again.

Commissioner Hitchens explained sworn personnel are currently in the process of completing the Immigration 287 (g) Training, noting the training is being done online through FLETC. Commissioner Hitchens advised the Command Staff went through the training first to see if it was the kind of training we wanted to provide, and right now, we are in the process of having our supervisors - Corporals through Captains - go through it, and we just sent out the message for our Troopers and Officers to go through it, so, in the next month or two all personnel that are eligible to be trained will be trained. Commissioner Hitchens shared some personnel have already worked with ICE on several details and they continue to ask for our help and we will help them on a case-by-case basis. Commissioner Hitchens reported DPS has someone detached to the ICE Task Force and he has stayed very busy.

Commissioner Hitchens reported on June 12th, there was a chase out of Laurens County that travelled into Wheeler County and during the chase, there were shots fired at the pursuing officers. After the chase, one of our Troopers was out looking for the person that fled on foot. The violator fired several rounds at the patrol car and two rounds struck the car pretty close to the windshield. The SOG SWAT team was deployed to try negotiations; GBI helped with negotiations, but it didn't work. Commissioner Hitchens stated the violator was offered water and when he came to get the water, SWAT threw some flash bangs and shot him with tasers, then he was taken into custody. Commissioner Hitchens noted it is suspected the violators are connected to several homicides in Florida.

Regarding building projects, Commissioner Hitchens shared Post 19-Swainsboro is in the process of developing a conceptual design for the building and placement on the property and we are discussing long term leases with the Airport Authority; we have received the preliminary civil drawing on Post 21-Sylvania, which has been approved and sent to Legal for review; site work for Oconee should begin soon; the ribbon cutting for Post 40-Worth was this week. Commissioner Hitchens also stated an area at Headquarters has been repaved and set up for the Motor Unit to have a place for training and it has also been used for multi-agency training, so you will see Troopers training with other agencies.

Concerning Fleet, Commissioner Hitchens advised half of the Mustangs that have been ordered are in, with the remainder being built; we just got word we will not be able to purchase the new Chargers until 2027 which is going to push us back, but they are offering the Hemi motors in them. Commissioner Hitchens stated you will start seeing the new Commercial Vehicle Enforcement decals on the cars but you will see a mix of patches and decals for a while because we didn't think it was fiscally responsible to just bring everybody in take it off; as they come in and get body work or get work done in the garage they will take those old decals off and put the new ones on, and they received 2 new shirts, so as they get new shirts they can add to the package. Commissioner Hitchens shared DPS is trying a mobile spike for ten patrol cars that mounts to the car, so you are not having to find somebody to get ahead of the chase; you get beside the car to deploy it, hit the brakes, and the violator runs over it, and it supposedly lets their tires deflate. Commissioner Hitchens stated this is being used a lot in Florida and we are going to try it and see if it is something we can put in our high activity areas around the state.

Commissioner Hitchens advised he received some information about a bill that passed this last session about items being built in China and Russia that has us concerned since we have a lot of Lenovo computers we just bought. Commissioner Hitchens noted we are working through that to see what will be or will not be allowed.

Vice-Chairman Wood commended Commissioner Hitchens on the activity the reports continue to show; and thanked Major Montgomery and Captain Huff for CVE Officers initiating an action with the Bulloch County Sheriff for additional support.

Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, reported on investigative updates stating in June there was a situation where an individual contacted GEMA and made threats to shoot GBI Agents. He was located in the Calhoun area and was arrested; the West Georgia Gang Task Force, which is the newest gang task force in Columbus, worked an operation with Muscogee County, FBI, DEA, Georgia State Patrol, and the Lee County Sheriff's Office where they executed search warrants and 10 subjects were arrested on drug and firearms charges; seized 108 pounds of marijuana; 20 pounds of cocaine; 78 grams of meth; 158 oxycodone pills, and ecstasy pills.

Director Hosey shared on June 2nd, there was a subject who traveled from North Carolina to Austell to the P.O.S.T. office, who came down to appeal his probation with GA P.O.S.T. Director Hosey explained after being denied his appeal, he physically assaulted three members of the P.O.S.T. staff, two of which were sworn investigators. Director Hosey shared Austell Police Department worked it initially and then got GBI involved in it because of potential threats that had been made toward the Walton County Sheriff and his staff, where he had been a previous employee. Director Hosey stated once GBI got involved in the investigation, it was learned the threats were actually made out of North Carolina, before the violator left to come down, so North Carolina Bureau of Investigation was notified.

Director Hosey advised the Cold Case Unit has reviewed or are reinvestigating 40 cold cases, indicating 15 were requests from designated family members and 25 have been GBI initiated; they have also opened 13 cold cases on unidentified remains in hopes to identify the victims with Forensic Investigative Genetic Genealogy and up to this point 4 of those unidentified remains have been identified through that process.

Director Hosey reported from January 1st to June 30th, we have investigated a total of 35 Officer Involved Shootings.

Director Hosey stated Colonel Hitchens mentioned the “No Kings” protests that took place a few weeks ago, prior to those protests with the Colonel’s help and Chief Schierbaum we had an inter-agency leadership meeting at DPS Headquarters in preparation of this and some other events. Director Hosey noted it felt like we could bring the leadership of the state together and get to know each other and talk about the resources that are available on the local, state, and federal level, adding there were representatives from the metro area, the Chief’s and Sheriff’s Associations, state, and federal agencies so information could be spread throughout the state.

Concerning the Investigative Division, Director Hosey reported there were 579 cases opened for the month of May; 87 of them were Crimes Against Persons; 29 were Drug Investigations; and over 400 were Other Investigations.

Regarding GISAC, Georgia Information Sharing and Analysis Center, Director Hosey advised they processed 1,472 requests for information in the month of May which is Threats to Life, Suspicious Activity, and the See Send App, which had 877 tips in the month of May.

Director Hosey reported the next Special Agent class begins on August 18th and they will graduate around November; August 2nd will be the first round of interviews for the next round of hiring.

In reference to the Crime Lab, Director Hosey advised the requests for services in the month of May went down by about 15%. The number of completed reports pushed out increased by about 16%.

Director Hosey gave an update on the pilot project for drug identification and reducing the backlog in the Crime Lab. Director Hosey explained in short, it is taking and conducting the first stage of drug testing on powder substances through mass spectrometry so that we can get some sort of initial report back out to our partners and prosecutors that gives them something to work with for pleas or whatever the case may be, so they can go to trial; however, we can still conduct the full services that needs to be done. Director Hosey shared the project was implemented on March 17th of this year at our Headquarters Lab, and as of July 3rd the backlog has been eliminated for the Blue Ridge District Circuit and it is being maintained by testing all new submissions that are coming in. Director Hosey advised 2 judicial circuits that had similar backlogs now have their backlogs eliminated. Director Hosey stated new submissions that are coming in are being tested by this same means. Additionally, Director Hosey shared 70% of the cases from the Douglas Judicial Circuit, which was the other circuit in the initial portion of this project, have been completed; the Rome Judicial Circuit has agreed to be

next; and Chemistry Management is working with the West Georgia Judicial Circuit to implement testing there as well. Director Hosey noted as this testing moves out, training will be scheduled for the Central (Macon) Lab and they will start implementing the same testing for our Ocmulgee Judicial Circuit, and once that has been successfully started, we will move to the Northeast Lab and Coastal Lab. Also, within that same program, Director Hosey referred to “phase two”, some funding was received from the FY26 budget for 3 portable mass spectrometers to get them into the Crime Labs to utilized within the lab to help with the backlog situation, and also to set the protocols so the portable mass specs can be pushed into the field to do some of the primary testing to potentially stop the submission from ever coming to our Crime Lab.

Director Hosey reported the Crime Lab has 22 Scientists in training in their respective disciplines right now and 2 Crime Lab Scientists were hired in the month of June and 1 Death Investigation Specialist. Director Hosey shared autopsies increased this month by about 30% but the turnaround time of getting them out at 90 days was up to almost 64%. Director Hosey advised 3 fellows graduated from the Fellowship Program in the ME’s Office this month; 1 returned to the military; 1 is going to Fulton County; and 1 is staying with GBI, and that still puts MEs at 15 because of a retirement.

Director Hosey stated there was a need to hire a Forensic Anthropologist to help with some unidentified remains and a candidate has been selected and is in background.

Regarding GCIC, Director Hosey shared there was a 2% increase in CJIS transactions processed for the month of May, which was over 67 million; and also, during the month of May, the percentage of electronic fingerprint cards versus mailed or manual fingerprint cards was at 99.6%.

Concerning building and facilities, Director Hosey shared construction on the expansion of the ME’s Office at Headquarters should start by the end of the month; and the Oconee County property that is the Region 7 Office should start soon; a new Region 10 Office is in the design process.

Director Hosey announced the promotions of Mr. Michael McCarriagher, Manager for the Trace Evidence Section, Mr. Joe Karpf, Manager for the Chemistry Section; Ms. Nelly Miles, Director of Public and Governmental Affairs has retired, and Sara Lue was promoted as her replacement.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked if there is an obligation to serve with the Fellowship Program, to which Director Hosey stated there is not.

Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, reported the numbers continue to rise every year, and with that there have been some organizational changes. Director Wigginton stated there is still a Deputy Director, but 2 individuals have been promoted with some restructuring. Director Wigginton noted in the past 10 years the Training Center has grown and the staff has grown almost 46% and anytime you get a 46% increase in staff you get problems. Director Wigginton explained they broke down sections and divisions and created a director that is over the training section and a director over the operations section. Director Wigginton announced Mr. Ike McConnell was promoted to Director over the Training Section and Ms. Cindy Jones was promoted to Director over

the Operations Section. Director Wigginton stated if you look at their experience and what they bring to the table, they both know how to manage people and programs and we have a lot of that going on right now, and sometimes where we fall short is in the delivery and how we get the programs out to the individuals that need it.

Director Wigginton stated on the law enforcement side, you have a lot of police departments in the state that only have 4 or 6 officers, so they are not getting the critical skills training they need; they do not have the manpower to send somebody for an 8 hour class much less a 16 or 40 hour class. Director Wigginton shared there will be a Use of Force team reaching out to different districts and regions to find these smaller agencies and “set up shop” in local communities so officers can get the critical skills training they need such as live Taser, firearms, non-deadly tools and run them through live scenario-based training. Director Wigginton noted for those in the room that have done live scenario-based training, it saves lives, whether it is citizens’ lives or officers’ lives, at the end of the day, it is making Georgia safe. Director Wigginton advised the use of force unit going around the state of Georgia and hitting these local communities, like what has been done with the fire training, is going to be their focus.

Regarding basic training, Director Wigginton reported Monday started the second offering of the 20-week basic mandate with 447 individuals starting the Academy. Director Wigginton shared the North Central Academy located in Austell, the last Academy that was considered a true regional Academy, reported they will be closing their doors. Director Wigginton advised stated they have to figure out what programs to cut a little bit, and what personnel look like around the state to ensure none of those agencies suffer; however, Director Wigginton stated there will not be an officer in the state of Georgia who wants to go to the Academy that will not have a seat on one of our campuses. Director Wigginton shared they have reached out to OPB and received approval to enter into a contract in the same space North Central ran to open up an Academy and run it temporarily, but again the money is going to be for a lease and we are having to pull staff from all other locations around the state, but Director Wigginton stated they will be going to the legislature to ask to open it up as a full time Academy. Director Wigginton noted in the meantime, seating in Rome, Forsyth, Alpharetta has been increased.

Sheriff Neal Jump thanked Director Wigginton for his help in getting the management training into the field.

DONATIONS

Commissioner Billy Hitchens, Georgia Department of Public Safety, requested approval of the following donations:

Food, Lodging, and Fuel for Two Troopers to attend the VFW National Convention	\$4,000.00	Department of Georgia Veterans of Foreign War
--	------------	---

Food and Lodging for Three Troopers to attend the 19 th Annual Operation One Voice Honor Ride and Warrior Weekend	\$5,025.00	Operation One Voice
--	------------	---------------------

The motion to accept these items was made by Chief Craig Tully, which was seconded by Mr. Roy Fickling and voted approved by the Board members.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Captain Jonathan Huff, Georgia Department of Public Safety, requested preliminary approval of a 10% increase to the Department of Public Safety's Maximum Rate Tariff No. 6 for Intrastate Rates and Charges for Household Goods with the final adoption on August 14, 2025 after a public hearing on July 29, 2025.

Mr. Willie Bolton made the motion to accept the preliminary Maximum Rate Tariff increase with the final adoption of August 14, 2025, after a public hearing on July 29, 2025. This motion was seconded by Chief Janet Moon and voted approved by the Board members.

Ms. Clare McGuire, Georgia Department of Public Safety, requested approval of a Resolution to authorize the Commissioner of Public Safety to enter into any negotiations, contracts, and agreements necessary to effectuate the execution of four leases between the State of Georgia and Southern Linc providing for placement of Southern Linc Communications Equipment on DPS-owned Communications Towers.

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

Ms. Rhonda Westbrook, Georgia Bureau of Investigation / GCIC, requested initial adoption of proposed/amended GCIC Council Rules to be approved after a public hearing is held.

The motion to accept the initial GCIC Council Rules changes was made by Mr. Roy Fickling, which was seconded by Mr. Willie Bolton and voted approved by the Board members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Craig Tully
Secretary