

## **BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

June 13, 2024

Virtual and Call-In Meeting

### **BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mr. Willie Bolton  
Mr. Roy H. Fickling  
Mr. Richard Hyde  
Sheriff Jimmy McDuffie  
Chief Leonard "Dee" Meadows  
Commissioner Michael Nail  
Mr. Billy New  
Mr. Charles D. Sikes  
Sheriff Joey Terrell  
Ms. Susan K. Treadaway  
Chief Craig Tully  
Mr. Ellison G. Wood

### **BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Mr. Stacey Cotton  
Chief Janet L. Moon  
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  
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  
Captain Jonathan Huff, Department of Public Safety/MCCD  
Lieutenant Richard Sikes, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Lieutenant Auston Allen, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
Deputy Director Rhonda Westbrook, Georgia Bureau of Investigation/GCIC  
Deputy Director Cleveland Miles, Georgia Bureau of Investigation/Crime Lab  
SAC Lindsay Smith, Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
ASAC Danielle O'Conner, Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
Mr. Jacob Harmon, Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Deputy Director Cheryl Greathouse, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Mr. Ara Baronian, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Mr. Hal Braswell, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Ms. Lorri Smith, Georgia Department of Public Safety  
Ms. Clare McGuire, Georgia Department of Public Safety  
Ms. Cindy Jones, Georgia Public Safety Training Center

Ms. Meaghan Carver, Office of Planning and Budget  
Ms. Sara Letson, Office of Planning and Budget  
Ms. Crystal Munoz, Office of Planning and Budget  
Ms. Megan Nolan, Office of Planning and Budget  
Mr. Cody Pyle, Office of Planning and Budget  
Ms. Angela Batey, APCO  
Mr. Bill T. Akers

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the June 13, 2024 Board of Public Safety meeting to order.

Lieutenant Richard Sikes gave the Invocation and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice-Chairman Wood introduced the guests in the room, Georgia Bureau of Investigation SAC Lindsay Smith and ASAC Danielle O'Conner, and Mr. Bill T. Akers.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the May 1, 2024 BPS minutes. Sheriff Joey Terrell made the motion to approve the May 1, 2024 minutes. This was seconded by Mr. Willie Bolton and voted approved by the Board members.

### **DIRECTOR REPORTS**

Commissioner Billy Hitchens, Georgia Department of Public Safety, reported the 117<sup>th</sup> Trooper School is on week 21 of training with 40 cadets, and the non-mandated cadets are scheduled to go to FTO on June 15<sup>th</sup>, adding 11 mandated cadets are already in field training. Commissioner Hitchens shared graduation will be September 13<sup>th</sup> at GPSTC. Commissioner Hitchens also noted the 118<sup>th</sup> Trooper School is scheduled to begin on Sunday, July 21<sup>st</sup> and it is estimated that school will have about 56-63 cadets. Commissioner Hitchens remarked recruitment for the 119<sup>th</sup> Trooper School continues, and it will begin January 12, 2025. Commissioner Hitchens also reported the 12<sup>th</sup> Motor Carrier School started on May 19<sup>th</sup> and currently has 11 cadets.

Commissioner Hitchens updated the Board regarding two injuries in the past month, advising Motor Carrier Officer Jeffery Martin stopped a truck pulling a trailer associated with a BOLO on I-85 in Franklin County and during the stop, the violator announced he was a gang member and refused any commands the Officer gave him. Commissioner Hitchens stated the Officer and violator got into a scuffle and the driver tried to drive off with MCO Martin still on the truck. MCO Martin jumped off the side of the truck and the trailer hit him in the back. Commissioner Hitchens advised with help from the GBI's Gang Unit, it was determined the driver tried to run over MCO Martin with the trailer, to which he admitted. Commissioner Hitchens reported the trailer hit MCO Martin in the back and he suffered fractures that will not require surgery and he is at home recuperating. Commissioner Hitchens explained the other injury involved TFC Zachary Walker who was driving on Riverwatch Parkway in Augusta when a wrong way DUI driver struck him head-on, noting TFC Walker has some pretty serious injuries, and after two surgeries, and he is home now recuperating; however, he has to go back for more surgeries, as he has had some issues with his leg and his foot, but he is in great spirits.

Commissioner Hitchens announced the Department is preparing for the Presidential Debate on June 27<sup>th</sup> and there have been a couple of security meetings, but everything is still up in the air.

Commissioner Hitchens stated all action is preliminary right now, and they have been working with APD and Secret Service.

Commissioner Hitchens shared Troop G assisted local agencies during May with large multi-post enforcement patrols that is associated with May Day and concert events. Commissioner Hitchens stated there have been no issues and the agencies have been very appreciative of Troop G providing extra manpower when needed.

Commissioner Hitchens updated the Board on activity on a couple of the specialty units so far for 2024, reporting Aviation has conducted 144 flights, 34 were searches with 16 subjects located.

Commissioner Hitchens noted the Bell 412 hoist is in the process of being prepared and will be completed in late August, which will allow members to get out and do some long line hoists.

Commissioner Hitchens also shared all aircraft are having the new radios installed when they go down for service, and two FLIR 380HD cameras have been purchased and installed on aircraft and are in service. Commissioner Hitchens reported the K-9 unit has 50 total K-9 teams, 24 are dual purpose, 19 are single purpose narcotic K-9s, and 7 EOD K-9s, and so far this year they have completed 1,164 deployments, have arrested 151 people, and have recovered 62 firearms; the SWAT team has had 60 calls for service this year; the Dive team has had 8 calls; CIU has recovered 87 stolen vehicles, 21 stolen firearms, has had 118 felony charges, and 55 criminals apprehended; and the CIU unit has made 22 felony drug arrests, apprehended 32 criminals, recovered 6 stolen vehicles and 29 weapons.

Commissioner Hitchens reported the state-wide radio system installs have been completed on all vehicles and the system is up and running. Commissioner Hitchens added the state-wide CAD should be rolled out starting in Troop C in the middle of July, making one CAD for the state.

Regarding construction projects, Commissioner Hitchens reported Post 8, Madison's renovation should be starting July 1<sup>st</sup>; Post 18, Reidsville is in the punch list phase and should be completed in the middle of July; Post 35, Jekyll Island is on track to be completed at the end of October; Post 40, Sylvester will be completed at the end of year 2025; the project superintendent of the Headquarters Hangar was on site this week getting ready to start that project; and the Mansion Post has the walls up and hopefully it will be completed at the end of this year or beginning of next year.

Mr. Charles Sikes commended DPS, GBI, GPSTC on historical recordings and reminded everyone today's date is the anniversary of the decision of Miranda in 1966, noting the impact it has had on law enforcement and the training on law enforcement.

Commissioner Hitchens updated the Board on the memorial for the original Police Academy at DPS Headquarters, sharing the sign is up and the informational placard has been ordered.

Mr. Willie Bolton asked for an update on Oconee Post, to which Commissioner Hitchens responded he has looked at the property and if everything works out, the site will have DDS, GBI, and DPS,

explaining some site work will need to be done before there can be a groundbreaking, but it is moving forward.

Mr. Roy Fickling asked where manpower is for Troopers, to which Commissioner Hitchens stated the goal is 1,000 Troopers and if we stay on track, we can reach it.

Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, reported the Cold Case Unit, along with Athens-Clarke County Police Department has arrested a subject for the murder of Tara Louise Baker 23 years ago.

Director Hosey shared back in May, the Gang Unit, working with the APD, the FBI, and local partners, participated in "Operation Spring Clean" to target violent criminal street gang members in the Atlanta metropolitan area, which led to the arrest of 7 criminal street gang members on multiple charges, including violation of the Georgia Street Gang Terrorism and Prevention Act.

Director Hosey stated recently, indictments were announced on the 20 individuals charged on the gang related shooting death of a 4-year-old in Athens.

Regarding the Cold Case Unit, Director Hosey reported the Coleman-Baker Act request webform has been on the GBI website since June 30, 2023, and 28 cold cases are being reviewed at this time, noting 11 were requests from designated family members and 17 were GBI initiated. There have also been 9 cold case unidentified remains cases opened in hopes of identifying the victims with forensic genetic genealogy.

Director Hosey shared from January to May 31, there have been 26 officer involved shootings and this number has gone up this past week.

Concerning staffing, Director Hosey reported the 53<sup>rd</sup> Special Agent class graduates next Friday with 14 Agents. Director Hosey added there is currently 317 Special Agents in the Investigative Division but 14 have accepted conditional offers to begin on June 17<sup>th</sup> and another 2 that should accept conditional offers to begin on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Director Hosey shared in the Crime Lab, there are 214 Scientists with approximately 30 vacancies in various disciplines within the Crime Lab, noting there are some in the hiring process and 18 Scientists are in training right now. Director Hosey indicated training can take anywhere from 18 months to 2 years depending on the discipline.

Regarding Medical Examiners, Director Hosey stated 12 of the 19 positions are filled as of June 1<sup>st</sup>. Director Hosey added the next round of fellows will begin later this summer and 2 of those in the fellowship program are committed to the GBI. Director Hosey also shared in October, one of the current Medical Examiners assigned to Headquarters is going to be transferring to the Macon ME's office, which will put 2 Medical Examiners there.

Director Hosey reported through May, the Investigative Division is at over 600 cases and 34% of those are crimes against person.

Regarding the Crime Lab, Director Hosey reported the back log is up for cases over 30 days and the reason behind that is the reporting system was down for about 2 weeks and this caused a delay in reports being sent back out. Director Hosey advised the technology update with the reporting system taking place later this month will solve the problems with the system going down.

Concerning GCIC stats for this reporting period, Director Hosey stated there is a significant difference in the month of April compared to other months due to a changeover in the system (the Georgia Law Enforcement Message Switch, or GLEMS). Director Hosey explained this system has needed to be upgraded for quite some time so there will not be shutdowns and other problems that causes delays to our partners. Director Hosey shared all vendors and the GCIC staff have worked through all the issues from the changeover.

Director Hosey also shared the crime lab information management system will be upgraded and switched over during the week of June 24<sup>th</sup> through 28<sup>th</sup>. Director Hosey noted this is going to create more stable and robust lab reports for customers. Director Hosey also advised the Medical Examiner's office switched over from JusticeTrax to a new LIMS system, MDI, that should assist in getting reports out from the Medical Examiner's side of the house, adding the Board report shows 77.2% of reports were released within 90 days in April.

Director Hosey advised in the Investigative Division, the case management system that has been around for a while will be upgraded/replaced, noting a vendor has been identified for this project.

Regarding facilities, Director Hosey reported the Medical Examiner's office expansion programming is scheduled for completion in July 2024; the Headquarters Medical Examiner's Office expansion design services is scheduled for completion in December 2024; and the Region 1-Calhoun new construction is scheduled for completion in January 2025. Director Hosey also mentioned another project is to examine the infrastructure of the offices across the state.

Director Hosey shared a committee of DAs across the state will be meeting to examine and explain the processes and procedures in the GBI Crime Lab in order to get a good understanding for our crime lab personnel as to the needs of our prosecutors across the state. Director Hosey stated he believes this will not only aid the Agency but also give prosecutors an understanding of processes that involve the Crime Lab when they are getting ready to prosecute a case.

Mr. Charles Sikes stated he appreciates the attention Director Hosey gives to the Georgia Crime Information Center, noting it is a division often forgotten. Mr. Sikes asked, when looking at the stats, how much of the fingerprints are electronic versus old ink style, to which Director Hosey responded he does not have the exact number but can guess most are going to be electronic. Mr. Sikes also asked what an offline search is. Deputy Director Rhonda Westbrook, GCIC, answered an offline search is the ability to access the message switch application to see what type of transaction was conducted, giving an example of when the CJIS violations reports are pulled or if you have an officer you feel is utilizing the message system switch to their advantage as opposed to the policy of the law enforcement agency. Deputy Director Westbrook stated the Agency has the ability to trace it back to the type of

transactions that were conducted to see what that individual accessed and the reason why they accessed it.

Ms. Susan Treadaway asked Director Hosey for clarification on services requested versus services completed, noting a news story earlier in the week where GBI Lab Director Cleveland Miles provided statistics in samples requested versus completed, to which Director Miles responded samples versus requests are not exactly the same thing, explaining when you look at requests that is requests for testing, which could contain multiple samples.

Mr. Willie Bolton commended the Cold Case Unit on the cases completed and thanked everyone for their actions on the most recent arrest.

Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, reported the Training Center has had over 317,000 students year-to-date and at the end of the fiscal year, there will have been over 350,000 students, which is a record for the Center.

Director Wigginton reported POST Council has voted unanimously to extend basic mandate training from 408 to 810 hours so that burden has shifted to the Training Center to deliver the training beginning January 1, 2025. Director Wigginton stated the Center is aggressively trying to hire positions and has received funding to add 28 positions to the basic mandate division to meet the requirement.

Director Wigginton explained some of the topics to be expanded on includes legal topics, use of force/de-escalation, adding high speed driving, more defensive tactics, more officer survival skills, physical fitness, health and wellness, and others. Director Wigginton stated Georgia will have some of the best prepared officers to graduate the academy in the near future.

Director Wigginton shared the resiliency training, which was started by GA POST Council last year, will now be delivered around the state.

Director Wigginton reported the Center has been asked to do a judicial security overview for judges for different courts around the state, from magistrate all the way up to the Georgia Supreme court regarding personal security when they are off the bench and individual security when they are on the bench.

Director Wigginton shared the Center was approached by the National Tactical Officers Association regarding training and partnering with the Training Center to be a host site to conduct it annually.

Mr. Charles Sikes stated he read an IACP article recognizing Georgia's training of peace officers regarding election security and asked if the Training Center is involved in this to which Director Wigginton responded they have been involved, behind the scenes.

Vice-Chairman Wood noted with the doubling of the basic mandate requirement, asked if there is a facility to handle that much change, to which Director Wigginton noted they asked for additional funding this year and they anticipate they will need to ask for additional requests next year. Vice-Chairman Wood asked if POST had much pushback on the updated hours, to which Director Wigginton stated they did not, noting the committee was unified in their approval.

Mr. Roy Fickling asked what the plan is for hiring personnel for the extended mandate, to which Director Wigginton advised a link has been added to every employee's email signature announcing, "we are hiring" and when you click, it will take you to a hiring page, and added the Center is advertising aggressively across the nation.

### **DONATIONS**

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

One (1) LG Refrigerator	\$1,700.00	The Home Depot
One (1) Costway Ice Maker	\$400.00	The Home Depot
Ten (10) PepperBall TAC-SA Launchers and Projectiles (1,500 Live X and 200 Glass Breakers)	\$17,890.00	The West Metro Regional Drug Enforcement Office

The motion to accept these items was made by Sheriff Joey Terrell, which was seconded by Mr. Willie Bolton and voted approved by the Board members.

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

Two (2) 2006 Ford Crown Victoria Vehicles	\$2,000.00	City of Conyers Police Department
Scrap Pallets	\$10,800.00	Better Pallets, Inc.

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

### **OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Clare McGuire, Department of Public Safety, requested approval of a Resolution for the Georgia Department of Public Safety to authorize the Commissioner of Public Safety to enter into negotiations, contracts and agreements with Laurens County, Georgia, as necessary to affect the transfer by reversionary warranty deed of Georgia State Patrol Post 20-Dublin from Laurens County to the State of Georgia.

The motion to accept this Resolution was made by Sheriff Joey Terrell, which was seconded by Mr. Willie Bolton and voted approved by the Board members.

Major Andrew Montgomery, Georgia Department of Public Safety Motor Carrier Compliance Division, requested approval for the final adoption of the Georgia Department of Public Safety's 30% increase to the Maximum Rate Tariff No. 5 pertaining to Intrastate Rates and Charges for Non-Consensual Towing with an effective date of June 17, 2024. Major Montgomery explained the public hearing has been completed with no opposition.

Mr. Roy Fickling made the motion to approve the final adoption of the Georgia Department of Public Safety's Maximum Rate Tariff No. 5, which was seconded by Sheriff Joey Terrell and voted approved by the Board members.

Vice-Chairman Wood asked for a motion for a Thank You Resolution to be presented to former Board Member Samir Patel. Chief Craig Tully made the motion to present a Resolution to Mr. Patel, which was seconded by Ms. Susan Treadaway and voted approved by the Board members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Craig Tully  
Secretary