

## **BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

May 5, 2026  
Forsyth, Georgia

### **BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

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

### **BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Sheriff E. Neal Jump  
Chief Leonard "Dee" Meadows  
Commissioner Michael Nail  
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 Walter Christian, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Major Chris Rodewolt, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Major David Bryant, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Major Doug Wilson, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Major Gary Langford, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Major Andrew Montgomery, Department of Public Safety/CVE  
Captain Brandon Dawson, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Captain J.K. Crews, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Captain Chad Gray, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Captain Jonathon Huff, Department of Public Safety/CVE  
Lieutenant Billy Schwab, Georgia Department of Public Safety  
Ms. Joan Crumpler, Georgia Department of Public Safety  
Assistant Director Scott Dutton, Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Deputy Director Cheryl Greathouse, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Ms. Cindy Jones, Operations Bureau Director, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Mr. Ara Baronian, Section Director, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Mr. Hal Braswell, Section Director, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Mr. Adam Ham, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Ms. Sharla Shockley, Georgia Public Safety Training Center

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the May 5, 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 called for approval of the March 5, 2026 and April 2, 2026 BPS minutes. Chief Craig Tully made the motion to approve the March 5, 2026 and April 2, 2026 minutes. This was seconded by Mr. Roy Fickling and voted approved by the Board members.

### **DIRECTOR REPORTS**

Commissioner Billy Hitchens, Georgia Department of Public Safety, reported the 121<sup>st</sup> Trooper School has 36 Cadets remaining; and the 15<sup>th</sup> CVE School started with 7 and still has 7 Cadets remaining.

Commissioner Hitchens reported on the Department's response to the Brantley County area wildfire, stating it began on Monday, April 20<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Hitchens shared Troop I personnel from Post 22-Waycross, Post 23-Brunswick, Troop I Command, and Region I assisted until Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> under the leadership of Captain Gray. Commissioner Hitchens added Captain Crews sent a 15-man IRT and we started rotating our Governor's Task Force personnel who have UTV and jeep like vehicles who are able to get on the ground. The vehicles were used to re-supply some of the firefighters. Commissioner Hitchens noted DPS sent its Command Bus, and Troop I had radio personnel staffed. Commissioner Hitchens explained the Command Bus served as a LE command branch for all law enforcement assisting with the fire. Since May 1<sup>st</sup>, Commissioner Hitchens advised there has been a drawdown of personnel.

Speaking on what personnel did, Commissioner Hitchens reported Aviation assisted with water drops and surveillance, along with GA Forestry and DNR; the Command Bus and radio personnel were sent down and immediately went to work making patches for radio systems that did not communicate and our radio division personnel were able to take the VHF repeaters and do a patch for the LTE LMR radios that could communicate together, and there was an issue that came about with some of the areas not having radios and we brought our cache of radios and we were able to reprogram them.

Commissioner Hitchens stated there was also a need for repeaters and our radio personnel put up two repeaters to help expand the coverage. Commissioner Hitchens noted he heard all positive comments about the communication and the SEGARN system worked extremely well but it is limited to the land area so once it got past that, the LTE system was about the only system that would tie everyone together. Commissioner Hitchens added there were some firefighters who did not have radios to communicate so we got radios, and Southern Linc programed them and put them out to those firefighters working with the fires.

Regarding the Cargo Theft Unit, Commissioner Hitchens reported they located a tractor trailer with approximately 872 vehicle tires that was found located where it was taken from. The guy who had the tires showed where he legally bought them, so the investigation is going to the people who actually sold it to them. Commissioner Hitchens stated the Cargo Theft Unit is staying busy with a lot of success.

Commissioner Hitchens shared the Governor's Task Force and Aviation Division conducted their spool up training and emergency aircraft procedures training on Jekyll Island on April 21-23, and all of the Command Staff attended and observed. Commissioner Hitchens advised the agencies that comprise of the Governor's Task Force include GSP, CVE, Pardons and Parole, and Department of Corrections. Their job is to go out and eradicate domestic marijuana cultivation all across the state – both indoor and outdoor, and they are also tasked with intelligence related to the manufacture and cultivation of marijuana and they work with local Drug Task Forces to find out any type of intel they may have to locate any illegal grows. Commissioner Hitchens shared their first mission once they were done on Jekyll Island was to go to Brantley County to assist with the fires.

Regarding our fleet and facilities, Commissioner Hitchens reported the mobile spike strips have been delivered, and they are in Garage right now being put on the vehicles. Commissioner Hitchens stated DPS should be compliant with the mobile drivers license law by the end of the summer or early fall, which is a year ahead of schedule, adding this will include a state phone issued to every Trooper and Officer that will have the software to run driver's licenses through GCIC and send information to the in-car computer. Commissioner Hitchens shared Post 32-Oconee is still scheduled to be completed in September; Post 21-Sylvania is scheduled to be completed in December; the K9 building and training building are both currently in design and programming phase and both are expected to be completed in late 2027 and early 2028.

Commissioner Hitchens submitted the 2025 DPS Pursuit Summary for the Board's review. Commissioner Hitchens noted numbers have gone down and that can be attributed to fallen crimes.

Assistant Director Scott Dutton, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, reported there have been 33 Officer Involved Shootings to date, adding the number is on track where we were last year.

Regarding the drug enforcement and Gang Task Force efforts over this last month, Assistant Director Dutton stated there was significant arrests and seizures of methamphetamine, fentanyl, MDMA, trafficking amounts to the point of 6 kilos resulting in multiple arrests in multiple jurisdictions. Assistant Director Dutton noted a lot of work is going on with the Task Forces, and Sheriff's Offices and Police Departments are working well together.

Assistant Director Dutton reported over the past month the Investigative Division has initiated 883 cases and has closed 775. Assistant Director Dutton shared 8 Special Agents recently graduated the Special Agent Academy and 5 are currently in mandate, explaining the operation had to be reversed based on how calendars lined up, and typically, if non-certified employees are hired to be Agents, it is preferred they attend basic mandate first but sometimes that does not work so the order is flipped.

Concerning the Crime Lab, Assistant Director Dutton stated highest of workload has been in the Chemistry section with Forensic Biology behind that. Assistant Director Dutton advised recruiting efforts has been in those two areas and there has been good success, it is just a slow process, adding 8 more Crime Lab Scientists are in the process of being hired.

Assistant Director Dutton advised Medical Examiners are staffed at 16 with a budget for 19 and there are 3 applicants in the hopper.

Regarding GCIC activity, Assistant Director Dutton noted this Division keeps track of the Sex Offender and Protective Order registries and for the Sex Offender Registry there is a little over 40,000 individuals on that registry and the Protection Order Registry has close to 190,000 and those automatically hit on a GCIC inquiry so those are vital pieces that are part of what makes GCIC function.

Assistant Director Dutton updated the Board on building projects, reporting the Headquarters Medical Examiner's Office is currently in the sitework and footing installation phase; the new Central Medical Examiner's Building is in the schematic design phase; and footing has started on the Oconee Office and the completion date is July 2027.

Assistant Director Dutton provided an update to the Board regarding the preliminary testing relating to drug cases, stating currently 25 jurisdictions have been completed, meaning their backlog is done and they are able to maintain as the cases come in by conducting the preliminary testing. Relating to the jurisdictions the Headquarters Crime Lab covers, there is a 3% return on cases that come back that need full testing which says a lot for the program that we can work with the preliminary testing as opposed to the other. With the Northeast Lab, Assistant Director Dutton stated the same type of circumstances - the return on those is at 9%, and the difference is vape testing is being done, and the THC requires more time. Assistant Director Dutton also shared the Bureau is still moving forward with the mass spectrometer devices that will be available in the field offices and law enforcement to do preliminary testing, and training has started.

Ms. Susan Treadaway asked what is attributed to the uptick in March 2026 completed cases in comparison to the preceding 8 months, to which Assistant Director Dutton responded, staffing.

Mr. Willie Bolton asked how the Cold Case Unit is going, to which Assistant Director Dutton stated they have had great success with technology as it relates to DNA investigations and are currently reviewing 53 cases and 15 of those are through the Coleman-Baker Act.

Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, reported Friday before last just over 500 recruits graduated from basic mandate around the state, and yesterday it started back with 347 recruits. Director Wigginton stated what he is hearing from Chiefs, Sheriffs, and training officers is the recruits graduating today are better prepared than they were a short time ago.

Regarding the Police Academy Division, Director Wigginton shared this week the Center is hosting 2 classes with the NTOA, National Tactical Officers Association, and there are 8 other states on campus this week in some type of training from as far west as Oklahoma.

Concerning the Fire Academy, Director Wigginton advised is still having great success with the regional field delivery and we are at a point where we cannot meet the request with our limited staff

and we are going back to the legislature to continue to ask for funding to expand that. Director Wigginton noted the Center sent 4 firefighters and the newest tanker truck to help with the fires in South Georgia for 2 weeks.

Director Wigginton shared the Center's IT department has been modernized and the staff is doing a great job of printing signage, pamphlets, class material, and t-shirts, among other things at an in-house print shop.

Mr. Roy Fickling asked for an update on the construction projects, to which Director Wigginton stated the new basic training expansion building should have a slab soon; the high speed driver training facility has new paving; the second phase of the second mock village has the roads and infrastructure for the water and sewer laid and construction is starting on some of the residential homes and mobile home pads.

**DONATIONS**

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

Airfare, Lodging, and Per Diem for Two (2) Troopers to Escort VFW State Commander to the VFW National Convention in Reno, NV	\$4,400.00	Department of Georgia, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Three (3) Bush Furniture Westfield L Shaped Desks, One (1) Statesman Executive Desk with Hutch and Credenza, One (1) Pit Boss Pellet Smoker, Two (2) Smart Signage A.I. Displays	\$9,014.61	Bartow County Commissioner's Office

The motion to accept these items 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 donation:

Check	\$1,000.00	Georgia Fire Investigators Association
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The motion to accept this item was made by Mr. Roy Fickling, which was seconded by Chief Janet Moon and approved by the Board members.

**OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Joan Crumpler, Georgia Department of Public Safety, requested approval of a Resolution to authorize the DPS Commissioner to enter into negotiations, agreements, and supporting documents as necessary to execute a lease amendment for the Athens Hangar.

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

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Craig Tully  
Secretary