

## **BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

October 12, 2023

Virtual and Call-in Meeting

### **BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mr. Willie C. Bolton  
Chief Stacey Cotton  
Mr. Roy H. Fickling  
Mr. Richard Hyde  
Chief Leonard “Dee” Meadows  
Chief Janet L. Moon  
Commissioner Michael Nail  
Mr. Billy New  
Mr. Charles D. Sikes  
Sheriff Joey Terrell  
Chief Craig Tully  
Mr. Ellison G. Wood

### **BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Sheriff Jimmy McDuffie  
Commissioner Tyrone Oliver  
Mr. Samir J. Patel

### **OTHERS:**

Ms. Tina Piper, Attorney General’s Office  
Mrs. Jennifer Pendarvis, Board Liaison  
Commissioner Billy Hitchens, Department of Public Safety  
Lt. Colonel Josh Lamb, Department of Public Safety  
Major Robert Balkcom, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Major Steve Harrison, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Major Rusty Harrelson, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Captain Chris Rodewolt, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Lieutenant Jonathon Huff, Department of Public Safety/MCCD  
SFC Billy Schwab, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Sergeant Robbie Scott, Department of Public Safety/GSP  
Assistant Director Scott Dutton, Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
Deputy Director Rhonda Westbrook, Georgia Bureau of Investigation/GCIC  
ASAC Danielle O’Connor, Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
Deputy Director Cheryl Greathouse, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Ms. Joan Crumpler, Georgia Department of Public Safety  
Ms. Lorri Smith, Georgia Department of Public Safety  
Ms. Clare McGuire, Georgia Department of Public Safety  
Ms. Cindy Jones, Georgia Public Safety Training Center

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the October 12, 2023 Board of Public Safety meeting to order.

Sergeant Robbie Scott gave the Invocation and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the September 14, 2023 BPS minutes. Sheriff Joey Terrell made the motion to approve the September 14, 2023 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, congratulated Major Doug Wilson on his appointment as North Division Adjutant for the Georgia State Patrol.

Commissioner Hitchens advised in light of the recent attacks on Israel, metro Troops and Regions are working with GISAC, Atlanta PD, and other intel groups to keep an eye out for any protests and potential hot spots. Commissioner Hitchens stated so far, the gatherings that have occurred have been peaceful and there have been no issues.

Commissioner Hitchens shared the 115<sup>th</sup> Trooper School has 44 cadets, noting the prior sworn cadets from this school will go to field training on October 20<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Hitchens also reported the 116<sup>th</sup> Trooper School is in week 5 with 15 cadets still active. Commissioner Hitchens shared the Department is currently recruiting for the 117<sup>th</sup> Trooper School and has seen an increase in applications after the viral video of the street racing arrest. Commissioner Hitchens advised the 10<sup>th</sup> Motor Carrier School is in field training with 10 cadets and will graduate on October 27<sup>th</sup>, and the 11<sup>th</sup> Motor Carrier School will start October 29<sup>th</sup> with around 15 cadets.

Commissioner Hitchens reported crime suppression details in the metro areas are still being scheduled, with great success, and details are also being scheduled all over the state when requested. Commissioner Hitchens stated he attended the Sheriff's Association training this past Monday and took the opportunity to let the Sheriffs know DPS is willing to come in and assist them with a crime suppression detail in their territory if they so desire.

Commissioner Hitchens advised the SWAT Team has been extremely busy this year with a variety of calls to include serving warrants, barricaded gunmen, and assisting US Marshals with apprehensions and noted they completed their 168<sup>th</sup> call for the year on the 11<sup>th</sup> of this month. Commissioner Hitchens stated previously their highest call volume was 148 for the whole calendar year.

Commissioner Hitchens noted Motor Carrier Compliance Officers completed the federal fiscal year with 80,472 inspections, indicating they are required to have 74,000 and this is 108% of their requirement so they have been very busy. Commissioner Hitchens shared not only have they been doing their inspections, but they are also number 1 in 2 in enforcement categories in the country; number 1 in drug and alcohol violations, and moving violations in commercial vehicles. Commissioner Hitchens stated he is very proud of the work they are doing.

Commissioner Hitchens reported MCCD unveiled their new commercial vehicle driving simulator at Valdosta State University's National Night Out, noting it was a very successful first deployment with approximately 250 students going through the simulator, with very positive comments about their

experience. Commissioner Hitchens explained the simulator is designed for young drivers, but really for anyone, to develop crucial skills for navigating safely alongside large commercial motor vehicles.

Commissioner Hitchens reported the Department has begun implementing the state-wide radio system Governor Kemp and the legislators appropriated for DPS. Commissioner Hitchens advised radio technicians are on the coast right now in Troop I and the reason for that area is in the event a hurricane does come in, there will be communications prior to and after the hurricane.

Regarding construction projects, Commissioner Hitchens reported Post 40, Sylvester is approximately 25% complete; Post 18, Reidsville is approximately 25% complete, with a February 24<sup>th</sup> completion date; Madison's waterproofing is still good, but DPS is waiting on a bid before renovating the historic building; Post 13, Tifton has the carport radio shop project that is open and operational where personnel can go to Tifton instead of going to Atlanta for radio issues; the Department just signed a lease for a radio shop communications building in Statesboro and this will allow technicians to install radios for the new state-wide radio system in a climate and weather controlled environment for the southern Troops; the Tifton hangar is waiting for the lease to be finalized then it will be moving forward; Jekyll Island is about 20% complete with the public safety complex and they are looking at a second quarter 2024 ribbon cutting; and Post 32, Oconee is still in the design phase, but will be the same floor plan as Reidsville.

Commissioner Hitchens also noted on the main campus, the headquarters area has been cleaned up and trimmed and some old trailers on the excess property lot have been taken down. Commissioner Hitchens stated the security checkpoint is coming along nicely and will provide a little better security on the property.

Assistant Director Scott Dutton, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, reported on the continued success of a Regional Drug Enforcement Office that also mirrors the Gang Task Force and in September, the Appalachian Drug Task Force had taken off a pretty significant amount of fentanyl and methamphetamine which tend to be the highest activity drug enforcement and it all initiated from a traffic stop, which is significant from the standpoint of the multiple jurisdictions that were involved with this particular case that went into Tennessee where search warrants were executed as well. Assistant Director Dutton noted just the collaborative pieces involved the Fannin County Sheriff's Office, Gilmer County Sheriff's Office, Dalton Police Department, Cleveland Police Department in Tennessee, one of Tennessee's State Drug Task Forces and Appalachian Drug Task Force. Assistant Director Dutton stated these types of cases can be exemplified the same way throughout the state.

Assistant Director Dutton also reported on a recent human trafficking case while working collaboratively with the GBI's HEAT unit at the request of the Echols County Sheriff's Office. Assistant Director Dutton advised a minor had recently escaped a home and had reported that he had been trafficked by his aunt and other family members for the purposes of labor. The offenders were indicted and charged.

Concerning Officer Involved Shootings, Assistant Director Dutton shared the Board report states 71, but as of today the number is at 77, noting the numbers are where they were last year, perhaps a little on the high side.

Regarding the gang initiative, Assistant Director Dutton reported there is a lot of training going on with it to help partnering agencies with collecting gang intelligence information and working together, so there will be more training coming from it.

Assistant Director Dutton reported the Crime Lab is in the process of backgrounds and interviews to fill vacancies, and it is an ongoing process, but progress is being made; same thing with the Medical Examiner's Office and GCIC.

Assistant Director Dutton shared on the Agent side, the Bureau is conducting Command Staff interviews with about 25 Special Agent candidates, with a Special Agency Academy starting potentially as early as Spring, but most likely Fall.

Assistant Director Dutton announced Special Agent Rebecca Herold was presented the National Task Force Officer of the Year Award from the FBI for her work on the FBI Safe Streets Task Force.

Assistant Director Dutton also shared during the 60<sup>th</sup> International Association of Women Police Annual Training Conference, GBI Inspector Eve Rodgers was presented the 2023 International Association of Women Police Mentoring and Coaching Award.

Concerning facilities updates, Assistant Director Dutton reported the Calhoun office, which is probably the oldest field office, will hold a groundbreaking in the next couple of weeks to get that project started.

Assistant Director Dutton reported the GISAC Fusion Center is leaning forward from the standpoint of all the issues going on in Israel and are reaching out to partnering agencies as well as the Jewish organizations to make sure they are staying vigilant and reporting suspicious activity quickly. Assistant Director Dutton noted there is a coordinated effort with the State Patrol and GEMA Homeland Security on sharing that information, as well as EOD response, in which several calls have already been answered on suspicious packages. Assistant Director Dutton shared Director Hosey had a meeting yesterday with the law enforcement element of the Board of Regents and he made it a point to mention to them the responsibility of staying vigilant, especially as it relates to colleges and universities which many times can be a hot bed for events.

Deputy Director Cheryl Greathouse, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, reported the Training Center has a range of over 1,100 to as many of 1,800 students on campus each month.

Deputy Director Greathouse reported on some major events that were held during the month of September, stating September 18-21, GPSTC hosted the 2023 ALERT International Conference, which is for driving instructors and there were attendees from all over the United States. Deputy Director

Greathouse shared during the conference, there was one very impactful speaker, Kirk Dinkheller, the father of the late Laurens County Sheriff's Deputy Kyle Dinkheller, who was killed in the line of duty. Deputy Director Greathouse stated he really drew a large audience and if you have ever heard him speak, you know he is very impactful with his presentations about officer survival and law enforcement training.

Deputy Director Greathouse shared once the ALERT conference was completed, GPSTC hosted the 2023 Georgia Public Safety Conference September 28-30, which was the first annual conference of its nature. Deputy Director Greathouse explained this idea grew out of last year's active shooter expo and will be an annual event. Deputy Director Greathouse reported there were more than 300 registered students and more than 150 different agencies in Georgia represented, and students were given an opportunity to attend accommodations of 17 different half day training sessions. Deputy Director Greathouse shared topics included tactical firearms, school safety, medical skills, leadership training, and targeted training specific to law enforcement, fire, EMS, 911, and education administrators.

Deputy Director Greathouse also reported other events hosted at the Training Center included the SRO executive session, which brought in superintendents and school principals in those associations that make up the target audience. Deputy Director Greathouse stated there was a lot of great feedback from this conference and commended the GPSTC staff for handling it.

Deputy Director Greathouse noted beginning September 25<sup>th</sup>, the first ever Patrol Readiness Program was launched. Deputy Director Greathouse explained this is a multi-week training, taking up to 50 students into the program that are graduates from the regional academies from across the state, to facilitate the delivery of courses typically needed by agencies after an officer graduates mandate, but are also needed in the first year or so of their experience to be able to get comfortable with single patrol readiness. Deputy Director Greathouse shared this program includes advanced level training, but stand-alone course, and should an attendee fail one of the training programs, they just do not get credit for that program but stay in the overall program. Deputy Director Greathouse noted courses include accident investigation for patrol, basic emergency response, driver training that includes high-speed training not included in basic EVOC, basic patrol survival, patrol health and wellness, accident reconstruction, and health and wellness. Deputy Director Greathouse reported in the inaugural program, there were 42 students from 31 different agencies across the state and the program will continue until November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Chief Janet Moon asked if there has been some thought given to the SRO training to be held while school resource officers are on summer break, to which Deputy Director Greathouse responded that issue is realized, and the timeframe will be a consideration moving forward.

### **DONATIONS**

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

One (1) Laser Tech TruSpeed 5 Laser	\$1,495.00	Emanuel County Sheriff's Office
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The motion to accept this donation was made by Sheriff Joey Terrell, which was seconded by Chief Janet Moon and voted approved by the Board members.

**OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Clare McGuire of DPS Legal Services presented a Resolution requesting the Board of Public Safety to authorize the Commissioner of Public Safety to enter into negotiations and agreements with the Bartow County Commissioner for a long-term lease of Georgia State Patrol Post 3, at 130 Hwy. 20 Spur, Cartersville, Bartow County, 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.

Assistant Director Scott Dutton, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, to authorize the transfer of custody of approximately 1.017 acres of real property in the City of Decatur, Dekalb County, from the Georgia Correctional Industries Administration; to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI), for its use in the expansion of the GBI Medical Examiner Annex Building and driveways.

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

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Craig Tully  
Secretary