

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY

October 10, 2024

Georgia National Fairgrounds & Agricenter
Perry, Georgia

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Willie Bolton
Mr. Roy H. Fickling
Mr. Richard Hyde
Sheriff Jimmy McDuffie
Chief Janet L. Moon
Commissioner Michael Nail
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 Leonard "Dee" Meadows
Mr. Billy New
Commissioner Tyrone Oliver

OTHERS:

Ms. Deborah Gore, 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 Josh Lamb, Department of Public Safety
Major Robert Balkcom, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Doug Wilson, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Rusty Harrelson, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Gary Langford, Department of Public Safety/Capitol Police
Captain Walter Christian, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Captain Jonathan Huff, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
SFC Billy Schwab, Department of Public Safety/GSP
SFC Hamilton Halford, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Cindy Jones, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Mr. James Bergman, Department of Community Supervision
Captain Matt Moulton, Houston County Sheriff's Office
Mr. Foster Rhodes, Chairman, Georgia Agricultural Exposition Authority
Mr. Robbie Dunbar, Director of Administration, Houston County
Mrs. Kathy Wood
Mrs. Darlene Terrell

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the October 10, 2024 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 recognized the guests in the room: Mr. Foster Rhodes, Board Chairman of the Fairgrounds; Houston County Sheriff Captain Matt Moulton; Mrs. Kathy Wood; and Mrs. Darlene Terrell.

SFC Hamilton Halford introduced his guest, Mr. Robbie Dunbar, Director of Houston County Operations.

Commissioner Michael Nail introduced his guest, Mr. James Bergman, Director of Special Operations with the Department of Community Supervision.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the September 12, 2024 BPS minutes. Mr. Willie Bolton made the motion to approve the September 12, 2024 minutes. This was seconded by Sheriff Joey Terrell and voted approved by the Board members.

DIRECTOR REPORTS

Commissioner Billy Hitchens, Georgia Department of Public Safety, extended thoughts and prayers to families lost to Hurricane Helene, stating it is truly heartbreaking to see the devastation the storm has caused to many communities and the Department continues to support everyone affected by it. Commissioner Hitchens reported he talked to the Colonel in North Carolina, and they have some grim numbers, and he has stated the loss of life there will be much higher than what is reported. Commissioner Hitchens stated the road to recovery will be lengthy, but DPS will continue to support the citizens of Georgia in every way possible. In preparing for the storm, Commissioner Hitchens explained DPS started by putting all sworn personnel on Phase A, which is essentially being on call to respond within 30 minutes to travel anywhere in the state and be prepared to stay for at least 3 days. Commissioner Hitchens also explained personnel were sent throughout the state upon request through GEMA and about 65 Troopers and Motor Carrier Officers a day were sent to the Augusta area and personnel were assisting local agencies who sent in requests. Commissioner Hitchens stated a lot were patrolling midnight shifts due to power being out and possible thefts. Commissioner Hitchens reported DPS personnel were out there steady, adding Aviation flew supplies to 911 Centers that lost connectivity, noting they are still conducting some flights now by flying Starlinks to areas of the state that need it. Commissioner Hitchens thanked Troop H Captain Walt Christian for his efforts and leadership. Commissioner Hitchens explained the Troop H area and I-75 corridor was hit pretty hard, and we told him what our vision was and what we wanted our folks to do and that was the end of our involvement. Commissioner Hitchens said when he called to check on them, they were taking care of business. Commissioner Hitchens noted this was an unusual storm that was supposed to be a statewide storm, so the Command Staff was sent home since they are spread out across the state, so there were Majors in each part of the state who were able to respond to things in their area.

For Hurricane Milton, Commissioner Hitchens stated their presence was increased on I-75 and I-95 where there was a lot of heavy traffic on I-75 and there were no issues.

Concerning Trooper Schools, Commissioner Hitchens advised on September 13th, 39 Cadets graduated the 117th Trooper School, which was almost a 64% graduation rate; the 118th Trooper School is its 12th

week and currently has 25 Cadets in that school and they are scheduled to graduate March 14, 2025, which could bring the number of Troopers to 893; the 119th Trooper School will begin on January 12, 2025 with approximately 70-75 Cadets; and the 12th MCO school is currently in its 20th week with 8 Cadets scheduled to graduate November 8th.

Commissioner Hitchens reported the Labor Day Holiday period recorded 24,000 vehicle stops; 14,000 citations issued; 17,000 warnings issued; 16 fatal crash investigations; and 469 DUI drivers.

Commissioner Hitchens thanked the Troopers and Motor Carrier Officers for their hard work during that time, adding they did a phenomenal job. Commissioner Hitchens also noted the NASCAR race in Atlanta on September 8th, which is now handled by Troop D, had no issues.

Commissioner Hitchens advised DPS will continue to maintain presence at schools throughout the state, stating Troopers and Officers are patrolling in the school zone areas in the mornings and afternoon, and if they have the opportunity, go into schools, and do walkthroughs. Hopefully just that car being visible out front will deter somebody.

Reporting on stats, Commissioner Hitchens shared this past month, Aviation conducted 126 flights, 28 searches, and located 17 suspects. Commissioner Hitchens also noted during the Hurricane, numerous dignitaries come to the state, and Aviation provided a lot of support to those individuals and responded to numerous requests for damage assessments for EMA and GDOT.

Commissioner Hitchens reported the Middle Georgia Gang Task Force has arrested 21 wanted persons, recovered 26 guns, has made 23 felony arrests, and recovered 5 stolen vehicles; the K-9 Unit has 51 total K-9s and for the year there have been 233 people apprehended and 44 of those were bite apprehensions; the Criminal Interdiction Unit has had 2.8 million in monetary seizures and 9 million in drug value seizures, working with local and federal agencies also; the SWAT Team is at 120 calls for service this year, apprehending 14 murder suspects; the Dive Team has had 17 calls for service; the Crime Suppression Unit has apprehended 6 murder suspects, recovered 146 stolen vehicles, 37 stolen firearms, and has arrested 116 wanted suspects.

Regarding projects, Commissioner Hitchens reported the Headquarters Hangar is scheduled for completion in February but they are pushing for a December date; the Mansion Post is scheduled to be completed in December; Post 18's grand opening is scheduled for October 25th; the JIA Public Safety Complex grand opening on Jekyll Island is October 28th; Post 40 in Worth County is looking like March 2025; the statewide CAD started training operators in October and will be completed by the 31st of December.

Mr. Charles Sikes commended Commissioner Hitchens, Director Hosey, and Director Wigginton on hiring and retention. Commissioner Hitchens stated the pay raises given to law enforcement, supported by legislators, has really helped with the recruiting.

Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, expressed thoughts and prayers to citizens around the state and neighboring states in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. Director Hosey also

commended all state agencies for the assistance that has been provided, stating he has talked to Colonel Hitchens several times last week in preparation and into the aftermath for them to work together and meet the needs across the state. Regarding the outcome of the storm, Director Hosey reported as far as facilities go, GBI fared well with structural damage across the state, and things ran smoothly throughout the storm with only a few offices being shut down for a little bit of time. Director Hosey also stated in the aftermath, they worked with North Carolina with getting generators to them as well as coolers and body bags.

Director Hosey reported in September the Southwestern Region Drug Enforcement Office located in Albany worked a significant investigation with many different agencies from that area and executed arrest warrants throughout the state with approximately 18 arrests made during the investigation specifically for methamphetamine. Director Hosey added it was a 9-month investigation and 778 grams of suspected meth and 9,000 grams of marijuana was seized.

Director Hosey noted last month he mentioned the investigative acts that took place during the school shooting in Barrow County, and by midnight on the first night, there had been over 400 investigative leads brought in through the leads tracking system, and Director Hosey thanked those that worked together during that investigation.

Director Hosey shared the Region 1 Office in Calhoun worked with the Walker County Sheriff's Office to solve a 24 year old murder case, noting the responsible individual was arrested in August, and added this case was solved by Agents going back through the cold case file and having evidence re-examined.

Director Hosey advised the Middle Georgia Gang Task Force is doing great work and in August they arrested 7 people in Washington County following a joint investigation, stating Agents seized 50 grams of suspected crack cocaine, along with powder cocaine and marijuana.

Director Hosey reported as of the end of September, the GBI has investigated a total of 68 officer involved shootings.

Director Hosey shared Andy Mossman was recently promoted to Special Agent in Charge of the Metro Gang Force in Conyers and Dana Reese was promoted to Special Agent in Charge of the Southeastern Regional Drug Enforcement Office in Metter.

Director Hosey shared their Special Agent School is in week 2 with 20 Agents. Also in the hiring process, Director Hosey advised Command Staff interviews are taking place this week with 31 who went through the Command Staff interview process, explaining from that, a hiring pool will be created to start filling vacancies on the Special Agent side.

Regarding Medical Examiners, Director Hosey advised they have 15 of 19 positions filled, and there are 2 doctors in the Fellowship Program interested in staying. Director Hosey noted also, a Medical Examiner at HQ transferred to the Macon ME office on October 1st so that office staff is full.

In the Crime Lab, Director Hosey noted they had 25 vacancies and 13 of them were hired with start dates of September 1st or 16th and the remaining 12 are somewhere in the hiring process at this time.

Director Hosey reported there is one more round of testing for next year's Special Agent School.

Concerning activity in the Investigative Division, Director Hosey advised Crimes Against Person is still the highest case load being handled by the Investigative Division and year-to-date they have seized close to 5.5 million in contraband.

Regarding GISAC, Director Hosey reported there were over 3,000 requests during the fiscal year for tips and suspicious activities.

Director Hosey advised for August, the Services Requested and the Services Completed in the Crime Lab shows an 8% decrease in their backlog.

Regarding GCIC, Director Hosey reported over 69 million transactions have been processed through August of this year. Due to Tropical Storm Debby, Director Hosey shared the GCIC Training Symposium was postponed until October, explaining it is important to hold because a lot of individuals rely on that training to keep up their certifications.

Director Hosey shared the Open Records Section has been working with a large backlog of open records requests, but he was notified Monday morning that their backlog is now in the single digits.

Regarding construction projects, Director Hosey reported the Headquarters MEO expansion design services is scheduled for completion in December 2024 and the Region 1, Calhoun office new construction is scheduled for completion in January 2025.

Mr. Charles Sikes asked if Director Hosey could highlight a couple of Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) hits to explain how it helped the original jurisdictional agencies to solve criminal matters.

Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, expressed his thoughts and prayers to families affected by the storm, noting there was some minimal damage at the Savannah location and some basic academies had to be shut down. Director Wigginton also stated they are housing generators for GEMA that are servicing hospitals and nursing homes, and he has received notice that Florida will be sending a request for supplies.

Director Wigginton relayed to the Board an individual who recently approached him at the Training Center and shook his hand and said thank you. Director Wigginton stated he asked for what, and the individual advised he was an Atlanta Police Officer shot 4 years ago and he is back to work and back in training. Director Wigginton advised this individual had completed an officer survival class at the Training Center just prior to him being shot. The individual credited his survival to the training he

received. Director Wigginton mentioned that this reminded him of why they do what they do at the Training Center.

Regarding Basic Mandate training kicking off in January, Director Wigginton reported they are working diligently to get the curriculum finalized and are making great progress and they are 2 away from filling the 30 new positions created.

Concerning construction, Director Wigginton noted the restrooms renovations in the dorms are being finished this week; the water project to replace the water lines are out for bid; the renovations to make two access roads on the infields start this week; some outdoor training areas should start this week; and the rescue trench for the Fire Academy should be completed by the end of the month.

Director Wigginton reported the numbers for the Center continue to grow and this week personnel from Vermont, Washington, Idaho, Alabama, South Carolina, and Georgia are in the Executive Protection class; next is the Southeast Annual SWAT competition with people from Tennessee, Alabama, South Carolina, Florida, and Georgia participating; and this week, is the 11th Circuit Mental Health Response consisting of Alabama, Georgia, and Florida on how to respond to crisis intervention and mental health across the state.

Ms. Susan Treadaway thanked Director Wigginton for hosting her team at the Training Center for a tour and demonstration, adding they were all very impressed with the facility and professionalism of the staff.

Mr. Roy Fickling mentioned the new Basic Mandate expansion and asked if there is anything the Board can do to assist with obtaining any additional room needed, to which Director Wigginton advised there are two projects they are working with the legislature and OPB to attempt to get into next year's budget. Director Wigginton explained one is a new building on campus that will have more classroom and gym space, and the other is a building just located in unincorporated Cherokee County to have a "GPSTC North" to have more track space and they are working to get money in their budget next year to try and purchase the building, which is a former charter school that went bankrupt. Director Wigginton stated any legislative support we can get from the Board will be helpful.

Chief Janet Moon asked if the Cherokee County building is acquired, would there need to be dormitory space added, to which Director Wigginton responded it appears the current classrooms can be modified into dorm rooms, but the restrooms will be the question.

Sheriff Joey Terrell thanked Director Wigginton for his leadership, the SRO program, and his friendship.

Mr. Willie Bolton thanked Director Wigginton for working out the issues with the Athens Police Academy.

Mr. Charles Sikes mentioned he and Vice-Chairman Wood witnessed training firsthand from the fire side in Metter from the city block that caught on fire. Mr. Sikes noted Metter has limited resources and called for mutual aid from Statesboro for the fire, and how they interacted and took the fire under control was through training at GPSTC and the Regional Fire Academy.

Chief Craig Tully mentioned under Director Wigginton's leadership, the training is now brought to the field, to the volunteers, and there are only a few states that do that.

Commissioner Michael Nail announced at the Annual DCS Awards Ceremony the day before, Director Wigginton received the Public Stakeholder of the Year Award.

DONATIONS

Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, requested approval of the following donation:

One (1) 2017 Ford Explorer	\$10,739.00	Paulding County Sheriff's Office
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The motion to accept this item was made by Sheriff Joey Terrell, which was seconded by Chief Craig Tully and voted approved by the Board members.

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

\$2,000.00 Cash Donation	\$2,000.00	Georgia Fire Investigators Association
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The motion to accept this item was made by Chief Craig Tully, which was seconded by Sheriff Joey Terrell 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 for Carriers of Household Goods in Intrastate Transportation with the final adoption on December 12, 2024 after a public hearing on November 7, 2024.

Sheriff Joey Terrell made the motion to accept the Maximum Rate Tariff increase with the final adoption of December 12, 2024 after a public hearing on November 7, 2024. This motion was seconded by Chief Janet Moon and voted approved by the Board members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Craig Tully
Secretary