

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY

September 14, 2023
Virtual and Call-in Meeting

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS:

Ms. Tina Piper, Attorney General’s Office
Mrs. Jennifer Pendarvis, Board Liaison
Commissioner Christopher C. Wright, Department of Public Safety
Lt. Colonel Billy Hitchens, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lt. Colonel Josh Lamb, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Kendrick Lowe, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Robert Balkcom, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Steve Harrison, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Rusty Harrelson, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Major Thornell King, Department of Public Safety/Capitol Police
Major Andrew Montgomery, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
Captain Chris Rodewolt, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Captain J.K. Crews, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Captain David Bryant, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Captain Michael Burns, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lieutenant Bradley Mosher, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lieutenant Chris Nease, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lieutenant Jonathon Huff, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
SFC Billy Schwab, Department of Public Safety/GSP
SFC Richard Sikes, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Sgt. Chase Woodie, Department of Public Safety/MCCD
Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Asst. Director Scott Dutton, Georgia Bureau of Investigation

Dep. Director Rhonda Westbrook, Georgia Bureau of Investigation/GCIC
ASAC Danielle O'Connor, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Dep. Director Cheryl Greathouse, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Lauren Curry, Governor's Office
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. Kelly Ward, Georgia Department of Public Safety
Mr. Jacob Harmon, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Ms. Nelly Miles, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Ms. Cindy Jones, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Sharla Shockley, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Angela Batey, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Mr. Sam Dober, Office of Planning and Budget
Mr. Rahsaan Thompson, Office of Planning and Budget
Mr. Cody Pyle, Office of Planning and Budget
Ms. Megan Nolan, Office of Planning and Budget
Mr. Greg Bluestein, Atlanta Journal Constitution
Ms. Maggie Lee, The Current GA
Mr. Chad Riner
Mrs. Angie Hitchens
Mr. Jerry Davis
Ms. Amelia Reece

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the September 14, 2023 Board of Public Safety meeting to order.

Sergeant First Class Richard Sikes gave the Invocation and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the July 13, 2023 and July 15, 2023 BPS minutes. Sheriff Joey Terrell made the motion to approve the July 13, 2023 and July 15, 2023 minutes. This was seconded by Chief Dee Meadows and voted approved by the Board members.

DIRECTOR REPORTS

Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, reported the Training Center has taught over 1,000 off-site classes during this calendar year. Director Wigginton noted a lot has been done through the volunteer firefighter program, which was started a few years ago to put instructors out in the field and deliver training across the state.

Director Wigginton shared next Monday, the International Association of Emergency Vehicle Driver Trainers across the nation will be at GPSTC for their conference, noting there will be people from all over the United States and world to showcase the training facility and how it relates to emergency vehicle operation. Additionally, Director Wigginton reported the following week, the Training Center

will have the Active Shooter School Safety Symposium for the third year. Director Wigginton advised one thing done differently this year is opening the symposium to additional school personnel, and this means there will be school superintendents, principals, individuals over school bus barns, etc. in attendance, and it will be a real partnership opportunity in school safety.

Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, thanked Governor Kemp and the Board for having the confidence in him to be the Director of the GBI and he looks forward to serving the men and women in the Agency and state of Georgia as he goes forward.

Director Hosey reported Scott Dutton has returned to the GBI to take the position of Assistant Director, stating Assistant Director Dutton has spent a lot of time with the Agency and has been an asset to the Agency throughout his career.

Director Hosey shared Retired Special Agent Don Davis from the Americus area passed away this morning and asked that everyone keep his family in our thoughts and prayers.

Regarding the Investigative Division, Director Hosey noted the Child Exploitation Unit worked on an operation that lasted about 11 days dealing with child predators and exploitation of children on computers, and they worked with 24 agencies across the state of Georgia executing 34 search warrants in 28 different counties, arrested 26 individuals for sexual exploitation of minors, and of those search warrants, there were 30 children living within the premises of where activity was taking place. Director Hosey shared there were 296 devices previewed on scene and 281 devices seized.

Director Hosey shared the Cold Case Unit that started up on January 1 of this year is getting off the ground, but they are in a reviewing process based on a protocol of receiving requests and as of the time of the Board report, they were reviewing 12 cases. Director Hosey noted the Unit has been placed under the Office of Special Investigations and the 2 Agents that are in training for Behavior Analysis have been moved under that department. Director Hosey stated the 2 Agents are coming up on 2 years of training in the Behavior Analysis program and hopefully they will be fully trained and certified within the next year.

Director Hosey reported there will be a Basic Agent Academy starting on Monday, September 24th with 26 future Agents starting.

Director Hosey shared Special Agent in Charge Jerry Jones was the runner up for the Dr. Curtis McClung award for his work with the Resiliency program, and Special Agent Christian Johnson received the Officer of the Year at the recent GACP Conference.

Concerning the Leadership Academy being conducted within the Agency, Director Hosey stated the first one has been completed and all reviews were very good, and this program will continue to be modified to ensure it fits the upcoming leadership within the Agency.

Director Hosey also shared the Agency will continue with the Resiliency training in house, with the Crime Lab and Medical Examiner's personnel completing a class, with another class coming up in October with GCIC personnel.

Concerning backlogs, Director Hosey advised he continues to see the reports each month where managers are setting and achieving goals to bring the backlogs down.

Regarding the Medical Examiner's office, Director Hosey reported with the hiring of a doctor in October, there will be 12 MEs in the state, which is the highest number he can remember in quite some time, and it still leaves them with 6 vacant positions. Director Hosey noted 3 doctors in the fellowship program have expressed an interest in staying with the GBI.

Director Hosey advised the 90-day release for autopsies is at 51.3%, which is very good considering the number of cases being received right now.

Director Hosey shared that within the Medical Examiner's office is the Child Fatality Unit, and the Agency is looking at a restructuring plan for the Unit. Director Hosey indicated this Unit is important because they gather statistics from child deaths across the state and try to find some method to address possible prevention, to include training. Director Hosey explained there are 2 Medical Examiners who have a background and passion for investigating pediatric or child deaths. Director Hosey stated they are looking to grow out the program and be nationally recognized for it.

Regarding GCIC, Director Hosey reported the Team is continuing to work on the CDX Board (Criminal Case Data Exchange) and addressing the submission of dispositions on cases, and they are also working on upgrading the AFIS system within GCIC and working with GTA on the cloud migration project.

Director Hosey addressed a recent outage of the GCIC system, sharing as soon as the system went down, the Team sent notifications out across the state to stakeholders, and then immediately got with the right people and got the problem fixed in a timely fashion and then was able to go back and make sure that everything missed during the outage was entered appropriately. Director Hosey stated he appreciates the work the GCIC Team does.

Concerning facilities updates, Director Hosey reported within the next month or so they will be breaking ground on the new Region 1 Field Office in Calhoun. And there are plans for facility upgrades and changes across the state, to include facility hardening projects at Headquarters.

Commissioner Christopher Wright, Georgia Department of Public Safety, congratulated GBI Director Chris Hosey for his appointment and stated he is honored to know him and work with him.

Commissioner Wright stated Lt. Colonel Billy Hitchens will be providing the Director Report, but he wanted to share a few things with the Board first.

Commissioner Wright stated leadership is something that we talk considerably about in the roles we all serve, and leadership should always be about serving the people of an organization. Commissioner Wright noted it is a responsibility that each of us share and not just those that are in final leadership roles; it is about helping people and creating an environment for people to learn, grow, and prepare for future opportunities. Commissioner Wright mentioned leadership is about learning from one another, listening to one another and respecting their differences, and it is an expectation that he feels like we have set for all employees because we expect our people to be leaders in the community, we expect them to be leaders within the organization, and it doesn't matter what rank they hold or what position they hold; whether it is a civilian employee answering the phone talking with someone, or a Trooper or Motor Carrier Officer on the road helping someone or interacting with someone in the public, we talk a lot about leadership and we talk about everyone being leaders. Commissioner Wright stated the biggest thing to him about leadership is preparing others to take your place and for him it is the single most important aspect of leadership, but if you never step aside and allow people who you have worked with, worked alongside, and learned from to assume those roles, in his opinion you fail as a leader because it is important to provide that opportunity for people to move up and it is also just as important to step aside and watch them grow. Commissioner Wright noted one of the things he has enjoyed the most about being Commissioner is promotion board day, stating he loves being able to see people grow and get promoted, and seeing how it changes them professionally and personally, and he loves seeing how it changes them and their families. Commissioner Wright remarked that has always been the highlight of his career; watching people grow and learn.

Commissioner Wright reported a few months ago, he informed Governor Kemp that it was his desire to retire before the end of 2023, and on September 30th he will formally make that transition. Commissioner Wright stated this position is not his to keep, commenting it belongs to the members of this Agency and it represents every member of this Agency, and it has been an honor to be a Trooper and work for this Agency and when he took this job 3 years ago. Commissioner Wright noted he had one goal in mind, and that was to make this a great place for our employees to work and to feel supported, and he hopes in some small sense they have felt that. Commissioner Wright said this is a bittersweet day for him because he has 33 ½ years of credible service, but he knows this is the right moment for him and it has been a very tough 3 years. Commissioner Wright noted we have been through a lot of issues and worked through a lot of issues, beginning with the 106th Trooper School issue all the way through the civil unrest, which was very difficult for the law enforcement profession, to a world-wide pandemic that none of us in our lifetimes have had to deal with, and we have done what Governor Kemp set the tone for us to do, which is to build positive relationships around this state and Commissioner Wright stated he feels like we have done a very good job to try and accomplish what the Governor has asked us to do; to build relationships so we can work together to make our state safer and a more productive place for our citizens, and make it a great place for people to want to come and do business and come visit. Commissioner Wright added most importantly, his job has been about helping our employees and doing things for our employees to make DPS a great place for them to work. Commissioner Wright stated he has always felt that employees who are happy employees and who feel like they are supported are productive employees and he thinks we have seen that in what our Troopers and Officers do on the road every day, the impact they have made, not just here in the city of Atlanta, but in a lot of our cities across the state; we have helped small town and small communities

who have had shortages in their staffing and have seen crime rise in their communities; and when they have asked us to help them, we have answered that call every single time and our employees have done it with pride and have been consistent with it and are proud of it.

Commissioner Wright took a moment to thank a few people, stating he wanted to thank God, who has provided him with a tremendous opportunity. Commissioner Wright noted as many may know, he was raised on a small farm in southwest Georgia and literally came from nothing, and he certainly did not anticipate getting in this position he is in now. Commissioner Wright shared since he was probably 6 years old, he had always wanted to be a State Trooper and he never wanted to be a police officer or do anything else; and if he didn't achieve that goal, he had a backup plan to be a farmer because that was all he knew. Commissioner Wright thanked God he was able to successfully be a Trooper, stating it has been a great career and he gives Him all the Glory because without Him he would not be in this position. Commissioner Wright also thanked his family for support given to him over the years and the employees of this Agency, because they have supported this Command Staff and they have risen to every occasion and they have done everything we have asked them to do across this state, and sometimes it was not easy, but they have done it and it has made this state that much better place. Commissioner Wright thanked the Command Staff, advising he asked every single one to be on this team with him, noting many of them have been with him since starting this journey together and he stated he is so proud of them and we all have done a lot of positive things for this Agency and most importantly we have done a lot of positive things for the people who serve this Agency. Commissioner Wright thanked Board members for always supporting the Command Staff and giving him the opportunity to serve this Agency and state, adding the Board has always been there to support him personally, professionally, and has always supported this Agency. Commissioner Wright thanked Chad, who has been his best friend for 23 years and has helped him get through this journey. Lastly, Commissioner Wright thanked Governor Kemp and the first family for giving him this opportunity, and for seeing something in somebody who came from nothing and who has tried to work hard and do the right thing every single day. Commissioner Wright thanked Lauren, Trey, David, and the entire leadership team at the Capitol, adding they have been phenomenal, supportive, and most of all they have always backed the blue.

Commissioner Wright stated he loves this state, and he loves his DPS family, sharing they have been his family for 30 years and he will always have a special place in his heart for them. Commissioner Wright commented sometimes loving something means making the decision to let it go, because letting it go means opportunity for more people and that is truly what today is about. Commissioner Wright remarked he wants to leave it so other people can grow and move up because that is what leadership is about; to provide opportunity for other people. Commissioner Wright noted this position is not his to keep and it is not his to see how long he can hold on to it, adding it is time to let it go when the time is right, and the time is right now. Commissioner Wright stated he is leaving it at a time when the Agency is in a very good spot, things are good and calm at the moment, and we have been able to accomplish a lot of things over the last three years.

Commissioner Wright notified Vice-Chairman Wood of his intention to retire at the end of this month and thanked everyone again for their support and the opportunity to serve the Agency. Commissioner

Wright noted many have heard him say many times that without our employees, there would not be a Department of Public Safety.

Vice-Chairman Wood thanked Commissioner Wright for his leadership and service, adding the Board members remember a lot of the crises mentioned and the DPS Command Staff leading us through, adding everyone respects his decisions for handling them the way he has.

Subsequent to the retirement announcement by Commissioner Wright, Vice-Chairman Wood called to amend the Agenda for the consideration of a recommendation from Governor Kemp for the Board to appoint Deputy Commissioner / Lt. Colonel William Hitchens, III to the positions of Commissioner of Public Safety and the Colonel of the State Patrol at a salary of \$196,000 per year effective October 1, 2023. Vice-Chairman Wood called for a motion to the effect.

Chief Craig Tully made the motion to appoint Deputy Commissioner / Lt. Colonel William Hitchens, III to the positions of Commissioner of Public Safety and the Colonel of the State Patrol at a salary of \$196,000 per year effective October 1, 2023. This motion was seconded by Mr. Willie Bolton and voted approved by Board members.

Vice-Chairman Wood congratulated Lt. Colonel Hitchens on his appointment and asked if he had any comments for the Board.

Lt. Col. Hitchens addressed the Board by thanking Governor Kemp, First Lady Marty Kemp, and the First Daughters for the confidence and trust in him to lead this Agency, stating he is extremely honored and humbled the Governor would select him for this appointment. Lt. Col. Hitchens promised he will do his very best to uphold the reputation, make them proud, and not embarrass this Department. Lt. Col. Hitchens thanked the Board for its vote, noting many he has known and respected for a very long time, and stating it means the world to him that he has the Board's confidence and approval as he moves in to this position. Lt. Col. Hitchens stated he wants to thank God for putting him into this position. Lt. Col. Hitchens also stated there is no way he can end his remarks without talking about his good friend, boss, mentor, sounding board, therapist, 69th Trooper School classmate, and advise giver. Lt. Col. Hitchens noted he and Colonel Wright came on this Agency at almost the same time, risen through the ranks together, and spent the last 4 years working every day together. While it has been very stressful and busy, Lt. Col. Hitchens remarked it has been one of the most fulfilling times he has ever had. Lt. Col. Hitchens shared Colonel Wright has shown time and time again his commitment to do the right thing for his employees and keep them in the forefront of his thought process when decisions must be made and he promises to continue the same type of leadership Colonel Wright has shown.

Lt. Col. Hitchens stated as many know he is second-generation Trooper, and if he can make it to October 1st, he will be a second-generation Commissioner. Lt. Col. Hitchens noted he has grown up going in patrol posts since he was born, and this Agency means the world to him, and he promises the employees he will honor the Department's history and keep its traditions. Lt. Col. Hitchens commented we have a great team we have put together, who do not mind getting their hands dirty and

working alongside the Troops, adding they all believe in their people and the mission of this Department.

Lt. Col. Hitchens also thanked his wife of almost 20 years and his children and parents, adding they have been by his side every step of the way. Lt. Col. Hitchens stated if he can give the young people any advice; find someone that will support you like she has, because without her, he would not be where he is today.

Vice-Chairman Wood reminded the Board members it is a responsibility of the Board of Public Safety to confirm the appointment of the Deputy Commissioner of Public Safety by the Commissioner. Vice-Chairman Wood asked Lt. Col. Hitchens if he is prepared to make that appointment now, to which Lt. Col. Hitchens responded he is.

Lt. Col. Hitchens called for the appointment of Major Kendrick Lowe to the position of Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for a motion for the Board of Public Safety to confirm the appointment of Major Kendrick Lowe to the position of Deputy Commissioner of Public Safety, effective October 1, 2023.

Chief Craig Tully made the motion to appoint Major Kendrick Lowe to the position of Deputy Commissioner of Public Safety effective October 1, 2023. This motion was seconded by Sheriff Joey Terrell and voted approved by Board members.

Vice-Chairman Wood congratulated Major Lowe on his appointment and asked if he had any comments for the Board.

Major Lowe stated he would like to thank God first for the opportunities and admitted he is a little nervous. Major Lowe thanked the Governor for trusting him to be the Deputy Commissioner of the Department and Colonel Wright for his leadership, as well as Lt. Col. Hitchens, stating they mean the world to him, just like everyone in the room means the world to him. Major Lowe also thanked the Board for the opportunity, promising he will do his very best as the Deputy Commissioner and by serving the men and women of the Department. Major Lowe stated he is excited and is looking forward to the job. Major Lowe thanked his wife and family, adding he would not be where he is today without them and his wife has been with him every single day, supporting and backing him.

Deputy Commissioner Hitchens reported the 114th Trooper School graduated September 9th. Deputy Commissioner Hitchens thanked the Board members who were present, Director Hosey, Director Wigginton, and Ms. Lauren Curry for attending the ceremony.

Deputy Commissioner Hitchens advised the 115th Trooper School has 47 cadets, noting the prior sworn cadets from this school will go to field training on October 20th. Deputy Commissioner Wright also reported the 116th Trooper School started September 10th with 19 cadets and as of this morning, 15

remain. Deputy Commissioner Hitchens shared the Department is currently recruiting for the 117th Trooper School and has seen an increase in applications after the viral video of the street racing arrest. Deputy Commissioner Hitchens took a moment to speak on that, stating he believes this video really struck a chord with the general public that showed a wild chaotic scene with spectators being run over and a Trooper appear out of nowhere to take decisive action to end the craziness. Deputy Commissioner Hitchens added he thinks the public reacts to this because Corporal Ennis acted swiftly and professionally while treating the violator as respectfully as possible, and this has been a very positive thing for the Department and we can certainly see a blip in our applications after the video was shown.

Deputy Commissioner Hitchens advised the 10th Motor Carrier School is in field training with 10 cadets and hopefully all 10 will graduate on October 13th, and the 11th Motor Carrier School will start October 29th and will start with around 15 cadets.

Deputy Commissioner Hitchens reported crime suppression details in the metro areas are still being scheduled, with great success, and a detail in Bibb County was just conducted that was extremely successful.

Deputy Commissioner Hitchens advised the Department has taken possession of a new Bell 407 GXI and we should be taking possession of a Bell 412 mid-October, and the Department is still actively looking for more Bell 407 helicopters to fill out our fleet.

Deputy Commissioner Hitchens reported the Department is getting ready to implement the state-wide radio system Governor Kemp and the legislators appropriated for DPS. Deputy Commissioner Hitchens advised installation will begin with the areas around the coast that could be impacted by a hurricane first and finish with Troop C.

DONATIONS

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

One (1) Pepperball VKS Launcher	\$1,315.00	Pierce 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 Dee Meadows and voted approved by the Board members.

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

Glass Doors and Windows	\$3,500.00	Big American APL
Eight (8) ECO Tec T-shirts and Performance Polos	\$500.00	Atlenco

Seven (7) Vinyl Window Graphics	\$2,600.00	Atlenco
Five (5) Ford Crown Victoria Police Sedans	\$4,975.00	Paulding County Sheriff's Office

The motion to accept these donations was made by Sheriff Joey Terrell, which was seconded by Mr. Roy Fickling and voted approved by the Board members.

Mr. Charles Sikes made a motion to adjourn the Board of Public Safety meeting and go into the Georgia Crime Information Center Council, which was seconded by Chief Craig Tully and voted approved by the Board members. Sheriff Joey Terrell abstained from the vote.

GEORGIA CRIME INFORMATION CENTER COUNCIL

Ms. Rhonda Westbrook, GCIC Division Director, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, presented the FY2023 CJIS Security Policy Violations report for the Georgia Crime Information Center, which involves unauthorized access and dissemination of criminal justice information. Ms. Westbrook noted there were violations for 26 agencies reported during FY2023. Ms. Westbrook presented the request for approval of actions taken to resolve security policy violations for FY2023 to the BPS members for their approval.

Mr. Willie Bolton made the motion to accept the GCIC's recommendations for the FY2023 GCIC Security Policy Violations, which was seconded by Chief Dee Meadows and voted approved by the Board members. Sheriff Joey Terrell abstained from the vote.

Mr. Charles Sikes made a motion to adjourn the GCIC Council and return to the Board of Public Safety meeting, which was seconded by Chief Craig Tully and voted approved by the Board members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Craig Tully
Secretary