

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY

September 11, 2025
Brunswick Golden Isles
Chamber of Commerce
Brunswick, Georgia

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. Willie Bolton
Chief Leonard "Dee" Meadows
Commissioner Michael Nail
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/Capitol Police
Major Andrew Montgomery, Department of Public Safety/CVE
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 Richard Sikes, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lieutenant Chris Kelch, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Lieutenant Eric Wilkes, Department of Public Safety/GSP
SFC Billy Schwab, Georgia Department of Public Safety
SFC Daniel Chernich, Georgia Department of Public Safety/GSP
Sergeant Jonathan Edwards, Georgia Department of Public Safety/GSP
Chief Dispatcher Delmas Boyett, Department of Public Safety/GSP
Ms. Clare McGuire, Georgia Department of Public Safety
Director Chris Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Assistant Director Scott Dutton, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Director Chris Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center

Assistant Director Cheryl Greathouse, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Operations Bureau Director Cindy Jones, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Angela Batey, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Sara Abernathy, Georgia Department of Public Safety/CVE
Ms. Colleen DeLoach, Georgia Department of Public Safety/GSP
Mr. Jared Lott, Georgia Ports Authority
Mr. Forrest Strickland, Georgia Ports Authority
Undersheriff Robbie Jump, Glynn County Sheriff's Office
Major Stephanie Britt, Glynn County Sheriff's Office
Mr. Bill T. Akers
Mrs. Wanda McDuffie
Mr. C.B. Yadev
Mr. Jay Lassiter

Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood called the September 11, 2025 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 asked for guest introductions and Sheriff Neal Jump introduced Robbie Jump and Stephanie Britt from the Glynn County Sheriff's Office. Vice-Chairman Wood recognized Mr. Bill T. Akers from the GBI.

Vice-Chairman Wood called for approval of the August 14, 2025 BPS minutes. Sheriff Neal Jump made the motion to approve the August 14, 2025 minutes. This was seconded by Chief Janet Moon and voted approved by the Board members.

DIRECTOR REPORTS

Commissioner Billy Hitchens, Georgia Department of Public Safety, took a moment to recognize 9/11 and all the lives lost. Commissioner Hitchens thanked the Chamber of Commerce for hosting the Board and for being tremendous supporters and thanked the Ports Authority for attending.

Commissioner Hitchens reported the Clayton County Sheriff's Deputy who was involved in a crash last night is in critical but stable condition at the hospital, with broken bones and injuries. Commissioner Hitchens asked for thoughts and prayers as he moves forward.

Commissioner Hitchens stated given the community and business leaders in the room, he would adjust the normal presentation to give everyone a little insight into the Department of Public Safety. When people think of a Trooper or CVE Officer, they think all they do is stop cars and commercial vehicles, but these men and women do a lot more than that.

Commissioner Hitchens reported the Department recently wrapped up the Labor Day travel period which began at 6:00 PM on Friday, August 29th and ended at midnight on Monday, September 1st. Commissioner Hitchens stated during this four-day period, there were 15 fatalities across the state

which is 5 less than 2024. Commissioner Hitchens also reported during these 78 hours, Troopers arrested 462 drivers for DUI; investigated 473 crashes, with 7 of those being fatal; stopped 26,161 vehicles; issued 13,223 citations; and 19,422 warnings.

Commissioner Hitchens shared Director Hosey may touch on this but in the past several weeks there has been an increase in swatting calls in Georgia. Commissioner Hitchens stated thankfully none of these threats have been proven credible but each one still requires a full response. Commissioner Hitchens added we treat every call as if it is real until it is proven otherwise.

Commissioner Hitchens stated he would like to provide everyone with a brief update and highlight the Department's specialty divisions. Commissioner Hitchens stated in 2025, the Crime Suppression Unit has recovered 156 total vehicles with the monetary value of \$5,284,490 and has also recovered 26 vehicles with flipped or fraudulent VIN's, have been involved in 85 pursuits, recovered 18 stolen firearms, has apprehended 90 wanted suspects, and 2 murder suspects. Commissioner Hitchens advised this Unit consists of 10 Troopers and they patrol the metro Atlanta area, and the Unit came about because of Governor Kemp's vision of support for law enforcement. Commissioner Hitchens reported when Governor Kemp took office in 2019, DPS had about 18 K9s and today the K9 Unit is 52 dogs strong, and 31 are dual purpose and 21 are single purpose. Commissioner Hitchens shared so far this year they have had 1,340 deployments and during those deployments, the K9s have located 131 people, 24 of those being bite apprehensions, have recovered over 149.5 kilos of marijuana, approximately 551 kilos of methamphetamine, 21.9 kilos of cocaine, and over 1.7 million dollars in US currency.

Commissioner Hitchens shared DPS also has a SWAT Team that consists of 8 full-time members and 21 part-time members, and in 2025 SWAT has had 63 calls for service across the state, they have taken 5 murder suspects into custody, and they have assisted with numerous high profile events like the FIFA Club World Cup, College Football National Playoff and National Championship games, Orange Crush, and the Peachtree Road Race in Atlanta to boost security. Commissioner Hitchens noted one of the specialty divisions that does not get a lot of publicity but does a tremendous job is the State of Georgia Dive Team, and so far this year they have had 18 calls for service. Commissioner Hitchens noted some may remember in February of this year, there was a missing boater on Lake Oconee that got a lot of media attention, and the Dive Team responded with 3 Dive Team members from February 15th through 24th where they operated the underwater remote operated vehicle system, which is equipped with three cameras, sonar lights, and a grappling arm. Commissioner Hitchens stated our divers worked from sunup to sundown, searched approximately 640 acres, and spent an estimated 324 hours searching for the missing boater, and he was eventually recovered by a Dive Team from Wisconsin.

Commissioner Hitchens noted the DPS Aviation division is one of the most diverse aviation divisions in the nation, and so far in 2025, they have conducted 719 flights that have lasted over 1,400 hours, and of those 719 flights, 68 were for fugitive searches and 98 were for missing persons. Commissioner Hitchens shared the aviation fleet currently has 13 aircraft but that will reduce to 12 because 1 aircraft

will be going to surplus. Commissioner Hitchens noted a lot of money is spent on gas, adding the fuel budget is \$196,105.00.

Commissioner Hitchens reported DPS facilities are appraised of 87 buildings across the state, which includes 45 buildings that operate as a Patrol Post and barracks, 21 Weigh Stations, the Headquarters campus in Atlanta with 12 buildings and an Aviation Hangar, and 6 additional Aviation Hangers located throughout Georgia. Commissioner Hitchens shared the annual maintenance and repair budget is 1.5 million dollars.

Commissioner Hitchens shared DPS has an NRAD Unit, which is a Nuclear Radiological Detection Unit that is inside Commercial Vehicle Enforcement, and they have 1 full-time and 4 part-time employees and they go to the same events the SWAT Team does and sweeps for any kind of nuclear and radiological detection. Within Commercial Vehicle Enforcement, Commissioner Hitchens also noted there is a commercial driving simulator that goes around the state that has been a big hit at schools or anywhere else it has been.

Commissioner Hitchens reported the Department's current projects include a \$250,000 renovation in Waycross and the start of construction on 3 new Patrol Posts Swainsboro, Sylvania, and Athens, and some ongoing challenges across the state include HVAC system reliability as well as construction delays tied to permitting, soil studies, and ensuring contractor performance and quality.

Commissioner Hitchens said to give a little insight into motor vehicles, DPS has a fleet of approximately 1,600 vehicles with about 1,176 patrol vehicles and 424 for administrative or support use. On average, 85 vehicles are lost each year to crashes or mechanical failure and approximately 300 vehicles are replaced annually to keep the fleet mission ready. Commissioner Hitchens noted they try to surplus vehicles once they reach 125,000-130,000 miles and additionally DPS maintains a fleet of 12 helicopters.

Regarding the recent raid on the Hyundai plant, Commissioner Hitchens reported there were 21 Troopers assigned plus administrative personnel to assist HSI. Commissioner Hitchens stated Troopers handled perimeter traffic and provided aviation support, adding HSI arrested 475 individuals.

Mr. Roy Fickling asked for an update on the purchase of the mobile spikes to which Commissioner Hitchens stated the contract has been finished and they are waiting on delivery.

Vice-Chairman Wood commented on the traffic stops for August that averaged 77 stops for each person and thanked them for their work.

Commissioner Hitchens presented Troop I Communications Chief Delmas Boyett with his 30-year service award to the Department.

Director Hosey, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, took a moment to remember 9/11, stating the scars are still there from what took place and we all remember where we were and we will never forget it,

but we must continue to remain strong as a state and a country. Director Hosey thanked the Chamber for hosting the meeting.

Director Hosey started his report with an overview of the GBI, stating they are just shy of 1,000 employees within the Agency, sworn and non-sworn, and they are hovering right around 350 Agents in the Investigative Division.

Director Hosey reported the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) had over 69,000,000 CJIS transactions this past month and there are a variety of ways those transactions are coming in and how they are processed, and their job is to provide accurate and timely criminal justice information and related services to the State of Georgia and partners across the state. Director Hosey noted the Division of Forensic Sciences is the Crime Lab and Medical Examiners offices, which has Crime Labs located at GBI Headquarters, Macon, Moultrie, Cleveland, Columbus, Augusta, and Pooler. Director Hosey added they had over 12,000 requests for services just this past month so there is no shortage in evidence coming in for them.

Director Hosey shared the Agency is continuing to work the preliminary reporting for drug chemistry to address the backlog, stating they started in the Macon Lab and started with the circuit that Milledgeville is in and in about a month and a half they are almost finished with the backlog for Baldwin County.

Director Hosey stated the state is still currently at 15 Medical Examiners with 2 in the fellowship program. Director Hosey shared this past month, MEs conducted 333 autopsies, noting the national average on autopsies is 250 but just in the last two or three years before adding new doctors, that number was around 400 autopsies that doctors were conducting each year.

Concerning the Investigative Division, Director Hosey advised there is an Agent class going on right now that has 27 in the class, and they will graduate November 17th. Of the 350 sworn Agents, Director Hosey added they are assigned to 15 of the Regional offices across the state and they conduct general investigations for Regional Drug Enforcement offices and 3 Gang Units that are operating.

Director Hosey shared GBI has several specialty units: the Financial Unit, the Child Exploitation Human Trafficking Unit, the Special Operations, Commercial Gambling, Cyber Unit, and the GISAC Unit.

Director Hosey reported the Investigative Division has worked 888 cases this fiscal year; 162 of those have been Crimes Against Persons and 76 of those have been narcotics related cases.

Regarding GISAC, the Georgia Information Sharing and Analysis Center, or Intel Unit, Director Hosey advised they have had over 1,300 requests for information this past month. Director Hosey noted Colonel Hitchens mentioned the swatting incidents that have taken place, GISAC plays a vital role in monitoring activity and then working with local and even state or federal agencies. Director

Hosey shared in one day there were three or four swatting calls taking place at one time around the state.

Director Hosey commented on the long-standing relationship with the Ports and GBI GISAC, noting the great relationship working with the Ports Police in Brunswick and Savannah. Director Hosey stated GBI GISAC is one of the original members of the Maritime Interagency Center of Operations (MICO), adding GISAC signed the first charter in 2009 and re-signed in 2023, along with 6 other federal and local law enforcement agencies. As members of the Executive Steering Committee, Director Hosey explained GISAC has a regional presence at the MICO meetings that provide capability and intelligence sharing with those involved in the meetings, adding through those MICO meetings GISAC continues to develop and maintain invaluable partnerships with the Georgia Ports Authority by assisting in developing and sharing intelligence, and developing law enforcement bulletins. Director Hosey advised with the incidents that took place yesterday in Utah or any similar incident that takes place around the country, GISAC Analysts automatically start monitoring activity and talking to other Fusion Centers around the country in order to share information with law enforcement partners around the state.

Concerning facilities, Director Hosey reported GBI should be breaking ground soon on the new expansion for the ME's office at Headquarters, adding there has been some permit issues with DeKalb County getting that process started but hopefully it will start very soon.

Director Hosey shared a couple of losses within the Agency, noting the recent loss of Special Agent Tracy Sands from the Region 5 Statesboro office. Director Hosey stated Tracy was very well known in this area of the state as a very good investigator and we lost a friend and a great GBI Agent. Director Hosey also shared yesterday morning, Special Agent Retired Andy Ledford passed away and he is very well known throughout the state and the Agency in his position as Firearms Coordinator since he saw every GBI Agent that came through the Agency.

Director Wigginton, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, thanked the Chamber of Commerce and Ports as well for hosting the meeting.

Director Wigginton shared historic information about the Center, noting it was opened in 1987, after construction started in the early 80s, and its primary focus was to conduct advanced and specialized training for law enforcement. Director Wigginton reported the first year the Center opened, it had just barely over 1,000 students and the next data found in 2005 reported 21,000 students. Director Wigginton noted the Fire Academy was transferred to the Center in 1991 by Executive Order and Basic Training transferred over in 1996. Director Wigginton stated if you go back to 1987, the population of Georgia was just over 6,000,000 and if you look today, Georgia's population is around 12 million, so the population of the state has changed, also the law enforcement and firefighter population has changed. Director Wigginton advised this last fiscal year that just ended, the Center went from 1,000 a year in 1987, to an increase in a short time to 20,000, to this past year 412,000 individuals that were touched in some capacity.

Director Wigginton stated, operationally the Center is very robust and there are programs today that we never imagined that we would touch, such as judges, judicial security, educators, teachers, and school administrators for school safety. Director Wigginton added the Center is reaching out and doing more training in local communities, noting the Fire Academy conducted 723 classes last year out in the field and that was 723 classes being taught to volunteer firefighters who up until just a few years ago would have never received that type of training; and the law enforcement training is being pushed out to local communities to reach smaller agencies who do not have the resources to come to the Center.

Director Wigginton shared the Center's cafeteria serves 10,000 meals a week; and upkeep on the wastewater treatment plant is \$3,000,000 to maintain, and that has nothing to do with training or delivering training, but it is pretty important because if it shuts down, we have a prison on site that has 1,000 inmates, plus the student population who will not be able to go to training. Director Wigginton stated it is the things behind the scenes that keeps the Center going to make sure we can deliver training on campus and around the state.

Director Wigginton reported not only does the Center have students from all over the country but internationally also, and this week there are students from South Korea taking classes, so the Training Center is known around the nation for its facility and instruction.

Director Wigginton remembered the people lost on 9/11, stating a lot of people got on a plane that day, or went to work, and had no understanding they were going to pass that day, or they would pass later exposed to cancer. Individuals sitting at their desk, or sitting on a plane, but then those planes hit the towers and we had individuals like in this room that ran towards the danger and a lot of them knew the outcome of the decision they made and what is important is that we continue to train individuals who have the fortitude to run toward that danger and save citizens.

Vice-Chairman Wood mentioned a couple of firefighters lost recently and to remember them in thoughts and prayers.

DONATIONS

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

One (1) Evolution 3 DataWorks Plus Fingerprint Scanner	\$2,300.00	Locust Grove Police Department
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The motion to accept these items was made by Sheriff Neal Jump, which was seconded by Sheriff Jimmy McDuffie and voted approved by the Board members.

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

Furniture and Household Furnishings	\$2,500.00	Cash Liquidations
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Forty-Seven (47) Expired Ballistic Vests \$0.00

Georgia Ports Authority

The motion to accept these items was made by Sheriff Jimmy McDuffie, which was seconded by Sheriff Neal Jump and voted approved by the Board members.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Clare McGuire, Georgia Department of Public Safety, requested approval of a Resolution to authorize the Commissioner of Public Safety to enter into negotiations and appropriate agreements as necessary to surplus or transfer custody of approximately 1.892 acres of the vacated space formerly occupied by GSP Post 18, located at 3092 GA Highway 147, to DDS and reserving to DPS approximately 1.128 acres for the continued ownership, use, location, and access to the communications tower on the property and the radio equipment room adjacent to the tower.

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

Vice-Chairman Wood thanked Sheriff Neal Jump, Chamber of Commerce employee Aubri Stevenson, Captain Chad Gray, SFC Daniel Chernich, Sgt. Jonathan Edwards, Mr. Jay Lassiter, Mr. C.B. Yadev, Captain J.K. Crews, and Ports Authority employees Jared Lott and Forrest Strickland for their assistance with the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Craig Tully
Secretary