

**BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

April 15, 2010

The Glennville Garden Club Center - Glennville, GA

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mr. Wayne Abernathy  
Mr. Daniel M. Bryant  
Sheriff Steven D. Cronic  
Patrick H. Head  
Mr. C. Murray Kight  
Chief Jack K. McElfish  
Commissioner Brian Owens  
Sheriff H. Cullen Talton  
Mr. Gerald T. Willis  
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**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III  
Chief Louis M. Dekmar  
Retired Sheriff Bruce Harris  
Mr. Ellison G. Wood

**OTHERS:**

Mr. Joe Drolet, Senior Assistant Attorney General  
Ms. Cheryl Buie, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
Colonel W. W. Hitchens, Jr., Commissioner, Department of Public Safety  
Lt. Colonel F. D. Snellings, Jr., Deputy Commissioner, Department of Public Safety  
Mr. Joe Hood, Comptroller, Department of Public Safety  
Major Mark McDonough, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
Major Stewart F. Hicks, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
Chief Mark McLeod, Department of Public Safety/Motor Carrier Compliance Division  
Major H. W. Beck, Department of Public Safety/MCCD  
Major W. E. Boulware, Department of Public Safety/MCCD  
Captain Russell Powell, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
SFC Pete McCaleb, Department of Public Safety/Motor Carrier Compliance Division  
Captain W. H. Bryant, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
Lt. Steven Bone, Department of Public Safety/SWAT  
SFC Charles Evans, Department of Public Safety/SWAT  
Corporal Jerry Pimentel, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
TFC Kyle Sapp, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
Mr. Dan Brown, Department of Public Safety  
Assistant Director Dan Kirk, Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
Director Dale Mann, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Deputy Director Patrice Kerner, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Deputy Director Butch Beach, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Mrs. Maureen Bryant  
Colonel Rueben McGhee, Houston County Sheriff's Office  
Chief Deputy Billy Rape, Houston County Sheriff's Office  
Retired GSP Major Lester Rampy

Department of Corrections' Board Members

Ms. Laura Jones

Department of Corrections' Employees

Mr. Wayne Abernathy called the meeting to order and asked Reverend Rick Case to give the devotional and lead all in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Abernathy called on Mr. Wayne Dasher, host for the meeting to speak. Mr. Dasher recognized those that set-up and decorated for the meeting. Mr. Dasher then went on to recognize local people of the area.

Mr. Wayne Abernathy stated he was serving as the Vice-Chairman today as Vice-Chairman Ellis Wood is in the hospital with problems and asked that all remember Mr. Ellis in prayer and hopes that his recovery is very speedy; that he will soon return to this Board. Mr. Abernathy went on to introduce the BPS Board members.

Mr. Wayne Abernathy thanked the Department of Corrections' employees for their hospitality and good food today.

Mr. Wayne Abernathy called for approval of the March 2010 Board minutes. Sheriff Steve Cronic made the motion, which was seconded by Fire Chief Jack McElfish and voted approval by the Board members.

### **DIRECT REPORTS**

Colonel Bill Hitchens, Department of Public Safety began by stating it is always a pleasure to come to the Reidsville-Glenville area as it is close to home. Colonel Hitchens told those present that he and Tattall County Sheriff Quinton Rush were in trooper school together 41 years ago and have worked together for a number of years. Colonel Hitchens thanked the Department of Corrections personnel and Mr. Wayne Dasher for the steak luncheon.

Colonel Hitchens stated he spoke earlier with Mr. J. M. (Bob) Plemons who runs a DOC mobile construction team and like Wayne Dasher, DPS has taken advantage of the mobile construction team on several occasions. DOC built the patrol post in Newman, a great facility and by using DOC saved the Georgia State Patrol a lot of money. Colonel Hitchens told those present that this time last year, DPS received a 13 million dollar grant for the Computer Aided Dispatch-Records Management System and converted what use to be the driver's license facility at the Headquarters complex into the DPS Communications Center. Colonel Hitchens related that the DOC mobile construction team came in and put it all back together and did a great job, saving DPS and the state a substantial amount of money. Colonel Hitchens stated that 3-4 years ago, DPS started a motorcycle unit in the metro area and the intent of the motorcycle unit was to get to people on the 75/85 connector, one of the busiest stretches of highways in the US; traffic congestion is always a problem but when you have an accident or a breakdown, traffic can back up 15-20 miles if something is not done in a hurry. Colonel Hitchens

stated what DPS has done with creating the motorcycle unit, sometimes the Governor thinks they do not work as much as they should, the motorcycle unit troopers sit on the ramps and respond to accidents and emergencies, trying to clear up the road to keep traffic moving. DPS acquired the state building which used to be the Department of Human Resources Pharmaceutical Facility that is located in the same fenced complex with our Capitol Police Department. Colonel Hitchens stated he asked DOC Commissioner Owens for assistance from their DOC mobile construction team to remodel the facility for the Motor Unit which is almost completed. Colonel Hitchens related that using the DOC mobile construction team has saved DPS a tremendous amount of money on this project and the Motor Unit will be right at the interstate system and with the Capitol Police Department that operates 24/7, there will be good security. Colonel Hitchens related to those present that there are inter-departmental workings that go on that are very positive.

Colonel Hitchens stated DPS is putting in nine CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) sites across the state which started about a year ago. Colonel Hitchens stated that CAD-RMS training would begin May 11<sup>th</sup> for Americus and the Gainesville site will begin May 18<sup>th</sup>, which will mean eight of the nine sites will be completed. For this area, Statesboro was the second site completed which covers this region. GSP has essentially gone from 45 dispatch posts in the state to nine communications centers. Now everything is computerized and with GPS we can look at the screen and see where all of our units are in any particular region. Colonel Hitchens went on to state in regards to working with other agencies, the Department of Natural Resources wanted to be involved with our CAD system. In our Troop I area, which is coastal Georgia, all troopers have been given computers and work out of the GSP Brunswick Communications Center. Colonel Hitchens reminded those present that there was a DNR game warden shot at the Chatham-Effingham County line a while back and their communication system was just inadequate. Now all the game wardens have GPS and in addition they have access to GCIC. DNR game wardens can now run tags, check for wanted persons and stolen vehicles. When the game wardens are out on the water, the Communications Center will be able to follow the game wardens and if they have any problems we can get someone to them.

Colonel Hitchens told Board members a Tea Party would take place at the Capitol today and believes that this will be a large Tea Party; some notable people will be in attendance with an estimated 20,000 people in attendance. In addition to the Capitol Police, GSP has about forty troopers assigned to the detail.

Colonel Hitchens related that Freaknik will be held in Atlanta this weekend and stated Atlanta PD has not issued any permits. Colonel Hitchens stated DPS does not know what will transpire; DPS will work with Atlanta PD and bring in about 70 troopers to deal with some of the traffic issues. GSP will also have a special response team on stand-by.

Colonel Hitchens reminded the Board members that he spoke last month about the Dive Team that became as a response from Homeland Security saying the Navy and the Coast Guard were interested in areas along coastal Georgia with some issues that they felt needed to be dealt with. DPS received a Homeland Security grant to start a Dive Team. The Dive Team has been operational for a little while. DPS is very lucky to have some troopers in place with prior military experience in special ops as part

of the SWAT Team. Colonel Hitchens stated DPS tried not to take everyone from the SWAT team as we were worried we might have simultaneous events that would require the same people. Colonel Hitchens introduced Captain Bill Bryant who serves as the SWAT Commander and Troop H Commander. Colonel Hitchens then introduced Capt. Bryant's two assistants assigned full time to the SWAT and Dive Team, Lt. Steve Bone and SFC Chuck Evans.

SFC Chuck Evans began by stating back in late 2008 the Counter Terrorism Task Force attended a Vessel Boarding School in Charleston, SC put on by the Coast Guard, with the main goal at that time being port security. The Counter Terrorism Task Force got together and asked what we could do to help the Coast Guard, Navy, Chatham/Savannah and Brunswick/St Mary's ports to help secure our ports. SFC Evans stated they kicked around the idea of starting a state Dive Team that the SWAT Team would oversee and head up. SFC Evans related that the idea was presented to the command staff and they thought it was a very good idea but the Command Staff wanted to keep with the doctrine of the State Patrol which would allow us to not only serve the citizens of the state, but other departments, locals and municipalities. SFC Evans stated Homeland Security grants were obtained to fund the Dive Team. SFC Evans stated they visited a lot of other Dive Teams around the state in order to gain knowledge on the best equipment available that would allow the Dive Team to do their job. SFC Evans stated after a real strenuous process, fourteen applicants were selected for the dive team and related as a recreational diver, one does not understand the total concept and how technical it all is. SFC Evans stated the Dive Team utilizes lift bags, where they can actually lift up an object of 10,000 to 12,000 pounds from under water. SFC Evans stated the Dive Team members practice with their mask covered as all the water that they dive in is zero visibility and if they can see 6 inches in front of them normally that is great compared to conditions they have had to work in; everything we do is by feel only. SFC Evans related since the inception of the Dive Team, the first week in January, we knew the state needed an option like this, for counties and cities that had not been afforded opportunities for a Dive Team, but did not really understand how much the Dive Team was needed. The Dive Team is constantly receiving calls and we are trying fill everyone wishes to use us. The Dive Team just took on some new guys last week and hopefully will bring us up to eighteen divers with two administrative positions. SFC Evans stated at their very first dive operation which occurred the second week of January in Unadilla, they had to break a half inch of ice to get into the water as it was 29 degrees in contaminated conditions. The GBI had a murder investigation going on and suspected a handgun had been thrown into a cesspool. SFC Evans stated the dry suits keep the dive team members protected from contamination; this was the worst condition we had been in so far because we were new at this. SFC Evans stated they figured if they could dive in 29 degrees in contaminated conditions, they could work in any environment that is thrown at them. SFC Evans showed slides of a vehicle recovery in Dalton, where a trooper had been called to work a crash and requested the Dive Team's assistance in recovering the vehicle. The driver swam to the shore. SFC Evans stated the Dive Team was called to the drowning of a 16 year old in Calhoun last Saturday with the victim being located the following Wednesday. SFC Evans closed the Dive Team presentation by offering the Dive Team services to those present stating that all the Dive Team wanted was the work out of it and would be happy to assist and help anyone. SFC Evans stated the Dive Team does not come in and take over; they will work with those requesting their services to accomplish the mission.

Colonel Hitchens stated that some agencies do not have dive teams, and our job is to support these agencies just as we do with the SWAT team. There are 100 counties that are not served by a SWAT/Dive Team and we fill that void along with the Homeland Security interests and the federal people.

### **DONATIONS**

Mr. Joe Hood, Department of Public Safety requested approval of the following donations:

Three (3) Stalker DSR 2X Radars	\$8,775.00	Chattooga County Commissioners
Two (2) Stalker DSR 2X Radars	\$5,790.00	Perry Police Department

The motion for these donations was made by Chief Jack McElfish, seconded by Sheriff Steve Cronic and voted approved by the Board members.

Dan Kirk, Assistant Director, Georgia Bureau of Investigation stated that despite a lot of the economic turmoil we all seem to be in right now, GBI continues to do the job. The lab continues to function despite some folks saying there has been a meltdown; our backlog is still running about 5, 000 cases behind, with cases that are 45 days old which has been this way for about a year. GBI continues to maintain that level of service, our on-time percentage at the crime lab right now is 45 days at about 80% so GBI is doing very well despite the numbers. Assistant Director Kirk advised on the investigative side of the Department, GBI is down to 237 agents and GBI continues to still do the job there. Assistant Director Kirk stated they had several major drug busts that went down in West Metro, so things continue to happen and we still do the job.

Mr. Dan Kirk stated the Summerville and Moultrie Lab have closed. The personnel in those labs either left, retired or transferred to another lab. The facility at Summerville is being emptied out as we speak. Mr. Kirk stated the budget process is ongoing and stated the last that GBI heard is that the Speaker of the House has asked that \$200,000.00 be put into the Columbus budget as well as the laboratory in Moultrie. Mr. Kirk stated the GBI's position on this is we are not going to commit anything on this until the Legislature or the Governor has decided what direction they are going to take. This has gone back and forth, so at this point with the latest information we have gotten, we are going to sit back and when July rolls around, if there is money there, we will do what we have to do. As far as the Columbus lab, the people in the Columbus area were very generous; they provided us with enough money to keep the Columbus lab open until July 1, 2010. The Lt. Governor has promised that he would provide money that will keep that lab open after July; we know that the House of Representatives have put \$200,000.00 in their budget to go toward the Columbus lab to keep it open which would be about \$400,000 to keep the Columbus Lab open next year. We are hopeful that this will take place. As far as everything else goes, we are just like everyone else, we are surviving right now, doing what we can, the best with what we can with what we have.

Mr. Dan Kirk presented a Resolution requesting that the State Properties Commission authorize the Georgia Bureau of Investigation to enter into a Short Term Intergovernmental Agreement with Chattooga County allowing Chattooga County to occupy and maintain the facility known as the Georgia Bureau of Investigation Northwestern Regional Crime Lab and the real property on which it resides, located in Trion, Chattooga County, GA.

The motion for the resolution was made by Chief Jack McElfish, seconded by Sheriff Steve Cronic and voted approved by the Board members.

Director Dale Mann, Georgia Public Safety Training Center began by thanking the Department of Corrections and Mr. Wayne Dasher for the wonderful meal and reception today.

Director Mann recognized POST Director Ken Vance and stated that GPSTC and POST have a good working relationship. Director Mann told of the physical changes being made at GPSTC and stated after DOC moved to their new facility at Tift College, GPSTC is in the process of moving the Police Academy down to the former DOC space. GPSTC renovated internally and have used a lot of inmate labor. The GPSTC also has a second part to the plan, which involves giving DPS more office space at the training center. Director Mann stated that DPS has always been cramped and on top of each other and GPSTC is looking to renovate some of the old Police Academy space to expand the DPS operations.

Director Mann stated in about thirty days, GPSTC will roll out the on-line training programs and will start with one hour training programs. Director Mann stated there is a requirement in GA law that between POST and the Training Center we have to make available every year to officers' updated material on domestic violence and elder abuse and now have made this available in the on-line training class. Director Mann related that when the on-line training goes live, the officer will sign up, take the class, take the test at the end, download a C-12, which will be given to the departmental training officer who will send to POST and there you have the credit for the training and you never have to leave your building. We are expanding that into a lot of other areas right now; we have some on-scene accident investigations and will continue to expand the on-line training because the truth is; it is a lot cheaper for your folks to go on line at a computer at your office than it is to send to GPSTC. It cost you money and everybody money to do this. This year is probably the worst money year any of us have ever seen. We are looking at ways to build efficiencies into the training, it will never replace the student coming into a class room and learning, but it does help supplement that. We are glad to see GPSTC people make this work.

### **OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

Fire Chief Jack McElfish stated he had just attended the GA Fire Chiefs Conference and wanted to commend Colonel Hitchens for allowing SFC Scott Short to present a great two hour program on fire truck accidents and public safety accidents. Chief McElfish stated that SFC Scott Short really did a great job and scared them about driving safe. Fire Chief McElfish told Colonel Hitchens he has great

people working for him and thanked him for allowing SFC Short address the GA Fire Chiefs Conference.

There being no further business, the Board of Public Safety meeting was adjourned. The Board of Corrections called their meeting to order.

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Rooney L. Bowen, III  
Secretary