

MINUTES OF BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY
January 11, 2006

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Bud Black
Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III
Chief Lou Dekmar
Commissioner James Donald
Sheriff Bruce Harris
Mr. Pat Head
Chief Dwayne Orrick
Chief J. D. Rice
Sheriff Cullen Talton

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Governor Sonny Perdue
Mr. Hal Averitt
Mr. Wayne Abernathy
Mr. Dub Harper
Sheriff Jamil Saba

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mr. Chris Brasher, Georgia Department of Law
Ms. Laura Jones, Board Liaison
Colonel Bill Hitchens, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol
Lieutenant Colonel Arthur White, Department of Public Safety
Sergeant Mark McDonough, Georgia State Patrol
Major Keith Sorrells, Georgia State Patrol
Major Don Chastain, Georgia State Patrol
Mr. Terry Landers, Georgia State Patrol
Chief Mark McLeod, GSP Motor Carrier Compliance Division
Ms. Melissa Rodgers, Department of Public Safety
Ms. Becky East, Department of Public Safety
Director Vernon Keenan, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Assistant Director Chris Ash, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Mr. Ray Higgins, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Deputy Director Paul Heppner, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Director Dale Mann, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Senator Brian Kemp, Chairman of Public Safety Committee
Representative Terry Barnard, Chairman of State Properties and Institutions Committee
Mr. Frank Rotondo, Executive Director of Chiefs of Police Association
Mr. Reuben McGee, Houston County Sheriff's Office

Vice-Chairman James Donald called the meeting to order, welcoming everyone to the January Board meeting. He requested if the Board members had any visitors to introduce. Sheriff Cullen

Talton stated Mr. Reuben McGee had accompanied the Sheriff. Then, all attendees stood and introduced themselves.

Vice-Chairman Donald requested approval of the December Minutes; said motion made by Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III, seconded by Mr. Bud Black, and approved by the Board members.

DIRECTORS' REPORTS

Colonel Bill Hitchens, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol, reported that the agency has been actively engaged in budget formulations and preparation for the legislature, which started Monday.

Colonel Hitchens stated that the Christmas and New Years holidays are the two busiest times of the year for State Patrol, as far as traffic is concerned. Each holiday weekend, State Patrol, along with Department of Transportation, make a prediction. At an earlier holiday during 2005, the prediction greatly exceeded the expectation, and, there was a lot of concern in the media as to why that occurred. During both Christmas and New Year, the number of fatalities was less than predicted; therefore, there was not very much press about this last prediction, which was very positive. State Patrol is always very careful about predicting the numbers; specifically using a mathematical formula.

Colonel Hitchens apologized for the length of time it took to announce the rule changes at the December Board meeting. The rule changes involve four years of cleanup of departmental rules. The Department has been actively engaged since losing Department of Motor Vehicle Safety and since adding Motor Carrier Compliance Division to eradicate a multitude of rules from the books. The Department no longer has authority regarding drivers licenses, along with its administration or recordkeeping.

Colonel Hitchens announced that on Tuesday, January 10th, the Senate introduced Senate Resolution 660 to honor several law enforcement agencies. An incident occurred several months ago, wherein after an armed robbery occurred in Waycross, the individual fled in a bobtail tractor trailer. The Waycross Police gave pursuit, and then State Patrol troopers became involved. Before it ended, there were thirteen Georgia State Patrol personnel involved, five Motor Carrier Compliance Division personnel, in addition to members of Waycross Police Department, Ware County Sheriff's Department, Berrien County Sheriff's Department, Worth County Sheriff's Department, Tift County Sheriff's Department, and Tifton Police Department. The pursuit went all the way from Waycross to Tifton. Law enforcement officers tried everything in their power to get him to stop, but he refused; even driving on the rims. The individual drove through a couple of cities; the cities worked on blocking the roads and getting others off the streets. It finally ended after the officers shot at the rig and the individual pulled over on a grass strip attempting to turn around. The pursuit came to a satisfactory conclusion. The agencies and

officers involved were recognized by the Senate; and, the officers had their picture made with Governor Perdue. Colonel Hitchens stated this is a good example of how there is good law enforcement cooperation between a multitude of agencies; but it also highlighted the need for a interoperable communication system.

In response to a question of a plan to fix the interoperable communication, Colonel Hitchens responded there have been seven different studies regarding this issue. The 800 MHz is a much more technologically advanced system, and several major cities and counties have gone to that system. Being a statewide organization, State Patrol has to try and configure its communication system with different systems. Such as, while in Houston County, State Patrol has to be able to speak to the 800 MHz. While in Berrien County or other places where they cannot afford it, State Patrol has to figure otherwise. Not only does it involve State Patrol, but it involves other agencies. If ever in a domestic or a terrorist event, communications would vary significantly; such as, communicating to cut off gas lines or power lines or sewage systems. State Patrol has technology, which has been put in a couple of posts already, giving the ability to switch systems. State Patrol is working with Homeland Security and Georgia Tech Research Institute, and Motorola has been awarded the contract. In response to a question of the 800 system initiated in Troop C, Colonel Hitchens responded that it has not been completed yet; the funding was for the urban area so certain entities could come on board. Colonel stated that the cost statewide would be about \$300 million.

Director Vernon Keenan, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, reported that on February 1st, there will be a GBI Narcotic Agents class at the Training Center. This is the first agents class that has been held in three years. There will be 18 new narcotic agents and they will go through the sixteen weeks of training, and then on to Drug Enforcement assignments. The new agents will replace the senior narcotic agents, who will be rotated out to field assignments and to regular working assignments. Director Keenan explained that narcotic agents do some of the most dangerous work in law enforcement; their job is to work undercover in Drug Enforcement. When the class has completed their training, a graduation ceremony will be held and the Board members will be invited.

Director Keenan handed out to the Board members a copy of an excerpt from the GBI policy relating to disability retirement. This particular area in the policy explains setting up a system for employees to apply for medical disability. When the application is submitted, the employee has to go on leave. The Employees' Retirement System (ERS) receives the application, and, ERS begins its internal process. At some point, ERS then sends the paperwork to the employing agency; in this case, the GBI; wherein the agency reviews all the medical records to make a recommendation back to ERS. Director Keenan reported that now a system has been set up in a contract with Medical Dimensions, a group of doctors who review the medical reports and conduct examinations of the applicant. Medical Dimensions is a contract worker for the GBI, wherein the group makes the recommendation back as to what the GBI's position should be.

Director Keenan explained that the GBI met with Medical Dimensions and explained the standards that should be applied when determining whether someone can or cannot do the job of a special agent; those standards set up are those of the very best agent, of a hard, dedicated worker. Ironically, after the state contract was set up, the very first request came from one of the GBI's very best agents. The report came back that this particular agent could not do his function as an agent, after requiring him to go through a fitness for duty evaluation. This agent's application was accepted and received the disability. The GBI has found this system to be very successful, knowing that it is no longer in the business of making medical determinations without a team of experts. Director Keenan has shared this policy, along with the state contract, with other state agencies. In response to questions, Director Keenan explained that the decision on retirement is made between Employees' Retirement System and the employing agency. When there has been abuse of the system, the agency has gotten the blame. Several meetings have been held with ERS and Governor's staff, who are pleased that all law enforcement are looking into this issue to straighten this out.

Director Dale Mann, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, reported that the State Properties Commission voted to allocate the old state patrol post in Savannah, plus a ten-acre tract making it a total of seventeen acres, to the Training Center. This property will be used as an academy. After an evaluation was done, Director Mann stated they will be going into the building to gut it and renovate it. There was an underground fuel storage tank leak, which is being cleaned up. Also, there is the situation of the water line, which will probably come from Garden City.

As for the academy in Athens, Director Mann reported that it is at 100%; there are four classrooms in this academy. The Training Center went from paying \$72,000-a-year lease on an 11,000 square foot building to owning a building of 18,500 square feet. This new building is in a better location for the training academy.

Director Mann requested for the Board of Public Safety to support and approve a Resolution to accept a diversion center owned by Department of Corrections. Director Mann has contacted the State Properties Commission and it has agreed to approve the transfer. Vice-Chairman Donald stated that Director Mann had come to Department of Corrections requesting the transfer of this property, which will help the Training Center with training in that area. This center location in Dalton is a 100-bed center designed to house revoked probationers. Director Mann stated that currently, the academy is located at Coosa Valley Tech; and through the myriad of things that happened last year, the technical college will not acquire a building for another six or seven years. Now that Coosa Valley Tech needs space, the training academy has moved into modular units in the Tech's parking lot. With the Training Center acquiring the Dalton Diversion Center, the regional academy will be able to move to a permanent location. Vice-Chairman Donald stated this is in line with Governor's thoughts on leveraging other agencies' resources. Vice-Chairman Donald called for a motion to accept the resolution in the transferring of Dalton Division Center to the Department of Corrections. Chief Lou Dekmar made a motion

that the property located at 230 Brick Yard Road in Dalton be accepted for a training facility under the Georgia Public Safety Training Center. Said motion was seconded by Chief J. D. Rice and unanimously voted approval by the Board members.

Director Mann addressed a question concerning the condition of the burn buildings, responding that the Training Center has requested \$75,000 in their FY 07 package to be able to do some corrections on those buildings. One question raised was if legislators inquired about the contract academies not being under the supervision of the Training Center. Director Mann responded that three regional academies, one in Clayton, one in Fulton, one in North Central are not employees of the Training Center; all they do is report the training to the Training Center and a reimbursement check is given for the maximum amount of contract. Director Mann stated there is a need for a training delivery system where all the training academies operate under one system. Director Mann responded to questions if audits are conducted of those contract academies. Those academies have to follow POST rules and Director Mann depends on POST to minor the contract academies; those academies are not under the authority of the Public Safety Training Center. Four agencies that have their own training academies are Atlanta Police Department, DeKalb, Gwinnett, and Cobb. As an example, the contract with Cobb County means that the Training Center does not hire the academy director, does not hire the staff, and has very little control of the day-to-day operations. Director Mann emphasized that one of the things needed is a standardized delivery system; where everyone understands what the mission is, what the curriculum states, and do not deviate from what is required. Further, the Training Center meets with its academies to insure that requirements are followed to have safety rules in place. If a safety officer sees something that may be unsafe, he is to shut it down and does not start it up until it has been fixed. After roundtable discussion, Vice-Chairman Donald suggested this issue be taken up by the Public Safety Training Committee; that the committee members visit with Director Mann and with Executive Director Bill Hutson. Vice-Chairman Donald stated it would be wise to have the Committee look at the issue and report back with findings regarding whether the Board needs to take action to support some changes.

Vice-Chairman Donald took a moment to welcome Senator Brian Kemp, who heads the Public Safety Committee and is a friend of law enforcement. Senator Kemp has accompanied Vice-Chairman Donald to Mississippi to tour those prisons. Senator Kemp stated he wanted to come by and say hello to the Board members and that he appreciates the Board members' service. Senator Kemp stated for the agencies to call on him if he could help in the legislature or if his office can be of assistance. He has been Chairman of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee for over a year now and wanted to make it to one of the meetings to say hello.

Vice-Chairman Donald welcomed and introduced Representative Terry Barnard, who is Chairman of State Institutions and Property Committee. Representative Barnard thanked the Commissioner for the welcome and stated he just wanted to drop by and visit the Board.

DONATIONS/RESOLUTIONS

Mr. Terry Landers, Department of Public Safety/State Patrol, requested approval of the following donations:

Cash Donation To Purchase Exercise Equipment	\$ 500.00	Dr. Edward DiPetra
Cash Donation To Purchase Exercise Equipment	\$ 500.00	Dr. Michael Sharkey
Cash Donation For Equipment and Furnishings Two 32" Color TV's Seven 27" Color TV's Five 20" Color TV's One 19" Color TV/DVD Combo 14 VCR/DVD Combos	\$ 1,000.00 \$ 3,128.82	Wal-Mart Distribution Center
Five Stalker DSR 2x Radars	\$13,475.00	Murray County Commissioners
Six Stalker DSR Radars	\$10,860.00	Rockdale County Commissioners
One M.P.H. BEE III Radar	\$ 2,500.00	Police Chief Terry Esco Braselton Police Department

Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III made a motion to accept said donations, which was seconded by Sheriff Bruce Harris, and unanimously voted approval by the Board.

Director Dale Mann, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, requested approval of the following donation:

104 Various Types and Models Fire Extinguishers	\$ 2,235.00	Atlanta Journal Constitution
--	-------------	------------------------------

Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III made a motion to accept said donation, which was seconded by Chief Lou Dekmar, and unanimously voted approval by the Board.

There were no Administrative/Emergency issues.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III directed a question to Director Vernon Keenan on an issue discussed at a previous Board meeting, on the issue of instant gun background checks wherein the federal government indicated Georgia's permit does not meet the federal qualifications. Mr. Bowen questioned whether there was any legislative interest to change Georgia's permit law. Director Keenan responded that a bill has been filed by Representative Lunsford that would change the concealed weapons permit law to meet the federal requirements.

After discussion of the date of the February Board meeting, the Board members agreed to change the date to February 15, 2006, and will be held in Atlanta.

Vice-Chairman Donald updated the Board members on the public safety issues that affect the Department of Corrections. One thing is that the Vice-Chairman is planning to move Corrections Headquarters to the Tift College campus in Forsyth. This move will facilitate Corrections being located closer to those prisons situated below central Georgia. The people in middle Georgia will have an opportunity to be a part of leadership in the Department. It will relieve pressure on the requirements at the Training Center, with Corrections being able to hold its training at the campus. Also, the plan is to keep this location in Twin Towers for Board meetings of both Board of Corrections Board and the Public Safety Board; therefore, with Laura Jones managing both Board activities, there will be a presence in Atlanta. Vice-Chairman Donald stated the Department's move is a great news decision, which was announced by Governor Perdue. Vice-Chairman Donald stated that the next bit of good news is that in the budget the Department of Corrections will get additional funds to open additional beds. There are several probation detention centers that will be converted to medium or minimum security units under larger state prisons. Vice-Chairman Donald stated this is good news in that this will help draw down the population from the county jails; that this change will bring job opportunities to those communities; and there will be inmate work details for those communities; the communities need not be afraid because the facilities will house medium security level inmates.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Rooney L. Bowen, III