

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY

January 10, 2008

Atlanta, Georgia

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Vice-Chairman James E. Donald
Mr. Wayne Abernathy
Mr. Bud Black
Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III
Sheriff Steve Cronic
Chief Lou Dekmar
Sheriff Bruce Harris
Mr. Pat Head
Chief Dwayne Orrick
Mr. Ellis Wood

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. Dub Harper
Chief J. D. Rice
Mr. Gene Stuckey
Sheriff Cullen Talton

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mr. Joe Drolet, Board Attorney
Ms. Laura Jones, Board Liaison
Colonel Bill Hitchens, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol
Mr. Joe Hood, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol
Mr. Dan Brown, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol
Ms. Melissa Rodgers, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol
Chief Mark McLeod, Motor Carrier Compliance Division
Mr. Dan Brown, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol
Ms. Bonnie Kline, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol
Director Vernon Keenan, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Mr. Mike Fordham, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Mr. Dan Kirk, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Ms. Lisa Urich, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Deputy Director Paul Heppner, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Director Dale Mann, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Patrece Kerner, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Director Terry Norris, Georgia Sheriffs Association

Vice-Chairman James Donald called the January meeting to order. Vice-Chairman Donald stated Mr. Ellis Wood had a suggestion and called on Mr. Wood to stand. Mr. Wood stated he wanted to ask Sheriff Steve Cronic to open the meeting with prayer for the Board as well as for the General Assembly. Mr. Wood stated he would like to suggest that this be considered being done on a monthly basis. Vice-Chairman Donald asked if there were any objections. Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III stated he would like to take this one step further with suggesting, if Board members would like to invite a local

pastor to come to one of the Board meetings, to let that pastor be Chaplain Of The Day and give the prayer. Board Attorney Joe Drolet stated that just as a matter of information there have been challenges to this, such as in Cobb County. Mr. Drolet stated that the federal court ruled on a case involving Cobb County; every different denomination was allowed an opportunity and equally allowed to give invocations. Chief Lou Dekmar suggested also starting with the Pledge of Allegiance; it would be appropriate to follow the prayer with the Pledge.

Sheriff Steve Cronic opened the meeting with prayer, followed with everyone standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Bowen announced that former Board member, Sheriff Donnie Haralson, is going through another round of difficult cancer treatments. The prognosis on this drug treatment is good, but it is tough on Sheriff Haralson. Mr. Bowen asked everyone to keep Sheriff Haralson in their prayers. Vice-Chairman Donald announced that Mr. Tom Salter, Board member of Board of Corrections, is going through difficult time with his cancer and is in the hospital now. Vice-Chairman Donald called on all visitors to introduce himself/herself.

Vice-Chairman Donald stated he is proud of Georgia Bureau of Investigation and Director Keenan in pursuing the culprit of Ms. Emerson's death. Vice-Chairman Donald thanked everyone for doing that; the public is in mourning for Ms. Emerson.

Vice-Chairman Donald requested a motion to approve the December Minutes. Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III made a motion to approve the Minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Wayne Abernathy, and voted approval by the Board members.

DIRECT REPORTS

Colonel Bill Hitchens, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol, began with stating that he saw Sheriff Haralson recently. Colonel has known Sheriff Haralson for years and will keep the Sheriff in his prayers. Colonel Hitchens complimented Sheriff Steve Cronic. Last year, during the trip to Israel, Sheriff Cronic was recommended to do the re-baptizing of those on the trip; almost everybody in the group was baptized in the Jordan River.

Colonel Hitchens stated that this is the time for state government to be interested the forthcoming budget issues and appropriations. He did not want to speak to those yet, because Governor's Recommendations have not been released.

Colonel Hitchens reported on the holiday weekends; there is good news and bad news. For Christmas holiday, State Patrol predicted 25 fatalities; but there were 12, which is 13 less than predicted. For New Year's, the prediction was 12, but there were 18. As often happens in those holiday weekends

and other times of the year, there were some things that were unpreventable. Cobb County Police worked an accident involving three fatalities. State Patrol investigated fatalities in an incident in Butts County. Between these two incidents, they account for the difference of the prediction.

Colonel Hitchens reported that as far as work activity, he had everybody out on the road. Colonel and everybody on command staff were out on the road. State Patrol stopped 31,000 vehicles, had 22,647 arrests, and arrested 623 intoxicated drivers.

Colonel Hitchens responded to question about predictions, which is based on historical data. State Patrol works with Department of Transportation to look at historical occurrences, volume of traffic based on recent times, and actual fatality rate. Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends this; there is media and public interest on how many people are killed in accidents.

Director Vernon Keenan, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, began with thanking Vice-Chairman Donald for his kind words on the Emerson case. The credit for the success for that case belongs to the men and women in local and state law enforcement who worked that case. This has very much been a team effort of local law enforcement. Director Keenan stated he could not say enough about Sheriff Scott Stephens and Union County Sheriff's Department. Sheriff Stephens has a lot of new deputies up there and they are superb to work with. That case took everyone from Union County down to Hall County; over to Hall County and Gainesville; over to Pickens County; over to Cherokee County; and finally, to Dawson County, where Meredith Emerson's body was recovered. With all the agencies involved, the team work was superior. As Director Keenan has told GBI staff before, when there is a case like Meredith Emerson that attracts the national attention and the case begins to evolve, it is too late then to worry about whether the men and women working that case are properly equipped to do their job. The men and women working the street either know what they are doing and are able to make the proper decisions, or else, there will be mistakes made. Director Keenan stated he has never been able to calculate what brings a particular case into the national spotlight. Meredith Emerson is actually one of 608 women who are reported missing in Georgia. Since the Missing Persons file was set up in 1972, there are 608 women entered in that file. If the body of Meredith Emerson had not been recovered, she would have been 609. Director Keenan has received phone calls from around the country from his counterparts who talked about how this case has affected them.

Director Keenan is proud of the law enforcement in Georgia; the local agencies and the state agencies involved in this because they are the ones allowing the nation to see that Georgia law enforcement knows what it is doing. Georgia knows how to work a complex case; how to handle the media; and have the appropriate relationship with the family. There are state agencies that have not received laudatory comments; such as the Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement and their Game Management people who were critical in everything that went on. Director Keenan continued with explaining that Georgia State Patrol worked with this. Georgia Emergency Management Agency came in and set up an extensive command post because when it was reported that Meredith Emerson was missing off Blood Mountain area, there was a tremendous outpouring of 200 volunteers to assist in the Search and Rescue. All that requires organization. While that is happening, law enforcement is doing the investigation. Actually, there are two operations, i.e, Search and Rescue and then the Criminal

Investigation. It was determined initially there was going to be a criminal abduction; there were indicators this would evolve into a criminal case. At the beginning, it was known there was a suspect and a description. Through citizen reports, law enforcement was able to have a name and identification. It is well known that when the GBI is seeking a Person Of Interest, that it is extremely unusual for the GBI to ever talk of looking for a person of interest. However, this was an unusual case in that the case supervisors calculated the need for the public's help to identify Gary Hilton and be able to track him. Citizen involvement is key to the success in the investigation. Citizens helped identify Gary Hilton through five counties because of media reporting on the description of Hilton and of Hilton's vehicle. A citizen in DeKalb County spotted Hilton at a service station; he had just finished cleaning out his van and was in the process of washing it with bleach water. The citizen spotted the van and called 911, and the DeKalb County Police Department went out and arrested him. At that time the only charge was a misdemeanor of Failure to Appear in federal court out of a citation he had gotten from Park Services. Subsequent to that, Hilton was charged with Kidnapping With Bodily Harm in Union County; at that point it could not be proved that a murder had occurred. The investigation unfolded and the end result is that Meredith Emerson's body was recovered in Dawson County. District Attorney Stan Gunter made a decision that he would offer Gary Hilton a Life Sentence and take the death penalty off the table if Hilton would show GBI and Union County where the body was.

GBI completely agreed with that decision; it was important that the body be recovered for two reasons. First, the family could not bring closure without burial of remains of Meredith Emerson; and second, the recovery of Meredith Emerson and the surrounding information is critical to linking Gary Hilton to any other cases which he may have committed. GBI has met extensively with North Carolina authorities because there is a horrendous case of two elderly hikers; also, Florida authorities are talking with GBI about a possible link. Director Keenan stated there is a tremendous amount of evidence that is being catalogued and processed. He stated that Assistant Director Dan Kirk arranged for the Crime Lab to have scientists come in on Sunday to begin receiving some of DNA evidence.

Director Keenan stated his comments on this case are based around how proud he is of state and local men and women law enforcement that worked the street; they are the ones that do this work. Director stated he is privileged to work with them and take some of the pressure off by going before the media.

Director Keenan addressed the question of the prohibition that law enforcement officers cannot run a suspect through CODIS to see whether or not there are outstanding hits. Director Keenan stated there is not enabling legislation for a law enforcement agency, who is working a case and has a suspect, to enter that suspect into the DNA database. The GBI is working with the District Attorneys Association on preparing draft legislation for the Association to handle this issue.

Director Keenan addressed a question on the issue of mental health. Director Keenan stated that under current Georgia law, someone could be in psychiatric crisis and law enforcement cannot do anything unless there is a crime being committed. Law enforcement cannot just deal with someone who is going through psychiatric crisis without a criminal charge. Most of the time, it will not be an issue. Such as, Gary Hilton had encountered law enforcement in three states and he was a master of knowing how to keep law enforcement from not making an arrest on him. Director Keenan stated Sheriffs and Department of Corrections are the mental hospitals for State of Georgia. Director Keenan stated the

positive thing on mental health issues is the Crisis Intervention Team program, which is a partnership of Georgia Chiefs, Georgia Sheriffs, Department of Corrections, and other law enforcement agencies training law enforcement officers how to handle persons in psychiatric crisis. Georgia is the only state with the statewide program; Department of Corrections is developing a specialized CIT program for correctional officers. Emergency Medical Technicians organization are asking for training for their EMT's. All this is based around learning how to deal with persons in psychiatric crisis, hopefully to control the situation and keep it from spiraling out of control.

Vice-Chairman Donald reported that in a meeting with Fulton Superior Court Judge Downs, she told Vice-Chairman the number one issue is mental health resources. Vice-Chairman Donald stated there are some things going on out there now with the Governor's Commission On Mental Health; such as, Georgia has more institutional beds on average than any other state in the Union. The problem is in the local communities; the local community level mental health services are not there. One thing that Vice-Chairman Donald agreed to do on the Commission on Mental Health is have the first mental health day reporting center. Judge Downs has also asked Vice-Chairman Donald to provide a full-time probationer officer who does nothing but mental health in the Atlanta Judicial Circuit. Vice-Chairman Donald stated the Commission will suggest to accelerate programs for the law enforcement agencies. The law enforcement agency will meet the inmate in prison, tell the inmate they are aware the inmate is coming home, and inform the inmate he will be watched; and then three days later pay a visit to the ex-felon. Vice-Chairman Donald complimented Director Keenan for being a master of collaging all the law enforcement agencies and bringing them together, to have options to bring the guys to justice.

Director Dale Mann, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, began his report with introducing Ms. Patrece Kerner, who is the Deputy Director of Operations. Director Mann and staff are doing internal things at the Training Center to try clean up administrative things; such as how to keep up with number of meals that are given to students. This may get to the point where this process will be automated.

Director Mann stated the process of working with Department of Technical and Adult Education is going forward and DTAE is looking at pilots for basic training. Director Mann stated there will be an Ad Hoc/Basic Mandate Training Committee meeting on January 31 at 1:00 p.m. Director Mann stated he would feed lunch, if anyone is interested. Hopefully, this meeting will be at the end of the first phase, which is getting DTAE looking realistically at six pilot places. This month DTAE is having a meeting with their presidents of eight or ten of their technical colleges, who have expressed an interest in going forward with this pilot. Dr. Teresa Resch or Commissioner Ron Jackson will attend the Ad Hoc Committee meeting to bring the Committee members up to speed on what kind of decisions were made at the DTAE meeting.

Director Mann complimented Director Keenan for an initiative brought to the committee. Director Keenan has asked Mr. Mark Jackson, GBI Legal Services, to research the law about the technical schools doing background investigations on the potential students. After looking at that Code section, it looks like no reason that DTAE could not do the same thing that Training Center is doing with pre-service students. The Training Center requires the student to go to a private detective agency to have background run. So, before P.O.S.T. will issue their entrance to the Academy, they would have had to

pass the interstate index check. That is important because the technical school nor the law enforcement agency do not need to get somebody who is a convicted murderer from another state. Director Mann stated everything is progressing; everything is coming to end of the cycle of what recommendation will be from DTAE. Director Mann has told Commissioner Jackson to put their A team in the proposal, in that if DTAE gets the opportunity to do the six pilots, a great job will be done. But if the six pilot colleges do not do a great job, then the Training Center will be back at square one. The Training Center will help in every way possible. Director Mann responded to a question about the curriculum; P.O.S.T. has had a committee looking at this for over a year. Until there is an alternate way to get folks in the classes, they are full; there is not a spare seat left. Unless the Training Center gets additional resources, unless this works with DTAE, not another minute needs to be added to basic training. It is at 408 hours right now; needs to stay there until getting a handle on bigger capacity.

Director Mann requested approval of the following donation:

Memorial Fund In Honor of Ramsey and Elizabeth Simmons	\$100.00	John L. Schrum III and Ellen Schrum
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Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III made the motion to approve the donation, which was seconded by Mr. Wayne Abernathy, and voted approval by the Board members.

DONATIONS

Mr. Joe Hood, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol, requested approval of the following donations:

Ten Pro Laser III Lidar Speed Detective Devices	\$29,500.00	Bibb County Commissioners
Two Decatur Genesis II Radar	\$ 2,930.00	Colquitt County Commissioners
Three Garmin 660 GPS Navigation Units	\$ 1,575.00	Sheriff of Emanuel County
Three Garmin Nuvi 350 Navigation Units	\$ 1,020.00	Sheriff of Treutlen County
Six Garmin Nuvi 250 Navigation Units	\$ 1,362.00	
Two Decatur Genesis II Radar	\$ 2,970.00	Talbot County Commissioners

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Narcotics K-9	\$ 6,000.00	Braselton Police Department
Stalker Radar	\$30,000.00	Webster County Commissioners
Nine Fuji Digital Cameras With Accessories	\$ 288.40	Sheriff of Crawford County

Chief Lou Dekmar motioned approval of the donations, seconded by Mr. Wayne Abernathy, and voted approval by the board members.

Vice-Chairman Donald called for Emergency/Administrative Business or any Old or New Business. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Rooney L. Bowen, III
Secretary