

**BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

January 8, 2009

Corrections Board Room, Atlanta

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mr. Wayne Abernathy  
Mr. Bud Black  
Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III  
Sheriff Steve Cronic  
Chief Lou Dekmar  
Sheriff (Retired) Bruce Harris  
Mr. Pat Head  
Commissioner Brian Owens  
Chief Dwayne Orrick  
Sheriff Cullen Talton  
Mr. Jerry Willis  
Mr. Ellis Wood

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Mr. Dub Harper  
Chief Jack McElfish

**OTHERS:**

Ms. Laura Jones, Board Liaison  
Mr. Joe Drolet, Senior Assistant Attorney General  
Colonel Bill Hitchens, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
Lieutenant Colonel Fred Snellings, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
Major Mark McDonough, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
Mr. Joe Hood, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
Major Stewart Hicks, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
Chief Mark McLeod, MCCD, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
Captain Mike Fagler, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
Sergeant Russell Hayes, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
Ms. Jacqueline Bunn, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
Mr. Dan Brown, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
SFC Stan Stalnaker, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol  
Director Vernon Keenan, Georgia Bureau of Investigation  
Director Dale Mann, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Ms. Patrice Kerner, Georgia Public Safety Training Center  
Mr. Geronald Bell, Office of Planning and Budget  
Ms. Wendy Angelty, Office of Planning and Budget

Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III called the January Board of Public Safety meeting to order. Mr. Bowen requested Sheriff Steve Cronic to open with prayer. Everyone remained standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Bowen welcomed everyone to the Board of Public Safety. Mr. Bowen, on behalf of the Board, wished Mr. James Donald the best; the Board has enjoyed his leadership on the Board. This morning Governor Perdue appointed Mr. Donald to the State Board of Pardons and Paroles.

Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III requested everybody to be recognized. Mr. Bowen introduced Sergeant Stan Stalnaker, who is Post Commander down at Cordele. Mr. Bowen stated he and Colonel Hitchens agree that 48 important people on State Patrol are the Post Commanders. Every now and then they get to come to a Board meeting to see what is going on; it is an educational opportunity for them to know how everything starts up top and filters down to them, so that if troopers have any questions that they can talk to the Post Commanders. Mr. Bowen thanked Colonel Hitchens for allowing Sergeant Stalnaker to be one of the first ones to get to do this. Chief Dwayne Orrick added that Sergeant Stalnaker is the best post commander he has seen in thirty years; he has set a role model for those folks around the state.

Mr. Bowen asked each visitor to tell who they are and where they are from.

Mr. Bowen recognized the new Board member, Commissioner Brian Owens. Mr. Bowen welcomed Commissioner Owens; everyone has worked with him in Corrections during the years and the Board will value his input and experience that he will bring to the Board. Commissioner Owens stated it is his pleasure to be on the Board.

Mr. Bowen called for approval of the December Board Minutes. Mr. Jerry Willis made the motion, seconded by Mr. Bud Black, and voted approval by the Board members.

## **DIRECT REPORTS**

Colonel Bill Hitchens, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol, began his briefing with reporting that last month the agency finalized the contracts on the communications system. Today the agency has every bit of the money on hand that is going to take to fulfill this project. Colonel stated he would be less than honest if he didn't say that Governor Perdue had taken this as one of his projects. It began with \$1.9 million from state appropriations; the State Highway Safety Plan put in \$9.228 million; and Homeland Security put in \$1.899 million; for a grand total of \$13 million. The software is being entered in the system at Headquarters complex; then hope to have everything in Atlanta by the end of January, except for some of installations of computers in some cars. That may be mid-February before that gets done. The only thing holding the agency back now is the ability to install equipment throughout the state. Colonel Hitchens hopes that it can be done in two years and be fully operational. This is a great legacy for Governor that this will be in place before he leaves; Governor championed this. This will change the way the agency and many departments around the state do business in making the system more effective.

Colonel Hitchens stated the second thing he wants to report on briefly is the holiday weekend. Christmas and New Years is always the busiest time of the year, and, this one was no exception. There were couple of incidents; a trooper shot an individual and that is still under investigation. There were two other troopers seriously injured; both requiring surgery; one from a wreck and one from a foot pursuit. There was a hostage situation and standoff in Madison. The agency has a hostage negotiator and he did an exemplary job in this case. There was a standoff in Statesboro; the negotiator not only talked the guy out once, but the negotiator talked him out the second time. The negotiator did a great job and the U.S. Attorney told Colonel Hitchens that his people did a great job, but, in particular, the negotiator.

As far as the statistical data, Colonel Hitchens stated the agency worked half of fatalities. Fourteen of the twenty-four were at Christmas; ten of the twenty-one were at New Years. Five fatalities at New Years were alcohol related, but only one at Christmas. Colonel Hitchens stated that all the fatalities at Christmas were single vehicle. At New Years there was one at Screven County with three fatalities. Colonel stated one unusual fatality was a firetruck. Apparently what happened was the driver did not compensate for the water in truck, and, as he went around the curve, the water shifted. Colonel Hitchens stated the agency's people did an exemplary people. During the holidays, the agency made 189 DUI arrests at Christmas and 279 at New Years.

Chief Lou Dekmar reported that Lieutenant Colonel Fred Snellings will be the Grand Marshal at the Martin Luther King parade. Chief stated that Colonel Snellings will be riding in a convertible and waiving to the crowd. Colonel Hitchens added that the new sheriff of Fulton County was Lieutenant Colonel Snellings' boss, when he was special agent in charge at the FBI in Atlanta. Lieutenant Colonel Snellings was asked to introduce the new sheriff at the swearing-in ceremony.

Colonel Hitchens asked Mr. Dan Brown to come forward and answer a question concerning status of DOT, and, the transfer of electronic access data. Mr. Brown stood and explained that the agency has a contractor in-house, who is working with agency; working in the current system for the new system to speak the same language. This project is on target to be completely compatible for electronic transfer to DOT by mid-February. Mr. Brown stated DOT has paid for the contractor and the programmer, and, is willing to move forward. State Patrol plans on making presentations at the conferences this year to generate some awareness that it is now available; DOT has folks ready to send to the locals to make it a reality. Mr. Brown added that DOT has assigned a programmer especially to work the pilots for local chiefs and local sheriffs, so, the ball is definitely rolling.

Mr. Bowen stated this is a compliment to this Board and to the subcommittee; it seems that everything had come to a standstill until there was enough interest of this Board. With the subcommittee, things have been running full steam ahead.

Mr. Bud Black stated that Ms. Jacqueline Bunn will be prepared next month to give a briefing on Low Speed Vehicles.

Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III stated that Director Vernon Keenan, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, is going to delay his report to Executive Session and will then give a report on a personnel matter.

Director Dale Mann, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, began with reporting that architects were down to look at the burn building this past Monday; a couple of structural engineers. Director Mann stated that two years ago the agency had an engineering firm from Virginia to do core samples. That is what started the agency's concern about the burn building, which is 21 years old. In 1997, the agency spent about \$400,000 to retrofit two rooms. That worked for a little while. It turns out that the second engineering study done last year with Georgia Tech Research Institute came to the same conclusion that the building had degraded further. The structural engineers have not provided a report yet; they were just at the building this past Monday. Director Mann stated his prediction is that by the end of this month, the agency will condemn and stop using the burn building. This will have the effect that the agency will not be able to do live fire training exercises at the Training Center. The good news is there is a \$1.7 million bond package that might be going into a sale at the end of this month, after going through the process of General Assembly and Governor's approval. Director Mann stated that six months is the best guess for design; twelve months for construction; so, looking at eighteen months without a live burn facility. This will impact getting firefighters certified. Director Mann stated the Training Center will have to find some temporary way to do it through other departments that have a burn building or through acquired structures, which would be very hard to get. Once the Training Center gets the acquired structure, there is a lot of expense because there has to have an asbestos abatement inspection done, pull wire out, have the roof off, along with many other expenses. The agency would struggle with finding places to do live fire for those officers who need live fire burns.

## **DONATIONS**

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

One Stalker Radar	\$ 2,310.00	Oconee Drug Task Force
One License Plate Reader System	\$ 1,000.00	Troup County Sheriff
Five H&K Rifles and Accessories	\$12,500.00	Braselton Police Department
One DVD Player and Recorder	\$ 200.00	Houston County Solicitor General
One Kustom ProLaser III Lidar	\$ 2,995.00	Turner County Sheriff
Two Decatur Genesis II Select Radars	\$ 3,300.00	Liberty County Sheriff

Sheriff Steve Cronic made the motion to approve these donations, which was seconded by Mr. Wayne Abernathy, and voted approval by the Board members.

Ms. Patrice Kerner, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, requested approval of the following donations:

Check Donation To Public Safety Memorial Fund	\$ 500.00	Atlanta Chapter of Federal Law Enforcement Officers Assoc.
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Check Donation	\$4,600.00	Key Fire Hose Corporation
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Chief Lou Dekmar made the motion to approve these donations, which was seconded by Mr. Bruce Harris, and voted approval by the Board members.

### **OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

Chief Lou Dekmar gave the Board members a 'heads up' that the Chiefs Association constituted a multi-disciplined committee, which will involve representatives from DA's Association, County Coroners' Association, Funeral Directors' Association, ACOG, GMA, Innocence Project Attorneys, Chiefs Association, a member of Board of Public Safety, and Sheriffs Association. The purpose of the committee is to address the issues as it relates to the Crime Lab. Chief Dekmar reminded the Board members that at the last meeting the members were provided with information regarding the number of cases in the backlog that the Crime Lab was beginning to experience. At that meeting, the Board was advised of 21,000 cases that had been placed in inactive status pursuant to the agreement with Fulton County District Attorney, who directed GBI to not test drug cases unless asked for specifically. That is the only District Attorney in the state who does that. If there is a change in that policy, that would automatically put that burden on the Crime Lab. There are a couple of labs across the state being closed, and, there is the concern of ending back up to where ten years ago. At that time, the Crime Lab Commission recommended to the Legislature a \$52 million increase in facilities personnel to address the six-to-nine month backlog. To prevent that from again occurring, this committee will identify those issues that are very important to public safety and citizens, who are served by Crime Lab. The committee will make those concerns known to the Legislature and Governor's office and Lieutenant Governor's office. This morning Chief Dekmar met briefly with representatives from Governor Perdue's office just to give them a heads up about meeting in the future. Chief Dekmar stated that Mr. Bowen has also agreed to serve and represent the Board. Chief Dekmar stated he is hopeful to get a briefing from Crime Lab within the next week or so. Sheriff Steve Cronic added he has the honor to serve as chair of Legislative Committee for GSA, and, GSA has already had a meeting with several senators; this will be well served to work together on this issue. Mr. Bowen stated this is another excellent opportunity for this Board to participate in a matter that is a great concern to all local governments, and, for all parties involved to come up with something that the Legislature can work towards.

Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III congratulated Mr. James Donald for his appointment to the State Board of Pardons and Paroles. Mr. Bowen stated Mr. Donald will be back at a proper time to present him with a Resolution from this Board for his leadership and what a fine example he has been to the Board members. Sheriff Steve Cronic made a motion for a Resolution, which was seconded by Chief Lou Dekmar, and voted approval by the Board members.

Mr. Pat Head made a motion to go into Executive Session, which was seconded by Mr. Bud Black, and all Board members present affirmatively voted approval to go into Executive Session.

Following the Executive Session, the Board of Public Safety convened back into Regular Session.

Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III stated that at this morning's swearing-in ceremony, Governor Perdue remarked that he wanted this Board and Corrections Board to do some joint meetings. Every year in April, Mr. Wayne Dasher has a big law enforcement dinner in Glennville. Governor made the remark that that would be the time that the two Boards could meet together. Mr. Ellis Wood then recommended changing the April Board meeting to Thursday, April 16<sup>th</sup> in the Glennville area. Mr. Wood suggested that the Board visit a prison facility or the farming operations; that could be some educational opportunities. Commissioner Owens responded that the Department of Corrections would welcome the Board. Also, the State Board of Pardons and Paroles is considering holding a meeting in that timeframe, also. This might be an opportunity for all three Boards to get together. Mr. Bowen stated that would be a great opportunity in honoring what Governor directed to do.

### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III called on Commissioner Brian Owens for a motion. Commissioner Owens stated it is the tradition of the Board that the Commissioner of Corrections has served as Vice Chairman of this Board. Commissioner Owens stated that sometimes, however, it is good to break with tradition. Commissioner Owens nominated somebody other than Commissioner of Corrections, and, he nominated Mr. Ellis Wood. Commissioner Owens stated he got to know Mr. Wood five years ago when he came on Board of Corrections. Commissioner got to know this gentleman because about that time there were hurricanes all over east coast, and, law enforcement went to Louisiana and other places. At that time, Commissioner stated that Mr. Wood very quietly picked up the phone and called Commissioner Owens and requested that if he could provide his aircraft or heavy equipment. Commissioner described of another time when there were the Georgia fires, Mr. Wood called again to offer to help. Commissioner Owens stated Mr. Wood's integrity is without question, with his commitment to his family, his church, his faith to the state is without question, and is a man to be

nominated as Vice Chairman. Mr. Bruce Harris seconded the motion and the Board members voted approval.

Sheriff Steve Cronic made the motion to nominate Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III as Secretary of the Board. Mr. Wayne Abernathy seconded the motion and the Board members voted approval.

Mr. Ellis Wood thanked Commissioner Owens for his kind words, and, thanked the Board members for their kind comments. Mr. Wood stated he appreciates their friendship and kindness. Mr. Wood is humbled and feels inadequate. Mr. Wood stated he could not have done what has been done without the help of Mr. Bowen and Mr. Hood. Mr. Wood stated he will do the best he can to try to help this Board and things that will enhance the safety of law enforcement officers.

Chief Lou Dekmar questioned, and Mr. Bowen agreed, that the modifying of Board meeting dates will be discussed at the next Board meeting. Mr. Bud Black added this is probably the best Board, with its leadership of the agencies; and that he is proud to serve.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Rooney L. Bowen, III  
Secretary