

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Minutes of Meeting Held May 11, 2005

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Hal Averitt
Mr. Rooney Bowen, III
Commissioner James Donald
Mr. Dub Harper
Chief Dwayne Orrick
Sheriff Cullen Talton

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Governor Sonny Perdue
Mr. Wayne Abernathy
Mr. Bud Black
Chief Lou Dekmar
Sheriff Bruce Harris
Mr. Patrick Head
Chief J. D. Rice
Sheriff Jamil Saba

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mr. Chris Brasher, Department of Law
Ms. Laura Jones, Board Liaison
Colonel Bill Hitchens, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol
Lieutenant Colonel Arthur White, Georgia State Patrol
Captain Eddie Grier, Georgia State Patrol
Sergeant Mark McDonough, Georgia State Patrol
Mr. Wayne Yancey, Georgia State Patrol
Major Don Chastain, Georgia State Patrol
Captain Russell Powell, Georgia State Patrol
Sergeant Carl Taylor, Georgia State Patrol
Major (ret'd) Freddie Taylor
Trooper Josh Taylor, son of Freddie Taylor
Trooper Ben Taylor, son of Freddie Taylor
Mr. Luke Taylor, son of Freddie Taylor
Ms. Maria Bates, Georgia State Patrol
Director Vernon Keenan, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Mr. Ray Higgins, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Assistant Deputy Director Bill Holland, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Director Dale Mann, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Mr. Lloyd Strickland, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Mr. Butch Beach, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Mr. Bob Buffington, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Mr. Richard Guerreiro, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Ms. Ailie Olson, House Budget Office
Mr. Frank Rotondo, Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police
Representative Burke Day, Chairman of House Public Safety Committee

Vice-Chairman James Donald opened the May Board meeting with welcoming everyone and asking if there were any visitors. Colonel Bill Hitchens, Georgia State Patrol, welcomed back Mr. Wayne Yancey who was attending this meeting for the Director of Legal Services. Colonel Hitchens also introduced Captain Russell Powell, who is the new training director for State Patrol Training Academy. Director Dale Mann introduced new employee Stanford Allison, who is with the Georgia Fire Academy. Representative Burke Day, Chairman of House Public Safety, was also introduced to the Board.

Colonel Hitchens presented a Resolution to Major Freddie Taylor, who has retired from State Patrol after 35 years of service. After reading the Resolution, Major Taylor thanked the Board members for supporting him through the years, telling them what a blessing it has been to work with State Patrol and every day he had looked forward to going to work. He did not view it just as a job, but as a privilege.

DIRECTORS' REPORTS:

Colonel Hitchens, Department of Public Safety/State Patrol, reported that the department is concentrating on the inheritance of units from the dismantled Department of Motor Vehicle Safety. Effective 1 July, the law enforcement personnel from DMVS will join the Department of Public Safety. Several meetings have been held to discuss the issues of those being affected. Things are transitioning smoothly, but with a few monetary problems. With regard to this, Colonel Hitchens reported the law enforcement division is supported by federal grants. In meeting with federal counterparts, they are willing to work with the Department of Public Safety and they believe there will be no interruption with this transition. Colonel Hitchens stated the DMVS unit will be brought in as a separate division and the budget will be separate because of the federal grant process. Colonel Hitchens reported that the manpower is 330 law enforcement positions, but because of also suffering under economic crisis, the actual manpower is down to 270; in addition, there are 25 administrative people, those being fiscal officers, grant officers, an attorney, and personnel officer.

Director Vernon Keenan, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, began with updating the Board on the Firearms Program. Governor Sonny Perdue signed into law the legislation removing the mandate requiring GBI to operate the instant background checks program for purchasing firearms in Georgia. Chairman Burke Day was instrumental in pushing this important legislation through the General Assembly. When the GBI operated the program, the charge was \$5 for each firearms background check, when in fact it actually cost \$8. Because of the new law, the GBI is no longer required to do the program; the requirement has been passed over to the FBI. The GBI is working with FBI, starting

with meetings next week to begin the transition of the responsibility for the FBI to do firearms checks and to insure there is no disruption of this service to citizens purchasing firearms.

The second issue which Representative Day was instrumental in assisting with was getting appropriations to address the shortage in the State Crime Laboratory. The General Assembly, through the efforts of Governor Perdue, appropriated funding to GBI to hire seventeen new scientific positions for the lab. Also, \$3 million was appropriated to outsource crime lab cases to private laboratories. A meeting was held recently with the District Attorneys to address concerns about how the process will work with State Crime Laboratory sending crime lab cases to private labs. Director Keenan explained that the concerns addressed were the change of custody issues and expert testimony required at court proceedings. The District Attorneys had two suggestions, that being allowing video conferencing testimony in court proceedings and identifying agencies requesting analysis of evidence in those cases that never are prosecuted. Director Keenan indicated the GBI will aggressively pursue these suggestions. Director Keenan reported that the twenty new scientists have gone through training and are now reaching their full potential, which will impact the ability to address cases coming in. Director Keenan reported the GBI received no appropriations to replenish field agents, meaning that the GBI has to prioritize what crimes are to be worked. The GBI is facilitating the local agencies to come together to work crimes, such as property crimes.

Director Dale Mann, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, began with letting everyone know the Training Center will be serving lunch after the Board meeting. Director Mann stated that at the previous Board meeting, he reported the Training Center will acquire a Department of Juvenile Justice building located in Athens. The State Properties Commission will meet to vote to assign the building to the Training Center. Then an Executive Order will be presented to Governor Perdue and he will make the final decision on the transfer of the building. Director Mann is planning to have a structural engineer look at the building to see about taking out a couple of walls to change three small classrooms into two large classrooms. Director Mann understands that after May 20th, the State Properties Commission will let him know of the decision.

The second issue brought to the Board members was the Basic Communication Training, which is required under O.C.G.A. § 35-8-23. Chief Ken Vance, who is on the POST Council, wrote a letter requesting the Training Center pick up the cost of feeding and housing the candidates for the 911 community. Director Mann informed the Board members that he wanted to help and that he will be looking for \$34,000 in the Training Center's revenue to pay for meals and lodging for FY 06. He plans to ask Governor Perdue for his support by making this a part of his recommendation in the supplemental budget for upcoming fiscal year. Director Mann also stated that he plans to publish a statement that tuition, meals, and lodging will no longer be free for those candidates who attend the 911 training outside their six-month grace period. This will give agency heads

an incentive to follow the rules concerning basic training within the first six months of employment. Director Mann believes the 911 training program should be done; toward the end of the training, there is practice which gives a sense if that candidate can take the pressure of answering the phone, talking on the radio, and getting the complete information. Director Mann addressed questions and completed his report.

MINUTES/DONATIONS/RESOLUTIONS:

There not being a quorum, the attending Board members were not able to vote on Minutes and Donations. Vice Chairman Donald deferred both to next month's Board meeting.

There being no Administrative/Emergency Issues, Vice Chairman Donald requested if there were any Old or New Business.

Mr. Rooney Bowen suggested that a Resolution be presented to Mr. Jimmy Dean, who will be retiring at the end of this month, at the next Board meeting. The Board will vote next month on a motion to present a Resolution to Mr. Dean.

Mr. Bowen announced that the high speed pursuit driving will be conducted after lunch and the Board members were invited to observe.

Representative Burke Day was invited to speak about any concerns he may have to the Board. Representative Day stated that he has been a part of the public safety committee for years; it has always been a passion of his to work in the public safety field. He stated if the Board of Public Safety or agency heads needed his help that he is available.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Rooney L. Bowen, III