

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY
October 12, 2006
Statesboro, Georgia

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Rooney L. Bowen
Mr. Dub Harper
Sheriff Bruce Harris
Mr. Patrick Head
Chief Dwayne Orrick
Mr. Gene Stuckey

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Vice-Chairman James Donald
Mr. Wayne Abernathy
Mr. Bud Black
Chief Lou Dekmar
Chief J. D. Rice
Sheriff Jamil Saba
Sheriff Cullen Talton

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mr. Joseph Drolet, Board Attorney
Ms. Laura Jones, Board Liaison
Colonel Bill Hitchens, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol
Lieutenant Colonel Arthur White, Department of Public Safety
Major Corky Jewell, Georgia State Patrol
Sergeant Mark McDonough, Georgia State Patrol
Major Billy Boulware, Motor Carrier Compliance Division
Chief Mark McLeod, Motor Carrier Compliance Division
Captain Eddie Grier, Georgia State Patrol
Captain Mike Fagler, Georgia State Patrol
Lieutenant Tad Bentley, Georgia State Patrol
Captain Kirk McGlamery, Georgia State Patrol
Sergeant R. D. Hayes, Georgia State Patrol
Lieutenant Billy Hitchens, Georgia State Patrol
Director Vernon Keenan, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Ms. Chris Ash, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Mr. John Edwards, SAC, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Mr. Dean McManus, ASAC, Georgia Bureau of Investigation
Director Dale Mann, Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Mr. Richard Guerreiro, Georgia Public Safety Training Center

Mrs. Connie Averitt and Family
Senator Jack Hill
Representative Burke Day
Mr. Ellis Wood
Mr. Michael Guido
Mr. and Mrs. Raybon Anderson

Mr. Arnold Ray Akins, former Sheriff of Bulloch County
Mr. Carter Crawford, City Manager of Sylvania
Mr. Eddie Rushing
Mr. Roland Stubbs, Commissioner of Screven County
Mr. Garrett Nevil, Commission Chairman of Bulloch County
Mr. Douglas Graves, Sea Island Bank
Mr. Gary Johnson, Sea Island Bank
Mr. George Wood, City Manager of Statesboro
Mr. Joe Brannett, City Council Member of Statesboro
Sheriff Lynn Anderson, Bulloch County
Chief Stan York, Statesboro Police Department
Mr. Ken Brown, Chief of Police of Georgia Southern University
Mr. Ted Wynn, Public Safety Director of Bulloch County
Ms. Peggy Chapman, President of Statesboro Chamber of Commerce
Mr. Charles Sikes, retired GBI and Statesboro Probation
Mayor Billy Turpin, Mayor of Metter
Dr. Bruce Grube, President of Georgia Southern University
Ms. Hollie Bragg, Statesboro Herald
Ms. Laura Lanier, Office of Governor

Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III called the October Board meeting to order. Mr. Bowen welcomed everyone for this very special meeting; the Board is meeting in Statesboro today solely to honor Mr. Hal Averitt, who had been on the Board. Everybody on the Board had great respect for Mr. Averitt's wisdom on dealing with issues. One memory of Mr. Averitt is that he used to state, "what's right," which showed that Mr. Hal wanting to do what is right.

Mr. Bowen called on Mr. Michael Guido to bring the invocation for this meeting.

Mr. Bowen requested each attendee to stand and state his/her name. Mr. Bowen thanked everyone for attending; the vast attendance today is testimony within itself. Mr. Bowen gave special thanks for Chairman Jack Hill and Chairman Burke Day for being at the meeting to honor Mr. Averitt.

Mr. Bowen announced the presentation was originally going to be done by Governor Perdue, who made every effort to be here for the meeting. However, he was unable to come; so, Colonel Bill Hitchens had been asked to do the presentation.

Colonel Bill Hitchens stated it was a pleasure for him to do the presentation and that he had the privilege of knowing Mr. Hal Averitt. The first real remembrance was about 1990 when he was stationed in Americus, but then later transferred back to Statesboro when Mr. Averitt was Mayor. Colonel Hitchens was impressed with how Mr. Averitt handled issues with the college and the

local community. The public expects agencies to work cooperatively in different levels of government, whether it be local or county or state or federal. Colonel Hitchens saw agencies cooperate; this had a lot to do with the relationships that Mr. Hal Averitt developed.

Colonel Hitchens was appreciative of the fact that Governor Perdue had appointed Mr. Hal Averitt to the Board. Colonel pointed out that Mr. Averitt had not only been the mayor but had also served on the Board of Regents. Mr. Averitt brought a wealth of knowledge in a variety of areas; he did a very effective and efficient job on the Board of Public Safety.

Colonel Hitchens stated that everyone was very saddened by Mr. Averitt's untimely death; he left a void on the Board and certainly in the community. Colonel Hitchens quoted Sir Winston Churchill, "You make a living by what you get; you make a life by what you give." Certainly, Mr. Hal Averitt gave a lot to this community; his name will be indelibly etched in the history of Statesboro and Bulloch County.

Colonel Hitchens read the Board Resolution that was presented to Mrs. Connie Averitt.

Mr. Bowen opened the floor for personal comments. Director Vernon Keenan, Director Mann, Mr. Raybon Anderson, Dr. Bruce Grube, Mr. Wayne Akins, and many others spoke in honor of Mr. Averitt. On behalf of the Board, Mr. Bowen thanked everyone for remembering Mr. Averitt. The one thing that struck Mr. Bowen was that not one person used notes while speaking; when that many people can get up and speak about someone and never have to look at notes, everything that was said came from the heart.

DIRECT REPORTS

Colonel Bill Hitchens, Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol, stated he would be glad to address anything the Board members may want to discuss. Addressing questions, Colonel Hitchens stated a trooper school is scheduled for January, 2007. Two schools were in process and unfortunately, one has not yet graduated. The other school graduated in August, 2006. Starting in January, there will be about 80 positions to try and put in; last month, the physical fitness part was done and there were 91 people there. Then they will have to go through psychological evaluation, oral interview, background, and polygraph. Colonel Hitchens stated the school may be down to 60 or 70; at graduation there probably will be 40 people. At the same time, State Patrol loses four to five people a month; the agency does not seem to be progressing.

Director Vernon Keenan, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, began with reporting that Governor Perdue held a news conference at the GBI Drug Office in Canton. This was heavily attended by media and local officials. At the news conference, Governor Perdue announced that he was doubling the size of the Meth Force, which he created last year. Reminding the Board members, Director Keenan stated the Governor proposed to the General Assembly, and the General

Assembly appropriated the funds, to hire fifteen special agents to work methamphetamine throughout Georgia. Those agents are currently in class and they will graduate on November 2nd. At the news conference, Governor Perdue announced that he was proposing to the Legislature that they appropriate an additional \$1 million to hire fifteen more agents. Georgia went from having 29 meth labs seized by law enforcement throughout the state to nearly 750 meth labs in one year. The General Assembly, with the support of Governor Perdue, passed legislation which put a major restriction for meth producers to purchase pseudophedrine, an ingredient sold "behind-the-counter" in stores. A combination of law changes by the Legislature, aggressive local and state law enforcement, and training provided to many of the local officers working the front line of methamphetamine are the factors that led to a dramatic decrease in the number of meth labs that were operating in Georgia. From 2003 to 2004, there was a 32% decrease in the number of meth labs seen by law enforcement in the state. Governor Perdue's initiative address is that 95% of the methamphetamine being used in Georgia is not being manufactured in Georgia; it is imported into the state primarily from Mexico and from California. The metro Atlanta area has become the distribution point for methamphetamine in southeast. The additional Meth Force agents that will be hired will be directed to work with the Drug Enforcement Administration and High Intensity Drug Traffic Area to establish partnerships and strategies to deal with the importation problem. Those fifteen agents will graduate on November 2nd; the Board members will be invited to the graduation ceremony. This is the first group of GBI agents hired in four years; this is a major event to have a graduation class for special agents.

Director Keenan continued reporting that three weeks ago Governor Perdue held a major policy announcement at GBI headquarters. The announcement was that the Governor is proposing to triple the size of the unit investigating internet crimes involving children. Governor Perdue will propose to the General Assembly that an additional eight special agents be hired to work internet predator crimes. Internet Crimes Against Children Unit is organized by a central clearinghouse operated in Washington, D.C. by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, a part of U.S. Department of Justice. Reports come in from all across the country regarding internet crimes against children. Those reports are then parceled out to the individual states. The Governor's proposal calls for hiring additional eight special agents and five forensic computer specialists. Those are very important positions because those are the men and women who take a computer that has been seized from a sexual predator or seized in drug case believed to hold child pornography. It is a very specialized type of work; very intensive training associated with this. The Governor's initiative is a major initiative, and, will be welcomed by the GBI.

The second area that Director Keenan reported on involves an award, which the Statesboro GBI Office will receive at the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) conference. As part of the conference, the award, "Innovation In Investigations," will be given to Statesboro GBI Office for the first runner-up position. Director Keenan nominated the Statesboro office for its innovative process, which has been used in complex investigations. The award calls for innovative ideas, which can be adopted by other law enforcement agencies in the nation. In explaining further, Director Keenan stated the Statesboro office developed a major case protocol.

Assistant Special Agent In Charge Dean McManus will attend the IACP conference, along with Special Agent Tracy Sans, who was the case agent on the investigation. Director Keenan described that the award is based on the investigation done concerning allegations of brutality by guards at Rogers State Prison. SAC John Edwards and his agents were assigned to handle that investigation. This investigation was important not only to Commissioner Donald of Department of Corrections, but also to Governor Perdue and State of Georgia, to find out if there was systematic brutality of the inmates in the Georgia prison system. SAC Edwards' staff conducted over 60 interviews in just a few weeks; they had all the preparations for the case completed and on the District Attorney's desk in less than two months. That is lightning speed for a criminal investigation. During the process, ASAC McManus and Agent Sans perfected a technique for taking a tremendous amount of information in a chaotic situation and organizing a very focused investigation to meet the needs of the District Attorney. A major case protocol, a tracking system, and information management network were combined together to write the White Paper; this was submitted to the International Association of Chiefs of Police. The GBI brought the case to a successful conclusion and then adopted the refined protocols the Statesboro office had used. Director Keenan described SAC Edwards and ASAC McManus as top investigators and proudly introduced them to the Board members.

Director Dale Mann, Georgia Public Safety Training Center, began with stating that based upon an inquiry from Chief Orrick, the policy of dealing with firearms in training exercises has been revised. Director Mann gave the Board members a copy of the revised policy. This deals not only with the Training Center but also with the seven regional police academies that are employees either by contract or by letter outside the contract. This is designed to control the situation with the three contract academies. The policy puts into rule form, explained under General Order, "[f]irearms designed to be capable of firing any type of lethal ammunition are prohibited from any training exercises except on the Firearms Ranges. Emphatically, they are not to be used in any simulated or practical training exercise other than 'disassembly' and 'cleaning.'" Director Mann stated the modification was made in June of this year. Some of the academies, such as Augusta, has a firing range across the street; there is not a dedicated cleaning room. There is not a place to disassemble the guns other than to do it out in the open on the range. A modification was made that all instructors are checked before entering a room with a handgun; also, all students are checked and cannot bring a piece of live ammunition during that period of time. Director Mann stated that there is a policy stating that the training facilities or anybody who runs an exercise where there is danger to students (drivers training, firearms, the bomb range, etc.) has to have approved safety rules. Those safety rules have to be articulated in writing and are kept on file. Chief Orrick questioned if people could be encouraged or required to wear a vest at the range. Director Mann responded that he would like to encourage, rather than to rule, people to wear a vest; it is expensive to buy body armor to put on everybody. If a ruling were made, the Training Center would have to make armor available. Chief Orrick inquired whether it had been addressed about bringing weapons into the classrooms or at the regional academies. Director Mann stated there is a policy excluding bringing weapons to the

Training Center; however, every now and then an ankle holster is seen. That person could probably be following the rules of his/her agency. If that agency states the person needs to wear a gun 24/7, the Training Center quietly reminds the person about the safety rule. If the student is notoriously doing something unsafe, then the Training Center will take care of the situation. Director Mann would rather take care of the situation on a case-by-case basis.

Director Mann announced invitations were mailed to the Board members inviting them to the Governor's Public Safety Awards Ceremony on October 18th.

Director Mann stated that a particular type of holster has been prohibited on the firing ranges. It is one where the officer has to stick his finger in the trigger to unlock the holster. An accidental discharge occurred two months ago on the firing range and the bullet hit behind the student's food. This student unlocked his gun from the holster and the way the holster is designed, a student actually puts his finger to unlock it through the trigger guard. The vendor of that particular holster came by to discuss the prohibition. Director Mann explained to the vendor that it is a safety issue.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Rooney L. Bowen, III invited Representative Burke Day to address any issues. Representative Day stated that one issue is the Study Committee will be dealing with law enforcement salaries. With thanks to Colonel Hitchens, Commissioner Donald, Director Keenan, and Director Mann, the Committee will be able to develop some concepts to be different in graduating pay increases. Representative Day stated they are looking for a way to keep the people that we have, hopefully get ahead in the curves with constantly attracting good help, and, then rewarding with extra initiatives. He asked for any suggestions that the Committee might look at concerning pay increases; the Committee will probably meet shortly after the election in November. Representative Day thanked the Board members for the opportunity to be here.

Mr. Bowen thanked Representative Day, stating that Representative Day is a strong supporter of this Board. Mr. Bowen stated Representative Day's insight and comments are always welcome. The comments on pay increases are on the forefront of every Board member's mind; the greatest issues are hiring and retention of people for these agencies.

Mr. Bowen took the moment to thank Mr. Ellis Wood for hosting dinner for the Board members; the Board of Public Safety members consider Mr. Wood to be one of them. It is a pleasure to come to Statesboro and it is a pleasure to be with Mr. Wood.

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Mr. Bowen announced the November Board meeting has been changed to Wednesday, November 8th.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Rooney L. Bowen, III
Secretary