

Law Enforcement Task Force Meeting

April 26, 2017

POST Council

5000 Austell-Powder Springs Rd., Suite 261, Austell, GA

Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES

Task Force Member	Present	Absent	Excused	Comments
Verda Colvin, Superior Court Judge				via conference call
Gerald Couch, Sheriff Hall County				via conference call
Eddie DeLoach, Mayor Savannah	✓			
Sonja Fillingame, City Manager-Union City	✓			
Bert Flewellen, Chief Operating Officer DCS	✓			
Tyler Harper, Senator		x		
George Hartwig, DA Houston County		x		
Vivadon Horton, Citizen Liaison	✓			
Dan Kirk, Assistant Director GBI	✓			
Michael Persley, Police Chief Albany	✓			
Alan Powell, Representative		x		
Mitch Ralston, Sheriff Gordon County	✓			
Pat Strode, CIT Program Administrator				via conference call
Ken Vance, POST Director, Co-Chairman	✓			
Chris Wigginton, GPSTC Director, Co-Chairman	✓			
Scott Woodell, GSP Training Director	✓			
Others Attending				
Angie Bowen, GPSTC	✓			
Chadd Wilson, GPSTC	✓			
Sharla Shockley, GPSTC	✓			
Meghan Fail	✓			
Ryan Powell, POST	✓			
Terry Norris, GA Sheriffs' Assn.	✓			
Robert Paris, Chief Deputy Gordon County	✓			

PURPOSE

Governor Nathan Deal appointed the Law Enforcement Task Force to examine the Basic Law Enforcement Officer Training Course and establish competency-based standards for any course revisions deemed appropriate.

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chairman Chris Wigginton

The Task Force meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m.

Motion to Accept Meeting Minutes from March 27, 2017

Motion: Scott Woodell

Second: Bert Flewellen

OPENING REMARKS

Co-Chairman Chris Wigginton

Director Wigginton introduced Chadd Wilson of GPSTC-Cherokee to discuss current BLETC topics. Chadd distributed a handout, which will be scanned and emailed to those attending on the conference call. The first handout is a proposed 682-hour curriculum. The three instructional areas being looked at are basic law, patrol procedures, and crisis intervention.

Discussion

Chadd explained that during basic law, students are taught basic criminal law and criminal procedure. Chadd explained the different levels of contact an officer might have with members of the public and how those levels of contact affect what an officer can and cannot do under the law and the constitution. Peace officer liability and interviews and interrogations are also taught during the basic law instructional area. Juvenile law is the fifth topic taught in the basic law instructional area.

Judge Colvin stated, in response to a question from Ken Vance, that there seems to be a disconnect between the law enforcement officers and the juvenile court in her jurisdiction. The juvenile courts do not seem to be addressing the core cause of the problem and juvenile offenders tend to reoffend because their needs are not being met.

Chadd stated that BTD would like to see the Juvenile Law block cleaned up and focus more on how to apply the law.

Judge Colvin asked if during training, a well-respected juvenile judge could come speak to the officers.

Dir. Wigginton stated that they would love to do that, but it typically comes down to scheduling. Dir. Wigginton stated that we need to take as much as we can and make it scenario based training so that the students can better retain the information being taught.

Capt. Woodell suggested that we invite the chair of the Juvenile Court Judges Association to sit in on the curriculum development team.

Chadd said that Use of Force is being taught more as a legal topic and that GPSTC is attempting to teach students when not how to apply a use of force. Use of force is addressed in Title 17 of the OCGA, which is criminal procedure. Currently, we are teaching the law behind use of force and then moving the students to scenarios where they have to apply what they have learned.

Ken asked the Sheriff Ralston and Chief Persley if they have been seeing a lot of use of force complaints. They both answered no.

Sheriff Couch stated that they have not received any use of force complaints in a long time.

Dir. Wigginton told the group that we are teaching constitutional law, state law, and case law. We are not trying to teach people to be more or less restrictive. We are teaching when they can use force and how to articulate why they used force.

Chadd explained that GPSTC is stressing the need to avoid jargon and to write the report as if telling a story so that anyone can read it and understand what happened.

Capt. Woodell complimented the GPSTC use of force instructor training and thanked the Training Center for what we have been working on.

The group discussed use of force training and how to ensure that enough time is allotted in the curriculum to allow quality training. Use of force necessarily must include de-escalation, but that we have to teach officers that de-escalation is not always an option, and sometimes force must be applied. There was a discussion about the impact of citizens recording officer interactions.

The next instructional area, number 5, was introduced. Chadd explained that putting the entire CIT program into the Basic Law Enforcement Training program is that there is no way of taking the students to a site visit to their local mental health provider, because of the number of agencies and jurisdictions being represented. However, some of the topics from CIT will be incorporated into the program. Officers will not be certified as CIT, which is necessarily a community-based program. Cultural diversity is a topic included in the Crisis Intervention instructional area.

Interpersonal communication and mental illness awareness are also taught within the instructional area. Judge Colvin suggested bringing in someone with mental health experience to teach that block. Dan mentioned that this is intended to be an introductory course only. CIT is where we teach what resources are available. Intellectual disabilities are another topic that will be taught, so that officers can distinguish between someone who is mentally ill and someone who has an intellectual disability. Substance abuse is also taught during the Crisis Intervention Instructional Area. De-escalation techniques will be taught apart from use of force, to help reinforce the skills needed to de-escalate (similar to verbal judo). Crisis Intervention will teach officers, through scenario-based training, how to reintroduce order into crisis situations. The suggestion was made to title the course crisis mediation. The last block in the instructional area is Family Violence. Currently 8 hours, the suggestion is to expand the block to 24 hours to allow officers to better understand how to serve victims. Scenario-based training will also be used to reinforce the training. Ms. Flallingame suggested the course be coordinated with the Commission on Family Violence and Mike Mertz.

The last instructional area discussed is patrol and observation. This area is intended to teach officers how to handle the most common issues they will observe while on patrol. The BTD is working to develop practical exercises to be incorporated into the classroom portion. Officer survival, including stress and physical fitness is taught. Report writing, is the most troublesome topic. We have to teach officers to communicate effectively in writing. Currently, report writing is taught early in the course and students are required to write reports throughout the rest of the academy when they complete a practical exercise. Cadets are typically writing 10-12 reports during the session. The student then has to use the reports to testify during the mock trial in the last week of class. HazMat is developed and taught by GEMA.

Independent study topics. Benefit is that it takes courses that are typically a 1-hour block and primarily lecture and allows the student to complete that on their own. This frees up time for other, more critical areas to be taught.

Ryan asked about occupant protection being dropped from the course.

Chadd explained that we would continue to teach the law and legal aspects in vehicle law and dynamics of the crash into motor vehicle accident investigation because officers aren't getting anything out of the class as it is taught now.

Dir. Wigginton explained that just because something is listed as a zero hour does not mean it is not being taught, just incorporated into other topics. Radar/Lidar is proposed as 8 hours, but it currently takes 24 hours to take both courses. Director explained that there are some objectives that are duplicated in each course. The aim in basic is to teach the scientific principles as opposed to the operational considerations.

There was discussion about the importance of an effective FTO program.

Terry Norris stated that a mandated FTO program would be problematic.

Capt. Woodell suggested some model guidelines on how to create and run an FTO program.

Ryan asked how we would be able to incorporate 140 hours of physical training. Chadd explained that would include 1 hour of review of defensive tactics every day to reinforce those skills.

General discussion.

Old/New Business

Ken distributed a report on state and local law enforcement training for reading pleasure of the members.

Next meeting May 12, at 10:00 a.m. at the Georgia Sheriffs' Association.

June 22, at GPSTC at 10:00 a.m.

July 20, at 10:00 location TBD