

Law Enforcement Task Force Meeting

August 3, 2017
Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Forsyth, GA 31029

Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES

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

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

Called to order at 10:06 a.m.

Sheriff Couch, Sheriff Ralston, and Sonja Fillingame joined by conference call.

Motion to Accept Meeting Minutes for June 22, 2017.

Motion: Dan Kirk

Second: Ken Vance

OPENING REMARKS

Co-Chairman Chris Wigginton

Director explained that the main task of today's meeting is to review the draft proposal distributed to the Task force members. He explained that the document is embargoed, not an official document until it is approved by the Task force. Task force members were given an opportunity to review the document before going over the draft page by page.

Sharla sent an electronic copy of the draft proposal to those attending via conference call.

Discussion

The Director started the discussion with Orientation and Administration. The Director explained this was time that would be set aside for testing. There was a discrepancy in the number of hours. The document said 40 but it should be 48 hours.

Instructional Area #1-Intro to Law Enforcement. The Director explained that ethics and professional is taught and talked about every day. The actual training is done early on in the class.

The Director explained that the majority of additional hours in the proposal will be used to teach Use of Force in more depth. There was a discrepancy in the document in the number of hours allotted for courtroom testimony and demeanor.

The Judge asked if cultural diversity was going to be taught in the classroom. There was a discrepancy again in the number of hours for cultural diversity. Currently, no specific hours are devoted to the topic, we propose adding two hours. Director Wigginton explained that the online course is just the foundation, that the topic is discussed throughout the entire course.

The Director explained that the intent behind delivering some topics online is to allow more time in the classroom to be devoted to practical application. Online training is intended to deliver lecture based topics and test on those topics online, and then have the students apply that information in scenario-based exercises.

The District Attorney recommended taking out the term "Diseases of" from the title of Substance Abuse and Diseases of Addiction. Pat Strode advocated for leaving it in, but the consensus was that the term should be changed.

The question was raised about officers having to take de-escalation training every year. The Director explained that POST passed the rule late last year to require all officers to take de-escalation training every year. The topic in Basic Training is intended to lay the foundation. Practices are incorporated through scenarios throughout the course.

Pat Strode raised a concern about the use of the term intervention. The group decided a better term would be communication and intervention.

Area 4 was discussed next. Director Wigginton explained the intent of getting students involved in practical, scenario based exercises. Ms. Fillingame asked if we could include something in the narrative that will explain that the course was a building block so that the public doesn't think some topics are left out.

The group then moved to Area 5. There was discussion about human trafficking and elder abuse. Trafficking was added to the sexual assault investigation topic. Elder abuse was added as a separate topic.

Ken Vance recommended reducing Bombs and Explosives to 1 hour. Ray Saxon pointed out that the topic also includes how to respond to bomb threats. The group agreed to leave the number of hours at 2 as proposed.

The Director explained that the Organized Crime and Gang Investigation is taught over 4 hours and we believe that is sufficient for the majority of the state. If they need additional training after basic, it is available.

The group then discussed Instructional Area 6. A discrepancy was found between the spreadsheet and the proposal in the number of hours. The Director explained that the Speed Operator course is proposing to be added, but that the Task force will make the final decision.

Next, Instructional area 7 was discussed. The primary jump in hours is in the Firearms topic. The intent is to provide students with more realistic firearms training including firing under stress, at moving targets, etc.

Dan Kirk expressed concern about the perception that we have increased firearms by 40 hours but only 26 hours in communication and intervention. He recommended breaking out firearms more to reflect less hours in firearms and more on decision-making, etc. The Director asked that everyone look at the totality of the proposal, not just one particular topic.

Ms. Fillingame expressed concern that we balance things and make sure we add something that tells the public the intent of the committee.

The number of hours that are reflected in each topic does not mean that the topic is not addressed in other areas, that each topic is continued to be taught throughout the entire course.

Director Wigginton explained that the additional hours of emergency vehicle operations course is currently insufficient. We are proposing to add 16 hours to expose cadets to high-speed operations. The intent is to help reduce officer fatalities from motor vehicle crashes.

Senator Harper asked if a driving simulator would be beneficial to the Training Center. He explained his own experience in the GSP simulator and thought it might be something to consider. Capt. Woodell recommended that if the Training Center invests in a simulator that we

buy two to run in tandem, which helps teach communication in addition to driving. The cost for the GSP order is in the area of \$350,000. The Director recommended we add something to the EVOC paragraph about incorporating simulation if equipment is secured.

Instructional Area 8 was discussed next, currently there is no requirement for cadets in BLETC to take part in health or wellness training. We propose adding nutrition, wellness, and physical training to help improve overall well-being of the officers.

The judge asked about the physical preparedness of new recruits. It was explained that the physical diversity of cadets is wide. Some cadets are completely unfit.

Director Wigginton explained that the proposed physical fitness topics in area 8 includes practice of control tactics. He explained to the task force that the most pushback will come in this area.

Ms. Strode recommended adding instruction that will prepare officers to deal with mental and emotional trauma. She recommended taking that topics off line, teaching it in the classroom, and telling officers about hypervigilance, what happens when exposed to trauma, and how to help a partner that may be experiencing traumatic stress. Ray explained that Officer Survival covers how to deal with the aftermath of a traumatic event. The Director explained that we try to teach cadets not to treat their family like a criminal when they get home.

Sheriff Deese expressed concern about raising standards and expanding hours. There are small agencies where sheriffs are answering calls because they can't find sufficient numbers of recruits that qualify for certification now. He recommended mandatory in-service training in health and wellness. Frank Rotondo expressed support for a statewide FTO program. He expressed that the physical standard is based on whether the officer can do the job, physically. He acknowledged that there are various dynamics at play in mandating officers to do a number of things, including physical fitness standards. Judge Colvin expressed the desire to not let push back and negativity stop the progress we are proposing.

The Director explained again that the proposal is not a completed official document and should not be released outside of the task force. Members may take the document with them to make notes and make recommendations for changes by sending comments to Sharla, referring to a page number and section.

Terry Norris asked if the Task Force would release the document to the Chiefs and Sheriffs Association before submitting it to the Governor. He doesn't feel it is fair to ask Sheriff Couch and Ralston to make a decision to recommend or support the document without input from their colleagues. Judge recommended taking it to the Governor first, and letting him make the decision about sharing it with the Associations. Terry said it would be helpful to know what areas they disagree with before he makes a decision. Senator Harper reiterated the Judge's point that it is important to follow the Governor's directive exactly and let him make a decision. He may decide to form a separate commission to study the proposal and make their own recommendations. The point was noted. The Director explained that we would submit our report to the Governor first.

Directive

Comments regarding the proposal should be emailed to Sharla by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, August 11.

Motion to adjourn at 12:05 p.m.

Motion: Judge Colvin

Second: Ken Vance

Next Meeting:

Wednesday, September 6, 2017, at 9:00 a.m. – Georgia Public Safety Training Center, Director’s Boardroom