

Minutes of the Board on Law Enforcement Standards and Training (BLEOST)

Date: July 16, 2026

Time: 9:00 A.M. – 11:05 A.M.

Location: Mississippi Department of Public Safety (as per standard Board proceedings)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 A.M. by the Chairman, Sheriff Jim Johnson.

2. Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance

- Pledge of Allegiance: Led by Chief Rogers (Mississippi State University).
- Prayer: Led by Major Brandon Hendry (Harrison County Sheriff's Office).

3. Roll Call and Quorum

Director Amy Vanderford conducted the roll call.

Jim H. Johnson, Chair, Sheriff, Lee County

Amy Vanderford, Director, Office of Standards & Training

Brandon Hendry, Major, Director of Law Enforcement Training Academy

John Quaka, Chief, Tupelo Police Department

Michael Hall, Chief, Guntown Police Department

Kassie Coleman, Esq.

Lindsey Cranford, Esq.

Robert Hancock, Constable, Mississippi Constables Association

Kenny Rogers, Chief, Mississippi State University

Tadd Pitts, Colonel, Director of Highway Patrol

Randy Johnson, Sheriff, Jasper County

Todd Stewart, Sheriff, Stone County

BOARD ATTORNEYS PRESENT:

Luke Williamson, Esq.

Royce Cole, Esq. (arrived late)

- New Appointment: The Board officially welcomed Sheriff Todd Stewart (Stone County) as the most recent appointee by the Governor.
- Quorum: A quorum was established.

4. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the May 14, 2026, meeting were reviewed.

- Motion: Kassie Coleman moved to accept the minutes as emailed.
- Second: Robert Hancock.
- Action: The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

A. Bridge Program Vote

The Board addressed the Bridge Program and voting. There were two officers who had concerns and were invited to the board meeting to give objections- Dylan Anderson and Brooks Green. The Chairman asked if these individuals were present. The Sergeant at Arms called for both individuals three times in the hall; neither was present.

- Motion: Major Hendry moved to accept the Bridge Program
- Second: Sheriff Johnson
- Action: The motion passed unanimously

B. Curriculum Update (Basic Hours & Online Modules)

The Board discussed the proposed curriculum changes, including an increase in basic training hours and the implementation of online modules via ACADIS.

- Courtroom Testimony: Chief Quaka advocated for a foundational requirement of 4 hours for "Courtroom Testimony, Demeanor, and Mock Trial," noting that many new officers are unprepared for circuit or federal court.
- Online Modules: Director Vanderford demonstrated the online module system, noting that students who fail a check-on-learning question are required to rewatch the relevant section.
- Final Motion: Major Hendry moved to set the total basic training hours at 524 hours, incorporating the 4 hours of courtroom testimony by reducing hours in firearms nomenclature (rifle/shotgun).

- Second: Sheriff Todd Stewart.
- Action: The motion to approve the 524-hour curriculum and the online module portions/hours requirement passed.

C. School Police / MOUs

The Board heard testimony from Chief Cornelius Parks (Meridian Public Schools), Chief Mario Weekley (MASRO President), and Brian McGairty (MDE) regarding the legal status of school district police departments.

- Discussion: Chiefs expressed concern over rumors that school police departments would be abolished. McGairty suggested the need for an Attorney General's opinion. Chairman Johnson and Director Vanderford clarified that there is a need for an AG opinion to resolve "gray areas" in Statute 37-7-321 regarding the authority of school districts to "create" independent police departments versus using MOUs with local sheriff or police offices.
- Action: No vote was taken to dismantle any departments. The Board invited school chiefs to submit legal documentation from their school board attorneys to be included in the AG opinion request.

New Business

5. Certification of Officers

The Board reviewed the list of officers for Equivalency and Refresher certifications prepared by ACADIS.

- Action: The certifications were approved as presented.

Director Vanderford mentioned that a class from NEMCC Part time Academy did not send in notice of their fall class in 2025 for certification. The board requested Director Vanderford place NEMCC Academy on probation, complete and audit of academy records and request NEMCC Academy staff be present at the next board meeting to show cause as to why they were not in compliance. The class certification was tabled.

6. . Director's Report: Grenada Part-Time Academy Audit

Director Vanderford and Investigator Robbins reported on a recent accreditation audit of the Grenada Part-Time Training Academy.

- Findings: The academy was found to be "totally non-compliant." Records were unavailable, the training officer was absent during the audit, and students were reportedly not receiving the adequate instruction.
- Motion: Chairman Johnson moved to place the Grenada Part-Time Academy on immediate suspension, the office perform an audit of records and require the Grenada

Part-time Academy Director to appear at the September meeting to "show cause" why their accreditation should not be revoked.

- Second: Sheriff Johnson
- Action: The motion passed unanimously.

Report by investigators

Director Vanderford opened up discussions on the investigations being conducted by the three investigators. Sheriff Stewart brought up Officer Adam Guidry.

- Motion: Kassie Coleman made a motion to go into executive session.
- Second: Sheriff Stewart

7. Adjournment

The meeting was recessed at 11:05 A.M.

At 1 p.m. the hearing was reconvened for hearings on officers' certification review.

Joseph Prine: Evidence presented before the Board established the facts as follows. The Board called its witness, Investigator Anna Hatter ("Investigator Hatter"). Investigator Hatter testified on behalf of the Board regarding her investigation of the case. The investigative file was admitted as an exhibit to her testimony. Prine was represented by attorney Francis Springer at all times during the hearing. The Board's investigation of Joseph James Prine, Jr.'s ("Prine") conduct and hearing testimony established the following:

Prine was arrested on December 2, 2025 by the Gatlinburg (Tennessee) Police Department and charged with Driving Under the Influence. On April 22, 2026, the charges were dismissed upon a finding of no probable cause in the General Sessions Court of Sevier County, Tennessee. Prine testified that he was embarrassed by his arrest and has taken substantive measures to reduce his use of alcohol and has obtained treatment at the Veteran Affairs Medical Center for anxiety.

The Board deliberated in executive session and then ruled, with ten (10) members for and one (1) against, that Joseph James Prine, Jr., is eligible for certification with certificate number 24739 upon completion of certain conditions. Prine shall reapply for certification and complete a drug and alcohol dependency screening by a qualified substance abuse treatment provider and be declared fit for duty. If any treatment is recommended by said provider, it shall be completed by Prine and proof of completion shall be sent to the Office of Standards and Training for him to be declared eligible for certification. Upon becoming recertified, Prine shall be on probation for a period of five (5) years and shall be required

to self-report any infractions, discipline, or violation of Board policy to the Office of Standards and Training.

Santana Scales: Evidence presented before the Board established the facts as follows. The Board called its witness, Investigator Corie Robbins (“Investigator Robbins”). Investigator Robbins testified on behalf of the Board regarding her investigation of the case. The investigative file was admitted as an exhibit to her testimony. The Board’s investigation of Santana Marie Scales’s (“Scales”) conduct and hearing testimony established that Scales committed an act of malfeasance.

An FBI investigation into corruption within the Aberdeen Police Department revealed that Scales accepted money on two occasions from a Confidential Human Source (CHS) who was assisting the FBI. These payments were made to prompt Scales to warn the CHS of any impending law enforcement action against the CHS. Scales testified during the hearing and admitted receiving the money on those two occasions. Scales also admitted that she was introduced to the CHS by another Aberdeen Police Department officer who she knew was also receiving money from the CHS, and she did not report this information to anyone. Scales further admitting during her testimony that these actions would affect her credibility as an officer and that she would no longer be a good witness in a case.

The Board deliberated in executive session and then unanimously ruled that certificate number 26625, previously issued to Santana Marie Scales, is **canceled and recalled**, effective July 20, 2026, for a period of not less than ten (10) years for reapplication.

Next Meeting: September 10, 2026, at 9:00 A.M. Hearings: September 9, 2026, at 8:00 A.M.