

**MINUTES**

**BLEOST MEETING**

**March 14, 2024**

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Vice-Chairman Steve Mallory.

**Roll Call:**

The Vice-Chair called the roll, and a quorum was established. Board members present were:

Mayor Nancy Chambers  
Hon. Kassie Coleman  
Hon. Lindsay Cranford  
Col. Charles Haynes  
Chief Michael Hall  
Deputy Charles Harris  
Sheriff Jim Johnson  
Dr. Steve Mallory  
Constable Glenn McKay  
Chief John Mark Quaka

Board Counsel Luke Williamson

**Board members not present were:**

Supervisor Anjuan Brown  
Sheriff Greg Pollan  
Chief Daniel Sanford

**Introduction of Guests and Introductory Remarks:**

The guests introduced themselves and were welcomed by the Vice-Chairman.

**Speakers/Guests present were:**

Officer Robert Gendron, Waveland P.D.  
Deputy Brian Jenkins, Lowndes Co. S.O.  
Lt. Mike Cowan, Desoto Co. S.O.  
Capt. Brandon Hendry, Harrison Co. LETA  
Chief Mike Prendergast, Waveland P.D.  
Inv. Ray Murphy, Waveland P.D.  
LTC Raleigh Murphy, MS ARNG  
Director Tony Carleton, MLEOTA  
Capt. Chad Arthur, CTED  
Lt. Jeremy Gordon, Capitol Police  
Officer Travis Watson, Gulfport P.D.  
Lt. Johnathan Esters, Hinds Co. S.O.

Sheriff Todd Stewart, Stone Co. S.O.  
Deputy Edgar Vazquez-Silva, Stone Co. S.O.

**Staff Members Present were:**

Program Specialist Supervisor Robert Davis  
Program Specialist Donna Rogers-Perkins  
Program Specialist Risa Turpin  
Accreditation Manager Bob Morgan

**Approval of Minutes:**

A copy of the minutes from the meeting on February 15, 2024, was emailed to each member. Sheriff Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. D.A. Coleman seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**In-Service Training – Request for Approval:**

1. **Presentation by Director Tony Carleton, MLEOTA-SSGT Firearms Instructor Course; SSGT Patrol Rifle Instructor Course.**
2. **Traffic Stops, 4 hours; Search & Seizure/Curtilage, 4 hours-Daniel Klem, Petal PD**
3. **Stress Mitigation and Trauma-Informed Crisis Response for Law Enforcement; Gulf Coast Trauma Institute; 12 hours**
4. **Leading Extraordinary Organizations; Ray Farris, Southaven PD, 16 hours**
5. **Patrol Mental Health Training, 8 hours; Use of Force & De-Escalation Concepts, 8 hours; Defensive Tactics Awareness, 8 hours; Hazmat Training, 4 hours; Michael Harper-Instructor**
6. **Gracie Survival Tactics 1-2-3; 8 hours each course; Cory Thompson; Pascagoula PD**
7. **National Criminal Justice Training Center (COPS website); Online Training; Chief Jason Dickinson-Itawamba Community College**
8. **Pathway to Financial Wellness, 2-4 hours; Creative Planning; Retired Lt. Travis George**

Director Carleton presented the courses listed in item 1. Chief Quaka made a motion to approve, and Constable McKay seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition.

Items 2 through 8 were presented and Sheriff Johnson made a motion to approve, Chief Hall seconded the motion, and it was passed without opposition.

**Final Vote - Proposal for Rule Change; Military Discharge Ch. 1-2:**

The Board reviewed the proposed rule change for final adoption. The underlined wording was proposed to be added to policy.

## **12. Employment Standards -**

Former members of the Armed Forces must have been discharged under honorable conditions. Former members of the Armed Forces discharged under other than honorable conditions may appeal to the Board for consideration, after providing all official discharge documents, and any additional or supporting documentation that may be requested by the Board.

### **Chapter 2 Applicant Evaluation, Employment and Certification Procedures Rule 2.2 Policy 1. C. 5.**

Former members of the Armed Forces must have been discharged under honorable conditions. Former members of the Armed Forces discharged under other than honorable conditions may appeal to the Board for consideration, after providing all official discharge documents, and any additional or supporting documentation that may be requested by the Board.

DA Coleman made a motion to approve as final the proposed changes. Chief Quaka seconded the motion, and it passed without opposition.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Presentation by Sheriff Todd Stewart – Dreamers Act**

Sheriff Stewart of Stone County asked the Board to consider allowing individuals that are not US Citizens, but are legal to work in the US to be eligible for certification as law enforcement officers. Individuals that fall under the US Dreamers Act have lived in the US most of their lives. Some states are allowing individuals in this category to serve as law enforcement officers.

The Board will review this Act and take this matter under consideration. At the current time, one of the qualifications to be certified as a law enforcement officer is the officer must be a US Citizen.

### **Certification of Officers:**

Director Davis presented three (3) part-time academy classes for certification pending completion of all requirements. The Vice-Chair entertained a motion. Constable McKay made a motion to approve the part-time classes for certification subject to meeting all requirements. DA Coleman seconded the motion. The motion was adopted without opposition.

Nineteen (19) full-time and six (6) part-time equivalency of training candidates were presented for certification pending completion of all requirements. The Vice-Chair entertained a motion. Chief Quaka made a motion to approve the equivalency candidates for certification subject to meeting all requirements. Col. Haynes seconded the motion. The motion was adopted without opposition.

### **Director's Report:**

The Board reviewed some legislation that could affect the Board. HB 418 would require campus chiefs and the Reservoir chief to complete 20 hours of executive level training annually. HB 691 is proposed to restructure the Board by removing certain associations from having positions on the Board and adding other representatives. This bill also will give the Board investigative authority. The Board was in support of the investigative authority. This bill will also require all law enforcement officers to receive continuing education annually.

Director Davis announced his plans to retire on June 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **Certification Review Hearing for Officer Robert C. Gendron:**

The Board on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Training (BLEOST) received a "Full-Time Law Enforcement Application for Certification" from the Waveland Police Department. This agency hired Officer Gendron as a law enforcement officer on 12/5/2023. Based on information in his certification file, the Board's staff has determined that he is not eligible for certification. Officer Gendron requested this hearing.

The Board on Law Enforcement Officer Standards & Training (BLEOST) has been provided with information that he was discharged from the Bay St. Louis Police Department. His discharge was due to immoral conduct, acts of omission tending to injure the public service, and allegations of criminal conduct. He confiscated marijuana, an illegal controlled drug, while on duty and then delivered the marijuana to an acquaintance for personal use. He admitted that while investigating a domestic related incident that he located marijuana, and confiscated it to have it destroyed at a later time. He admitted that he did not destroy the marijuana, but delivered the marijuana to an acquaintance while on duty. This conduct or action violates the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics or would greatly diminish the public trust in the competence and reliability of a law enforcement officer. According to the record, he were certified by the BLEOST as a law enforcement officer on March 25, 2022, certificate number 28571.

Director Davis presented an 18-page document taken from Officer Gendron's file to back up the allegations (marked as exhibit 1).

Officer Gendron addressed the Board explaining his side of the story, and requested that the Board allow him to remain in law enforcement. His Chief, Mike Prendergast, Investigator Ray Murphy, and MS Army National Guard Lt. Col Raleigh Murphy spoke on his behalf.

After all testimony was concluded, the Vice-Chair entertained a motion. Chief Quaka made a motion to go into closed session to consider whether to declare an executive session, DA Coleman seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition. Ten members were present, but Chief Hall recused himself. Constable McKay made a motion to enter into executive session to consider the allegations of misconduct and evidence produced during open proceedings, and the possible issuance of an appealable order. DA Coleman seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

After executive session was completed, the Vice-Chair invited everyone back to the meeting room. Constable McKay made a motion to come out of executive session, seconded by Sheriff Johnson. The motion passed unanimously.

The Chair announced that after deliberations in Executive Session, the Board on Law Enforcement Officer Standards & Training finds that:

### **FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. The Board has promulgated policy and procedure whereby: the Board may reject any unqualified applicant for certification by a classification of not eligible for certification, and any conduct or action that would violate the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics or would greatly diminish the public trust in the competence and reliability of a law enforcement officer would be actionable as due cause for reprimand, suspension (under condition), recall or cancellation of a certificate.
2. Clear and convincing evidence was placed before the Board that you, Robert Chase Gendron, admitted that you confiscated marijuana, an illegal controlled drug, while on duty and then delivered the marijuana to an acquaintance. This conduct or action violates the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics and would greatly diminish the public trust in the competence and reliability of a law enforcement officer. You were certified by the BLEOST as a law enforcement officer on March 25, 2022, certificate number 28571.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

Upon consideration of the testimony presented today, and pursuant to Mississippi Code, Section 45-6-7, the Board on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Training has promulgated policy for the administration of the Law Enforcement Officers Training Program (LEOTP) allowing the Board the authority to reject any unqualified applicant for certification by a classification of not eligible for certification. Any conduct or action that would violate the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics or would greatly diminish the public trust in the competence and reliability of a law enforcement officer would be actionable as due cause for reprimand, suspension, recall or cancellation of a certificate.

In Executive Session, after considering the facts presented, the Board voted unanimously (9-0) that you are not eligible for certification and that your certificate is cancelled, certificate number 28571. This action is effective on March 14, 2024.

### **Certification Review Hearing for Officer Travis I. Watson:**

The Board on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Training (BLEOST) received information from the Gulfport Police Department, that Officer Watson resigned during an internal investigation into allegations of embezzlement and credit card fraud. Officer Watson contacted the BLEOST staff to inquire about the status of his certification and was told that his certificate was inactive and that he was no longer eligible for certification based on the information received. He stated that he has been applying for law enforcement employment and the agencies were advising him that there might be a problem with his certification based on his actions with the Gulfport Police Department. Officer Watson requested a hearing before the Board to discuss his certification.

The Board on Law Enforcement Officer Standards & Training (BLEOST) has been provided with information that he was seen using a Fuelman Card to have gas put in his personal vehicle and his marked patrol vehicle. A video confirms that the Gulfport Police Department city-issued Fuelman Card was used to place gas into both vehicles at the time reported by the witness. There are three other videos that show him pumping gas into his personal vehicle while using the Fuelman Card. He admitted to using the department issued Fuelman card to pay for gas which he pumped into his personal vehicle on numerous occasions, and that he knew this was not permitted. He admitted that he probably used over \$200.00 in Fuelman transactions. This conduct or action violates the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics or would greatly diminish the public trust in the competence and reliability of a law enforcement officer. According to the record, he was certified by the BLEOST as a law enforcement officer on March 25, 2022, certificate number 28586.

Director Davis presented a 17-page document taken from Officer Watson's file to back up the allegations (marked as exhibit 1).

Officer Watson addressed the Board and explained his side of the story. He stated that he used the Fuelman card to recoup his money that he had to use to put fuel in his patrol unit. He did this because the card would not work on occasion.

After all testimony was concluded, the Vice-Chair entertained a motion. DA Coleman made a motion to go into closed session to consider whether to declare an executive session, Constable McKay seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition. Ten members were present. Constable McKay made a motion to enter into executive session to consider the allegations of misconduct and evidence produced during open proceedings, and the possible issuance of an appealable order. DA Coleman seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

After executive session was completed, the Vice-Chair invited everyone back to the meeting room. Constable McKay made a motion to come out of executive session, seconded by Chief Hall. The motion passed unanimously.

After deliberations in Executive Session, the Board on Law Enforcement Officer Standards & Training finds that:

## **FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. The Board has promulgated policy and procedure whereby: the Board may reject any unqualified applicant for certification by a classification of not eligible for certification, and any conduct or action that would violate the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics or would greatly diminish the public trust in the competence and reliability of a law enforcement officer would be actionable as due cause for reprimand, suspension (under condition), recall or cancellation of a certificate.
2. Clear and convincing evidence was placed before the Board that you, Travis I. Watson, admitted to using your department issued Fuelman card to pay for gas which you pumped into your personal vehicle on numerous occasions, and that you knew this was not permitted. You admitted that you probably used over \$200.00 worth of Fuelman transactions. This conduct or action violates the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics or would greatly diminish the public trust

in the competence and reliability of a law enforcement officer. You were certified by the BLEOST as a law enforcement officer on March 25, 2022, certificate number 28586.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

Upon consideration of the testimony presented today, and pursuant to Mississippi Code, Section 45-6-7, the Board on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Training has promulgated policy for the administration of the Law Enforcement Officers Training Program (LEOTP) allowing the Board the authority to reject any unqualified applicant for certification by a classification of not eligible for certification. Any conduct or action that would violate the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics or would greatly diminish the public trust in the competence and reliability of a law enforcement officer would be actionable as due cause for reprimand, suspension, recall or cancellation of a certificate.

In Executive Session, after considering the facts presented, the Board voted unanimously (10-0) that you are not eligible for certification and that your certificate is cancelled, certificate number 28586. This action is effective on March 14, 2024.

**Next Scheduled Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled for May 9, 2024.

### **Concluding Remarks; Adjournment:**

Director Davis asked the Board for comments concerning a case on an officer that falsified his application concerning his high school diploma and an officer that was charged with assault for spanking a minor. The Board advised in both cases that hearings would be required. On a matter of an officer that had a hearing, where the Board took no action, the Board was asked if they considered the fact that the officer may have falsified his application when he stated that he did not realize he was under an official investigation into his actions when he resigned. The comments were that all evidence was reviewed, and this statement would not have changed the Board's decision.

Sheriff Johnson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by AG Cranford. There was no opposition.

The meeting was adjourned at about 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Director, Board on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Training