

MINUTES OF ARKANSAS STATE POLICE COMMISSION MEETING  
October 12, 2023

The Arkansas State Police Commission met on Thursday, October 12, 2023, at the Arkansas State Police Headquarters, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Commission Chairman Edwards called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Commissioner Steve Edwards, Chairman  
Commissioner Jeffery Teague, Vice-Chairman  
Commissioner John Allison, Secretary  
Commissioner Jim Hinkle  
Commissioner Ken Reeves  
Commissioner Neff Basore  
Commissioner Mike Akin

STATE POLICE PERSONNEL PRESENT:

Colonel Mike Hagar	Major Mike Moyer
Major Roby Rhoads	Lt. Colonel Jason Aaron
Lt. Colonel Mike Kennedy	Major Ron Casey
Major Stacie Rhoads	Kalika Rogers
Susan Tedford	Jenna Castleberry
Karen Perry	Captain Scott Joe
Lieutenant Jeff Plouch	Captain Rick Neill
Lieutenant Dustin Morgan	Lieutenant Philip Hydron
Lieutenant Bobby Brown	Lieutenant Randall Murphy
Sergeant Robert Middleton	Lieutenant Aaron Easley
Captain David Williams	Sergeant David Forthman
Captain Paulette Ward	Captain Jeff Sheeler
Captain Todd Shaw	Sergeant Greg Dycus
Captain Kyle Drown	Janie Runkle
Cindy Murphy	Donna Humphries

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jesi Feld, DPS	Michelle Spencer, DPS
Brooke Jarrett, DPS	

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Commission Chairman Edwards led the pledge of allegiance.

NOTIFICATION OF MEDIA:

The media was notified of this meeting on October 02, 2023.

MINUTES:

Commission Chairman Edwards stated everyone was sent out the minutes of the September 14, 2023, regular monthly meeting and I assume everyone has looked at them, I would entertain a motion to approve those.

Commissioner Reeves made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 14, 2023, regular monthly commission meeting. Commissioner Teague seconded the motion. Commission Chairman Edwards stated we have a motion and a second, all in favor, any opposed and the motion passed.

WEAPON RESOLUTIONS:

Major Stacie Rhoads presented the following resolutions for consideration by the ASP Commission.

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS: Lieutenant Dennis Morris efficiently and effectively served the Arkansas State Police for a period of thirty-four years, three months, and nine days;

WHEREAS: Lieutenant Dennis Morris retired from this department August 31, 2023;

WHEREAS: His departure creates a vacancy that will be most difficult to fill, which is recognized by each and every member of the Arkansas State Police Commission;

WHEREAS: Lieutenant Dennis Morris has made formal request that his service weapon be retired with him and remain in his possession;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED: The Arkansas State Police Commission, in its regular meeting at Arkansas State Police Headquarters in Little Rock, Arkansas on Thursday, October 12, 2023, in accordance with Act 547 of 2003, awards him, his Glock Model 19, Serial Number BMFZ837, as a token of their esteem and appreciation for service devoted to the Arkansas State Police.

Commissioner Hinkle made a motion to approve the above weapon resolution presented to the Commission. Commissioner Basore seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

#### R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS: Lieutenant Dennis Morris efficiently and effectively served the Arkansas State Police for a period of thirty-four years, three months, and nine days;

WHEREAS: Lieutenant Dennis Morris retired from this department August 31, 2023;

WHEREAS: His departure creates a vacancy that will be most difficult to fill, which is recognized by each and every member of the Arkansas State Police Commission;

WHEREAS: Lieutenant Dennis Morris has made formal request that his shotgun be retired with him and remain in his possession;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED: The Arkansas State Police Commission, in its regular meeting at Arkansas State Police Headquarters in Little Rock, Arkansas on Thursday, October 12, 2023 in accordance with Act 547 of 2003, determines the fair market value of the Remington shotgun, serial number D020749M, that Lieutenant Dennis Morris has carried be affixed at \$100.00, and that Lieutenant Dennis Morris be permitted to purchase the shotgun for his personal use.

Commissioner Hinkle made a motion to approve the above weapon resolution presented to the Commission. Commissioner Basore seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Commission Chairman Edwards stated the next item of business is division reports.

#### Fiscal Section – Karen Perry

Karen Perry gave an overview of the monthly report. Ms. Perry stated we have completed our first quarter of the year and we are in good standing. We did get our \$24 million approved in ARPA funding from the legislature. Now we are working on getting our MOF's and contracts ready to start spending that money. We paid overtime for the troopers for the March 31st tornado. We have a meeting at the end of the month to prepare for our next fiscal year budget session.

Commission Chairman Edwards stated the special money that we were awarded for radios and those other things, whatever else was in that package, is that all moved forward. Ms. Perry stated we are in the process, we still have to work out the contracts and pricing, but it is moving forward.

#### Administrative Services – Major Roby Rhoads

Major Roby Rhoads presented an oral summary of the written report distributed to the Commission. He began by reporting the Human Resources/Personnel transactions for the

month, on the uniformed noncommissioned side we had four new hires, and two voluntary terminations. The commissioned transactions included two promotions, two retirements, and seven transfers. We currently have three military deployments.

Major Roby Rhoads stated we have 67 recruits scheduled to start Troop School on Sunday if they all show up.

We have 70 applicants for the 2024A Troop School which would start in February. We are in the polygraph phase for that one, we are going through polygraph books now.

Major Roby Rhoads stated for our Wellness Unit, since January 1, 2023, we have had roughly 123 visits, so that is a lot of work for those guys.

Major Roby Rhoads stated for the ASP Health Plan, September paid claims were \$987,000.00 which is a decrease of \$661,000.00 from last month and the fund balance is \$45,000.00 higher than last month, for a total fund balance of \$12,313,000.00.

Commissioner Allison stated so you just had an extra ordinary terrible month last month? Major Roby Rhoads stated yes sir, we did, a lot of big claims. Commissioner Allison asked they didn't carryover? Major Roby Rhoads stated just for that month that is all we had, just a lot of big claims that came in. Commissioner Allison stated I think that is the largest month I remember. Major Roby Rhoads stated that is one of the biggest I remember. Susan might be able to tell you some of the history, it was a big month.

Commissioner Basore stated but the cost could have been months prior to that, right. The claims came in, in September, but the treatments and stuff could have been several months before and some of them may have been doubled up treatments and two different months may have showed up on the same date. Major Roby Rhoads stated yes sir.

Commission Chairman Edwards asked is the February Troop School going to be a certified school again? Major Roby Rhoads stated yes sir and stated we carried over 14 applicants from this last process that will be invited to this school, we had a surplus from last time. Commission Chairman Edwards stated that is a good problem to have. Major Roby Rhoads stated yes sir.

Commission Chairman Edwards stated next, Crimes Against Children, Kalika Rogers.

Ms. Kalika Rogers stated the CACD Hotline received 5,892 contacts in September, with 2,338 of those being accepted for investigation. There were 11 child deaths reported, one of those was investigated, nine were assessed and one was documented. The CACD investigations unit accepted 523 new cases, and they closed 398 cases, with 129 of those being true, so that gives us a substantiation rate of 32%.

Commission Chairman Edwards asked that substantiation rate is that high, low, normal? Ms. Rogers that's about normal, we average in the 30s most of the year.

Commission Chairman Edwards stated next is Major Stacie Rhoads, Criminal Investigations.

Major Stacie Rhoads stated for the month of September CID opened 101 criminal investigations, one of those was an officer involved shooting. We worked 17 overall death investigations, four of those were homicides and we responded to 2 in custody deaths. One of the things that I want to highlight for CID for the month of September is kind of our approach to human trafficking. Back in February, Governor Sanders signed an Executive Order making combatting human trafficking one of the hallmarks of her administration. Human trafficking is something that the state police has not generally delved off into, we have kind of taken that to be a local agency issue. But as we have learned over the years, you know prostitution and labor trafficking and things like that, these are not prostitutes hanging out on the corners anymore. Just like we have seen in a lot of other criminal investigation activities, everything is kind of migrating to the internet. So, in keeping in Colonel Hagar's message of being proactive with policing, when the Governor signed that executive order, we took it that meant that we needed to step up and kind of be the leaders and moving our fight against human trafficking forward. Since that time, just in September, we had our first human trafficking operation, and it was a victim centered approach where we actually had undercover people getting online and engaging with escorts and their traffickers. As a result

of that, we made 10 contacts and we actually rescued 4 adult women, but more importantly we rescued 2 juvenile victims with the assistance of CACD and DHS. We removed a 15-year-old female and a 16-year-old female from an environment that ya'll would not even believe where we rescued them. But I am also happy to announce that, you know this was our first operation, it cost us absolutely nothing. The work of Special Agent Matt Foster in organizing this was just top notch and it was so successful. We also applied for a human trafficking grant and am happy to report that we found out on September 26 that we actually received that grant. It was very competitive, only 6 awards were given in the U. S., and we were blessed enough to get that money to help us with our mission and being able to rescue these people. You know when I was telling them on the night of this operation, all of the support and services that we offer here at the state police, hope should be the number one thing that we offer. With this money that is one thing that we are going to be able to offer these women, and men to, but it is predominately women, but that is something we are going to be able to offer them that nobody has been able to do. Really excited about our future in human trafficking.

Commissioner Hinkle asked what is the amount of that grant? Major Stacie Rhoads stated it is \$750,000.00, it was actually \$1.5 million, but we partnered with DHS, and they got \$750,000.00 and we got \$750,000.00. Commissioner Hinkle stated great. Commissioner Teague stated I am pleased that you guys took the initiative to do that, it is a pretty dark world out there and these women that you rescued, I know are indebted greatly to you guys, so thank you for doing this.

Major Stacie Rhoads stated the history of prostitution and stuff is let's see how many people we can put in jail, let's arrest people and this didn't really work, it didn't go away. What we hope to offer is them a path that will put them somewhere they have opportunities to help them, maybe it is their education. What we have learned is a lot of times they start with the child crimes, and they never really out live that, they just continue on this path and so we are hoping that is something that we have to offer. You know it is like I told them if not us then who, we are the state police, we should be the one leading this charge and we are not going to sit in the back.

Commissioner Basore asked are you putting together some troopers specifically designed for the human trafficking or is it going to be spread out. Major Stacie Rhoads stated yes, one of the things that we are going to do is we are going to organize a task force. We are going to be the lead agency on that, but we are also going to branch out to our local partners and get buy in from them and have them assign investigators as affiliates that can help us. Another way of us giving back to the agencies.

Commissioner Teague asked how pervasive is this in the state? Major Stacie Rhoads stated it would blow your mind. So, just to kind of give you some context, so when we started looking at this about a month out, we started getting on these apps that are strictly directed towards prostitution and over a month there were over 2,000 ads in Little Rock. We contacted 75 on the day that we conducted the operation. We were interacting with 75 people looking to meet our undercover to engage in sex for money. We actually invited, or 10 actually came to the hotel and 4 of them allowed us to rescue them and the others, I will tell you no we didn't arrest them, we gave them the same opportunity that we gave everyone. A lot of them turned it down, whether it is because they were scared of retaliation from their pimp. I also tell you that we made contact with 10 traffickers who we are now building cases against, and we will be bringing charges on several of those in the coming weeks. Our next one, we are looking to do another operation in Jonesboro in January.

Commissioner Reeves asked do all of these young ladies have pimps or are some of them freelancing? Major Stacie Rhoads stated some of them were doing it on their own. So, we had an operation in NW Arkansas that we participated in, it was not our operation, it was Department of Homeland Security Investigations and there was a woman that showed up there that was doing it on her own. She was raising her grandkids and she needed the money to be able to buy them shoes, not kidding, that is what she told us. So, some of them are doing it on their own and then some are being, you know, another thing that we found is a lot of the drug dealers are migrating over to human trafficking because it is not against the law to have a female in your passenger seat. That is a commodity they can sell over and over, and we see a lot of that.

Commissioner Reeves asked how many underage girls? Major Stacie Rhoads stated so, I told you about the 15-year-old, we have seen them as young as 12, but we did rescue the 15-

year-old and she had been in it for several years, she was a chronic runaway. The 16-year-old was the same, she was a chronic runaway and a lot of times they are on these social media apps and potential traffickers get on there and they groom them and then they offer them. A lot of times these young girls are not being paid money, but they are being paid with clothes and all of these really fancy things that girls are really in to, fashion and things like that, but as early as 12 years old. Commissioner Reeves stated good work.

Commissioner Akin stated yeah that is great, I appreciate your commitment to it, and you can tell you are passionate about it. Being the new guy on the block so to speak, the past several months I have learned the state police is doing a lot of things that the public is not aware of, but you do a lot more than just drive up and down the road and pass out speeding tickets. I hope our public awareness efforts campaign that we are able get that word out there as much as possible. Major Stacie Rhoads and we are and so our Communications Director, Cindy Murphy, is really doing a great job of kind of selling the other things that we have to offer across the state because most people don't know, and it has kind of always been that way. We have always worked in obscurity, and we have never had an issue with that, but our agents are doing some dynamic things out there to really change the world. Commissioner Teague stated wouldn't it be nice if the press instead of hammering us all the time on FOI issues would also spread the good news of what Arkansas State Police does in a positive way for the State of Arkansas and its citizens. It would surely be nice if the press would do that. Major Stacie Rhoads stated I totally agree, and you know over the last several years, we have not done a very good job of advertising the good that we do put back in the world and that's on us. I know that Cindy, one of her main goals is to put forth out there all of the great things that we are doing.

Commissioner Reeves stated on that topic, do we ever go to like Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs and make presentations about these other things that the state police do? Major Stacie Rhoads stated I don't generally get invited; no, I don't usually go to those. Lt. Colonel Jason Aaron stated we do them at the troop level a lot of times. At the troop level a troop commander whether it might be once a month or depending on that area that troop covers, they will have speakers that will attend, most of the time they are looking for a broad overview of what the state police do. Commissioner Reeves stated some of these real-life stories like Stacie just told would make anyone proud. Major Stacie Rhoads stated it is exciting stuff, I can tell you I am so proud of the work that we are doing and like I said, Matt Foster he really stepped up and kind of grabbed the bull by the horns and it is really going to put us on the map with this.

Commissioner Teague stated I know Colonel Bryant did that some when I was in El Dorado he came down to the Rotary Club and did a presentation but did a broad overview. But it might be interesting if like you went and spoke and strictly spoke about this particular issue that you are talking about to give some information about that. Major Stacie Rhoads stated I will say we have been invited to some churches, because when we conducted this operation, we invited a lot of advocacy groups and we found that a lot of the churches are involved in these advocacy groups. So, since that time we have been invited to several churches to give presentations on what to look for. A lot of times the general public just really doesn't know what to look for. You think about every truck stop that you stop at and what you can observe and report to a human trafficking hotline. A lot of the general public just does not know that it is there, and it is really overt once you recognize what you are looking at. Commissioner Teague stated interesting report, thank you. Commissioner Edwards stated thank you Major, great work.

Commission Chairman Edwards stated next is Highway Patrol Division, Major Ron Casey.

Major Ron Casey stated in the Highway Patrol Division for the month of September, Troopers arrested 1,404 people on criminal arrests including Felonies and warrants. There were 285 DWI arrests, and two underage DUI arrests. Troopers issued over 6,700 citations for hazardous including reckless driving. They issued 15,014 traffic citations for September. We had 58 pursuits for the month, investigated 1,183 crashes 37 of those being fatalities and they recovered 15 stolen vehicles and recovered 8 stolen properties which was probably guns. We had 5 aircraft missions, which was kind of short compared to other months because our King Air and Cessna have been down for repairs. We are sitting right now back to the fatals, we are 43 fatals less than what we had last year at this time as of this morning. That contributes to the troopers out there working the highways and issuing citations. There were 18,564 DL/CDL tests were given. On the drug seizures, there was over 147,000 grams of marijuana, 8,138 grams of methamphetamine, 51 grams of cocaine, 94 units of pills, all other drugs were 595 grams and troopers seized \$874,656.00 in U.S. Currency.

Commission Chairman Edwards asked that is all in September. Major Casey stated yes sir, heck of a job they did.

Commissioner Reeves asked what is the value of meth when you are looking at this table you have here, 8,000 grams of meth and the total overall money seizure is \$874,000, how do they value one gram of meth? Major Casey stated I am not really sure, about \$100 a gram.

Commissioner Hinkle stated you know we are quick to tease with you because you enjoy it and we do too, but that really is a good report, that is an outstanding report of what the troopers are doing in the State of Arkansas. And when you stop and think about just the drugs alone that they removed from potential young people in our state, I hate to tell you but that's a good report.

Commissioner Teague stated Major, the 58 pursuits, you are getting a lot of critique from the media about the PIT maneuvers. Have you talked to anyone about that, is 58 up, I don't keep up with it from month to month, is that up, down or about average. Major Casey stated it averages out at about that, we have low months, we have high months. We thought we would really see a decline in pursuits after the new law of it being a felony, but they have actually increased in September. Our TVI's that we perform its saving innocent lives is what it is doing. Our quality of life is its citizens, its troopers, and the suspects. We talk about it all the time, but the state police don't start the pursuit, it is somebody fleeing from us. Unfortunately, we have had some incidents where people died, but we didn't choose that they did. We are doing the best we can just to keep citizens safe. Commissioner Teague asked are most of these pursuits are they these high-performance cars that feel like they can outrun you or is it more of different vehicles? Major Casey stated we are pursuing a lot of Challengers and Chargers, but we are also pursuing Honda Accords and it is amazing how fast they go. You can buy a new Honda Accord off the showroom floor, and they run like 130 plus. So, we are seeing in different areas, we may chase a Chevy Trailblazer or a pickup in rural areas. In most of the Little Rock area we are chasing high-performance vehicles and we are also facing some new things in the last month or so where other people are getting involved in pursuits to keep us from getting the one, we initially chased. So, it is kind of like I equated it to Smokey and the Bandit, we have had a couple of incidences where they have been trying to interfere with pursuits, didn't win, didn't end well for them.

Commissioner Reeves stated I assume there is a high percentage of these that flee, who either have an outstanding warrant or have drugs in the vehicle or something like that. Major Casey stated yes sir. Commissioner Reeves stated they are not just trying to show they have a faster car than we do. Major Casey stated some do unfortunately, but there is an underlying criminal element to that.

Commission Chairman Edwards asked what percentage of the stops you are making like that are people with paper tags, it just seems like those guys are driving nuts? Major Casey stated we tried to look back not too long ago and pull those stats on those paper tags, but I don't think we got an accurate count. Unfortunately, those stats are not kept like they would with stolen vehicles, and we probably need to track that a little bit more. The good part about it is these paper plates do come back through DFA, they do come back with a name, so we are able to trace them. Commission Chairman Edwards stated it just seems like folks drive crazy once they get a new car.

Commission Chairman Edwards stated next is Regulatory and Building Operations Division, Major Mike Moyer.

Major Moyer stated during the month of September the Identification Bureau processed 22,667 civil background checks and 9,169 criminal background checks. The Used Motor Vehicle Dealer Section processed 329 dealer applications and we had 3 complaints that we investigated. The PI Security section processed 659 applications, our ASP Bomb Squad handled 5 separate explosive calls, and our fire investigations have definitely increased, we are up to 17 origin and cause investigations for last month.

Commissioner Teague asked what was the result of the explosive calls, anything? Major Moyer stated it is a variety, a lot of times it is old dynamite that farmers had, or someone has died, and the spouse has found old military explosives, so it is just a wide variety of calls.

Commission Chairman Edwards stated I have been kind of out of pocket for a little while, but I have seen headlines where the Feds are not happy with the marijuana and firearms deal,

anything going on with that? Major Moyer stated we did receive a letter from ATF, with 2 questions and our legal is currently reviewing that to provide a response back. But that is definitely a possibility that the ATF will make us known as an alternate state to where you can use your CHCL to bypass the background check to purchase a firearm, there is a possibility, strong possibility.

Commission Chairman Edwards stated so that is because, I mean, I thought you couldn't have a marijuana permit and a CHCL is that correct. Major Moyer stated last legislative session they passed a law that said that we cannot use that as a deniable factor, so you can now possess a marijuana card.

#### NEW BUSINESS:

Commission Chairman Edwards asked Colonel, do we have any personnel matters to deal with?

Colonel Hagar stated yes sir, Mr. Chairman, I would ask that we go to executive session to consider personnel matters.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Commissioner Reeves stated I make a motion we retire into Executive Session to consider personnel matters. Commissioner Hinkle seconded, and the motion passed. The Commission went into Executive Session at 10:34 a.m.

Commission Chairman Edwards called the meeting back to order at 11:21 a.m.

Commission Chairman Edwards asked Colonel, do you have any personnel issues for us?

Colonel Hagar stated yes sir, first on a reinstatement request for Draca "Drake" Champagne after his vetting process and everything and we updated his background, I would recommend he be reinstated as a trooper. Commissioner Teague made a motion that Draca "Drake" Champagne be reinstated as a trooper. Commissioner Basore seconded the motion. Commission Chairman Edwards stated we have a motion and second, all in favor, any opposed and the motion passed.

Colonel Hagar stated next, for the Sergeant position in the Highway Patrol Division, Troop B, I recommend Corporal Bryson Schulz. Commissioner Basore made a motion that Corporal Bryson Schulz be promoted to Sergeant in the Highway Patrol Division, Troop B. Commissioner Hinkle seconded the motion. Commission Chairman Edwards stated we have a motion and second, all in favor, any opposed and the motion passed.

Colonel Hagar stated on the Sergeant position in the Highway Patrol Division, Troop K, I would like to laterally transfer Sergeant David Forthman into this Sergeant position. Commission Chairman Edwards stated this does not require Commission approval.

The next is Captain in the Regulatory and Building Operations Division, and my recommendation would be Lieutenant Dustin Morgan. Commissioner Reeves made a motion that Lieutenant Dustin Morgan be promoted to Captain in the Regulatory and Building Operations Division. Commissioner Allison seconded the motion. Commission Chairman Edwards stated we have a motion and second, all in favor, any opposed and the motion passed.

The next is Captain in the Highway Patrol Division, Troop D and my recommendation would be Lieutenant Philip Hydron. Commissioner Hinkle made a motion that Lieutenant Philip Hydron be promoted to Captain in the Highway Patrol Division, Troop D. Commissioner Allison seconded the motion. Commission Chairman Edwards stated we have a motion and second, all in favor, any opposed and the motion passed.

Commission Chairman Edwards asked do we have any other business to come before the commission.

NEXT MEETING:

Commission Chairman Edwards stated the next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on Thursday, November 09, 2023, scheduled at 10:00 a.m.

Commission Chairman Edwards stated if there is no further business, I will entertain a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Reeves made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Basore seconded the motion. With no more business to come before the commission, Commission Chairman Edwards adjourned the meeting at 11:25 a.m.

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Commission Chairman

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Commission Secretary