

# Lanier County News

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"Serving our community and protecting our freedoms according to His Word since 1913"

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## Frequent Crashes on SR-64 and Teeterville Road Are on the Way Out

By Carol A. Gasser Moore

LANIER COUNTY, Georgia - The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has made a impactful announcement affecting a Lanier County area known for frequent crashes. The intersection of State Route (SR) 64 and Teeterville Road in Lanier County has now been converted from a two-way stop to a four-way stop. GDOT's plan is in response to the location's crash history and concerns of local government officials.

Teeterville Road traffic was controlled by a two-way stop sign only at SR-64 and Teeterville Road. The traffic did not stop all four directions in an area with a slight incline and a large curve which hindered drivers visibility. The conversion to a four-way stop intersection is scheduled to be effective on Monday, April 29th.

According to GDOT there have been eleven crashes that resulted in four injuries and one fatality. There have also been three crashes involving wildlife with no injuries to drivers or passengers. The information was reported through the Georgia Electronic Accident Reporting System (GEARS) from Jan. 31, 2019 to Jan. 31, 2024.

The accident history led to an extensive study of the intersection. GDOT's District Traffic Operations Office in Tifton studied the intersection to identify improvements that would have the greatest potential to address safety concerns. The crash data, along with traffic volume, speed, driver sight distance and other factors, indicated that GDOT planners needed to consider the recommendation of a four-way stop at the well-known intersection.

Information gained from the study pointed GDOT road safety planning staff to consider the change. Part of the plan indicates that drivers on SR-64 will have ample warning that they must stop ahead as they approach the intersection.

District Traffic Engineer Randy Rathburn stated, "Stop ahead" warning signs will be installed on the north and south shoulders of SR-64, along with flashing beacons. Rumble strips will also be installed on SR-64 approaching the intersections.

GDOT planning staff believe that with the change in traffic control to this intersection, they will be reminding drivers of what to do when they approach a four-way stop. The driver who reaches the intersection first goes first. If two, or more, cars approach at the same time, the driver on the left should yield to the driver on the right.



**STOP!!!**  
It's not a suggestion.

"Memorial reminds drivers about the previously unsafe intersection."



## LCSO Sheriff Norton Continues service to the Georgia Board of Community Supervision



By Carol A. Gasser Moore

LANIER COUNTY, Georgia—Originally appointed in January 2020 by Georgia Governor Brian Kemp to serve on the Board of Community Supervision, Norton continues to serve. In recognition of the excellent service his department provides, Sheriff Nick Norton has been elected by a voter majority five times.

Norton has more than 30 years of law enforcement experience as well as administration. He continues sharing his hard earned wisdom and experience through his involvement with this Georgia State Department of Corrections oversight board.

When first elected to the office of Lanier County Sheriff, Norton began an aggressive effort to seek investigative and prosecution assistance of the Federal Government to reduce local prisoner housing costs, investigative burdens, and increase penalties for offenders. The results were dramatic. Directing investigations toward them and merging with Federal jurisdiction allowed many long-term and high-level drug traffickers to become the responsibility of the Federal government. In turn, this practice released that burden from the State of Georgia along with the enormous costs.

As a first-time sheriff, Norton assessed the effectiveness of the local jail with an eye toward both inmate and public safety. Instead

of taking a "wait-and-see" approach as to whether the jail could continue to operate without the local taxpayers incurring lawsuits over the condition, he brought in advisers from a noted civil liberties groups to seek their input. He determined that he would never house an inmate in a facility that would provide less than adequate care for an inmate no matter what budget-saving it might appear to yield.

For more than 13 years he has effectively housed his county's inmates in regional facilities. This has saved the taxpayers millions and reduced the risk of lawsuits and the cost of building a facility

The Department of Community Supervision is responsible for the supervision of about 180,000 adult felony offenders, and Class A and Class B designated juvenile offenders. Some have been granted parole or a reprieve by the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, while others have received probated or split sentences by Georgia courts.

Sheriff Norton is not afraid to travel the path of most resistance to achieve the results needed. Professionally, Norton has provided law enforcement to assure citizen safety in sometimes unconventional ways to accomplish public safety and progress outcomes for everyone's welfare. Norton has a proven record of consistently recognizing a need and developing a solution.

## LCSO Shatters Teeterville Drug Trafficker's Business

By Carol A. Gasser Moore

LANIER COUNTY, Georgia – "I am pleased with the outcome, both how the entry and search took place, and extend my gratitude to all involved that helped close this Lanier County drug trafficker's business down," said Lanier County Sheriff Nick Norton in a Facebook Post on Wednesday, May 1 st about the arrest of Stephon Smith JR.

Lanier County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) investigators, Berrien County Sheriff's Office deputies, Georgia State Patrol troopers, and Georgia Department of Corrections officers executed a search warrant on the residence of 897 West GA HWY 64 in Teeterville, according to a report from LCSO. Around 9:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 30 th the Lanier County Sheriff's Office was able to move forward after working a drug trafficking case for several months.

Stephon Demone Smith JR (30) of Lakeland was successfully arrested without incident about 9:00 p.m. for narcotics and drug trafficking.

LCSO officers started their investigation several months prior to April. Unusual high traffic in the Teeterville area was noticed by citizens and called into Tri-county E911 by local residents started calling about it. Based on their growing investigation which became fuel by expressed citizen concerns, Lanier Investigators

conducted an investigation which amounted to hundreds of hours and many weeks. Additionally, investigators performed multi-weekend of surveillance of subjects, who appeared involved in the drug trafficking activities.

During Stephon Smith's arrest, law enforcement agents seized a sizeable amount of cocaine, marijuana, Schedule II prescription pills, scales and other items associated with and for the use and sale of narcotics.

Information from the LCSO tells the public that in order for the LCSO to build a bullet proof drug trafficking case that would meet the courts requirements and allow the Lanier County District Attorney's Office to take the case to court for a successful drug trafficking prosecution and conviction, they had already started their investigation.

Smith was a former resident of Nashville, GA. He was booked by Lanier County Sheriff's Office and taken to the Coffee County Jail. Smith is charged with:

- Marijuana – Possession less than 1 oz.
- Possession and use of drug related objects
- Possession of a Schedule II controlled substance
- Trafficking in cocaine, illegal drugs, marijuana or methamphetamine

The public is notified that the case involving Smith, is still an on-going investigation for other law enforcement agencies involved in his arrest.



Stephon Demone Smith, JR

"I would also like to thank all the participating agencies," said Sheriff Norton, "who assisted and came to help our county!"