

## **Sarasota Military Academy**

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

9 January, 2020

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#### **Board of Director Members' Attendance**

##### **Present:**

Mr. Herb Jones, Chairman  
Ben Knisely, COL USA (Ret), Secretary  
Mr. Kimball Bobbitt, Treasurer  
Ms. Carter Donovan  
Mr. Warren P. Hudson  
Ms. Linda Long  
Dr. Thomas J. McElheny

Howard G. Crowell, Jr., LTG USA (Ret), Chairman, SMA Foundation Inc.  
Ms. Alexandra Quarles, SMA Foundation Inc.

**Absent:** F. Steven Herb, Esquire, Vice Chairman; SMA-LTC Abby Williams, Assistant Head of School, High School Campus; SMA-LTC Dr. Catherine Rodriguez, Assistant Head of School, High School Campus; MAJ Becky Morris, Assistant Head of School, Middle School Campus; SMA-LTC Pamela Donehew, Director of Literacy and IB; SMA-MAJ Amy Mazner, Athletic Director, High School Campus; SMA-MAJ Leslie Smith, Athletic Director, Middle School Campus; SMA-CPT Bryan Burns, Prep Faculty Rep

#### **SMA Administrative Staff in Attendance**

SMA-COL Christina Bowman, Executive Director of Schools  
SMA-COL Frederick Fout, Head of School, High School Campus  
LTC Ben Weiss, Commandant of Cadets – Senior Army Instructor  
SMA-MAJ Steve Kok, Director of Finance  
SMA-MAJ Dr. Todd Brown, Director of Outreach  
SMA-COL Tom Vara, Head of School, Middle School Campus  
SMA-LTC Lisa Currie, Assistant Head of School, Middle School Campus  
SMA-LTC Ryan Lee, Assistant Head of School, Middle School Campus

#### **Guests: Members of the SMA faculty, staff and PTCC representatives.**

SMA-CPT Jennifer Vanston, High School Faculty Rep; Ms. Michele Collins, HS PTCC President; Ms. Melissa Watrobsky, Prep PTCC; SMA-MAJ Sylvia Gillotte, English Department Chair, High School campus; SMA-MAJ Michael Finley, Music Department Chair, Both campuses; SMA-MAJ Brandon Sikkenga, World Languages Department Chair, HS campus; SMA-CPT Hellen Harvey, Film Studies teacher, High School campus; MAJ (Ret) Alex Vanston, Military Studies Instructor, Prep campus;

Mr. & Mrs. Biset, High School Parents; Mr. William Edwards & Ms. Alissa Shulman, Prep parents; Ms. Gabriella Ryan, HS cadet; Ms. Emily Watrobsky, HS cadet

Location: SMA Prep School campus.

The chairman called the meeting to order at 4:35 pm.

Chairman Herb Jones introduced Mr. Warren P. Hudson as a new board member for SMA Operating Board. Mr. Hudson detailed his experiences to include serving in the US Navy and attending Vanderbilt University.

**Motion to Approve the Minutes from the 12 December, 2019 meeting:**

Dr. Tom McElheny moved to approve the 12 December, 2019 minutes; Mr. Hudson seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

**Executive Director of School Report:** SMA-COL Christina Bowman explained enrollment numbers for both schools. She mentioned how proud she was of the cadets and parents during the Wreaths Across America ceremony standing straight and tall in the rain. SMA-COL Bowman discussed the need to continue fundraising and recognized Ms. Phyllis Siskel for her 25K donation to be matched from efforts of parents and community. She explained that an additional 16K was raised above the matching 25K and Ms. Siskel graciously donated the additional 16K as restricted funds for a total of 82K donated to SMA.

SMA-COL Bowman stated that a press release of Ms. Siskel's donation and the letter to the editor from the board member will go out soon. She mentioned speaking with Mr. Baird who donated one million dollars to Sarasota County teachers not including charters and he told her that he will consider something for charters in the future. SMA-COL Bowman discussed onboarding with new board members and the process to fill the position within the Foundation, Inc. She recognized SMA-CPT Hellen Harvey and SMA-SFC Maggie Daly for their commitment and dedication in updating the library at the Prep.

Chairman Jones stated that he and LTG Howard Crowell plan to schedule luncheons with Ms. Siskel to thank her.

**Community Outreach Director Report:** Dr. Todd Brown provided a read ahead report. He discussed himself and a few high school cadets will be on air live with Mr. Bill Logan of ABC7 talking about Academy wide programs. Chairman Jones stated how proud everyone is on the amount of publicity Dr. Brown has brought to our Academy.

**Technology Report:** N/A

**SMA Prep Head of School Report:** SMA-COL Vara provided a read-ahead report. He discussed the eighth grade trip to the Kennedy Space Center prior to break went well as the Wreaths Across America ceremony. SMA-COL Vara mentioned the success of the promotion ceremony, the enrollment meetings and LTC Ben Weiss regularly on campus to address uniform requirements guidelines.

**SMA Prep Athletics Report:** SMA-COL Vara discussed athletics at the Prep with the first semester athletic awards and soccer and lacrosse tryouts coming up. He recognized parent, Mr. Edwards, for his generous donation to start the lacrosse program at the Prep campus.

**MYP:** N/A

**SMA Head of School Report:** SMA-COL Fred Fout discussed enrollment for the second semester including early graduates, dismissals and withdrawals. SMA-COL Fout explained the additional benchmark testing for Algebra 1 in order to make changes to second semester based on needs.

SMA-COL Fout discussed SPIN (Student Parent Information Night) at the high school on 5 February to promote the high school. He explained how the evening will have food trucks with teachers and cadets promoting classes and clubs in a festival atmosphere. SMA-COL Fout mentioned how information on the event went out directly to eighth grade parents and cadets at the Prep as well as other public charter middle schools in the area. He explained how his goal for next school year is to increase enrollment from the Prep. Chairman Jones encouraged the board members to attend in which SMA-COL Fout stated invites will personally be sent out.

COL Ben Knisely stated speaking with SMA-MAJ Amy Mazner on the needs of the Athletics department. He then announced, after asking a friend for assistance with SMA Athletics, a check for \$3500 was donated to purchase new basketball uniforms and warmups. SMA-COL Fout mentioned other fundraising opportunities on our website as well as the upcoming Athletics Golf Challenge to raise funds to cover pay-to-play costs. SMA-COL Bowman discussed all FHSAA pay-to-play costs totaling approximately 43K.

**SMA HS Athletics Report:** SMA-MAJ Mazner stated basketball is in mid-season and lacrosse starts at the end of January. SMA-COL Bowman mentioned the Giving Challenge is set for this April and that all donations will go towards Athletics and extra-curricular clubs and activities.

**IB Report:** N/A

**SAI/Commandant's Report:** LTC Ben Weiss stated that cadets returned from break in good condition with haircuts and presentations. COL Knisely inquired as to updates on moving eighth graders at the Prep to the ROTC curriculum at the high school in which LTC Weiss responded that the Army may allow it if there's no cost and he will look into it.

**Staff Representatives:** SMA-CPT Jennifer Vanston stated how teachers had concerns after the workshop meeting earlier in the week and submitted to her their comments to be read at the board meeting. She was asked to read the comments of approximately ten teachers by the board.

**Treasurer's Report:** Mr. Kimball Bobbitt and SMA-MAJ Steve Kok provided a read-ahead report. Mr. Bobbitt discussed the current financials including profit and

loss by campus as well as cash flow. SMA-MAJ Steve Kok explained the one-time expenses for November of taxes and IB testing fees. SMA-COL Bowman stated that the numbers for ESE cadets have been adjusted for the payout change and will be retroactive.

**PTCC Report:** Ms. Michele Collins mentioned 5 grants are requested this month between Athletics and the musical.

**Foundation, Inc.:** Chairman Howard Crowell explained the process of obtaining a new fundraiser is underway. He inquired for the Foundation financials to be included within the treasurer's report and proposed for administration to derive a formal process on how to transfer funds from Foundation to SMA.

**Committee Reports:** Ms. Linda Long discussed the workshop on the continuance of the IB program held on Monday, 6 January was very positive. She stated that a recommendation regarding the IB program is not prepared to be made today and that time to gather more information is needed. Mr. Hudson inquired as to when the decision should be made in which Ms. Long responded that the decision needs to be sensitive to our message to the community as well as deadlines to enroll in other IB programs and SMA-COL Bowman stated it needs to be decided within the month.

Chairman Jones stated another work session is needed in order to provide additional opportunity for public comment. SMA-COL Bowman agreed and set up Saturday, 18 January at 10am at the Prep gym as the date with an invitation that she will send out and post accordingly. The board also scheduled an additional board meeting for 22 January at 2:30pm in the HS conference room in order to vote on the future of the IB Programme on the high school campus.

**Chairman:** Chairman Jones stated the importance of having more work sessions on all topics with emphasis on finances to educate parents and cadets. SMA-COL Bowman suggested to include information on our charter contract as well as the district's responsibility to SMA.

**Old Business:** N/A

**New Business:** N/A

**Public Comments:** Mrs. Biset stated her concerns regarding the IB program and Mr. Biset asked the board for their email to send comments in which Chairman Jones stated he can send a detailed email to the administration. SMA-MAJ Michael Finley spoke as a parent of a graduate from the IB program at the high school and raised his concerns along with his praise of the program.

Ms. Watrobsky announced information on the golf tournament as she is looking for sponsors of all types. She stated her concerns with a decision of removing the IB program and handed out printouts of the comparisons with Gifted, IB and A/P programs.

Ms. Schulman stated her reasons on choosing SMA Prep is for character building and leadership and not for the IB program. She stated her concerns on the financial

burden of keeping the IB program and that global thinking and teaching will come from good teaching.

Cadet Emily Watrobsky stated that more support from peers and staff along with all on the same schedule to enable IB course takers is what's needed for IB to be successful. Cadet Gabriella Ryan agreed with cadet Watrobsky and stated that the IB program produces good leaders and success is not in only getting the IB diploma.

SMA-MAJ Sylvia Gillotte stated her concerns are issues of enrollment in general and not the IB program and that it needs to be promoted more. MAJ Alex Vanston stated that emotions need to be taken out of the decision of the IB program at the high school and that the IB training expenses should assist in the decision. SMA-CPT Vanston stated her concerns on the financial burden of the IB program as well as the divisiveness of the staff.

The chairman adjourned the meeting at 6:30 pm.

  
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Mr. Herb Jones, Chairman

2/13/2020  
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Date

  
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COL Ben Knisely, Secretary

2/13/2020  
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Date