

# **Sarasota Military Academy**

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **MEETING MINUTES**

**18 JANUARY 2022**

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

##### **Present:**

Thomas J. McElheny, EdD, CAPT, USMC (Ret), Chair  
Mr. Warren P. Hudson, CAPT, USN (Ret), Vice Chair (by phone)  
Ben Knisely, COL USA (Ret), Secretary  
Mr. Scott Lempe, LTC, USAF (Ret), Treasurer  
Dr. Brian Crupi, LTC, USAR  
Ms. Erica Gregory, Lt Col, USAF (Ret)  
Ms. Linda Long  
Mr. Pete Skokos  
Mr. Jim Tollerton  
Ms. Cynthia West, RN Lt, USA (Ret)

Mr. Rafael Robles, Executive Director, SMA Foundation Inc.

**Absent:** Ms. Tessa Suplee, Lt Col, USAF (Ret); LTC Ben Weiss, Commandant of Cadets; SMA-LTC Abby Williams, Assistant Head of School, High School; SMA-LTC Caitlin West, Assistant Head of School, High School; SMA-MAJ Charlie Carver, Athletic Director, High School; SMA-LTC Ryan Lee, Assistant Head of School, Middle School

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

SMA-COL Christina Bowman, Chief Executive Officer  
SMA-LTC Steve Kok, Director of Finance  
SMA-COL Frederick Fout, Head of School, High School  
SMA-COL Tom Vara, Head of School, Middle School  
SMA-LTC Lisa Currie, Assistant Head of School, Middle School  
MAJ Becky Morris, Assistant Head of School, Middle School  
SMA-MAJ Leslie Smith, Athletic Director, Middle School

**Guests in Attendance:** Ms. Susan Hartman, PTCC President; Ms. Brenda Canales, PTCC Vice President of High School; SMA-MAJ Deb Walker, Middle School; LTC (Ret) Steve Valeski, Middle School; SMA-MAJ Mark Fulghum, Middle School; Mr. Bill Edwards, Middle School; SMA-CPT Jennifer Vanston, Middle School; MAJ (Ret) Alex Vanston; SMA-CPT Kelli Kelly, Middle School; Cadet Savannah Corwin, High School

Location: SMA Middle School

The chair called the meeting to order at 4:34 pm.

**Motion to Approve the 14 December 2021 Minutes:**

Mr. Scott Lempe motioned to approve the 14 December 2021 minutes with stated corrections; Mr. Jim Tollerton seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

**Executive Director of Schools Report:** SMA-COL Christina Bowman provided a read-ahead report. She provided the current number of applications for the 2022-23 school year with a 36% commitment from eighth grade to the high school so far. Mr. Tollerton inquired as to how to increase the percentage of students who transition to the high school in which SMA-COL Bowman replied that some do not want to wear the uniform anymore and others move on to programs offered within the county. Ms. Linda Long recommended a report as to why students are not transitioning to the high school be provided.

SMA-COL Bowman discussed the current numbers with students transferring and graduating at the end of the semester from both schools along with the number of students starting at the beginning of the new semester. She mentioned the available positions at the middle school and a phenomenal work session with board members on 14 January. SMA-COL Bowman mentioned Sarasota Mayor Arroyo's visit to formation and to speak with high school cadets in February and she will provide a link for free testing kits that will be mailed out by the USPS.

SMA-COL Bowman discussed the county offering employees COVID PTO (Paid Time Off) days that would not go towards their personal time off if can prove a positive result as well as vaccinated. She requested the board to vote on providing SMA employees COVID PTO days.

**Ms. Cynthia West motioned to approve five (5) COVID PTO (Paid Time Off) days with proof of a positive PCR result with no contingency on vaccination; Ms. Long seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.**

SMA-COL Bowman discussed the county increase in salaries that would be retroactive from 1 July 2021 and presented to the board the additional funding needed year after year, if SMA matched the county's increase resulting in 100K for every 1% salary increase totaling 575K. Mr. Lempe recommended presenting a version of the budget with the salary increase to see what it looks like at the next meeting. Chair Thomas McElheny stated the numbers from the work session with a current surplus from a high deficit resulted in very difficult decisions and commended SMA-COL Bowman.

**SMA Head of School Report, Middle School:** SMA-COL Tom Vara provided a read-ahead report. He discussed an increase in applications and the enrollment meetings going well. SMA-COL Vara mentioned the students dismissed at the end of the semester as well as two resignations from staff. Mr. Erica Gregory inquired as to the average student/teacher ratio in which SMA-COL Bowman replied the class size of 17:1 is attractive to new families that is significantly lower than public schools. SMA-COL Vara thanked the PTCC for the staff luncheon.

**SMA Middle School Athletics Report:** SMA-MAJ Leslie Smith mentioned a successful turnout at the soccer tryouts with fifty boys and twenty-five girls attending. She stated an eighth grade parent has stepped up to coach the girls soccer.

**Technology and Data Impact Report:** N/A

**Instructional Design & Curriculum:** SMA-LTC Lisa Currie provided to the board 2022 projections of FSA results in reading and math for sixth, seventh and eighth graders. She explained analyzing data on each individual student to see how scores can be improved.

**SMA Head of School Report, High School:** SMA-COL Fred Fout provided a read-ahead report. He discussed professional development day on 10 January to include two hours of "Back to Basics" training for faculty on how to utilize data and to convey results with parents and students. SMA-CPT Bryan Burns presented to faculty on how to collect data using USA Test Preps.

SMA-COL Fout discussed enrollment numbers and COVID updates. He stated a local landscaper donating soil and plants to SMA-MAJ Lorene Bauck's garden and class was very appreciative. COL Ben Knisely inquired as to the bus situation in which SMA-COL Fout replied that one bus has a long-term substitute and SMA-COL Vara replied that one county bus completes a double route. SMA-COL Bowman replied that a new bus driver will be completing their paperwork and should start shortly thereafter and thanked SMA-CPT Jackie Sharkey-Trecartin for assisting in driving a bus while waiting for new hires.

**SMA HS Athletics Report:** SMA-COL Fout stated a successful senior night for girls soccer and one female soccer player visited the soccer coach and team at the US Military Academy at West Point.

**SAI/Commandant's Report:** N/A

**Staff Representatives:** SMA-MAJ Smith provided a read-ahead report for staff concerns. She stated that there were three areas of concern listing: raises to meet Sarasota county raises; if faculty will receive and when the bonus or stipend for highly effective teachers; and staff do not feel comfortable or safe in expressing grievances to HR as the CEO and HR are the same person.

SMA-COL Bowman stated that all job openings are posted internally first then externally through Indeed. She continued stating that all resumes received are forwarded to both heads of school for their recommendations, as she does not execute hires and fires directly. Chair McElheny inquired to SMA-COL Bowman if she had ever disagreed with any recommendations from either head of school in which she replied that she has not disagreed with their recommendations.

Dr. Brian Crupi stated that the main concern staff have is not feeling comfortable in voicing their opinions or concerns in which Ms. Gregory inquired as to the grieving process. SMA-COL Bowman replied that the grieving process goes through the chain of command and Ms. Long replied that a hired HR position needs to be implemented in the budget for staff to trust the CEO. Mr. Lempe recommends it be placed in the 2022-23 proposed budget and see how it can be implemented. Chair McElheny recommended SMA-COL Bowman work with Ms. Gregory, as an HR professional, on the process and continue to work with board on an open dialogue.

**Media Report:** N/A

**Treasurer's Report:** Mr. Lempe stated that financials will be available at the next board meeting as the FTE adjustment mid-year presented numbers that were not complete.

**PTCC Report:** Ms. Susan Hartman provided a read-ahead report. She discussed the merge of the two PTCCs to one unified for the academy and has attended meetings on both campuses that will be combined to one and combined both budgets as well. Ms. Hartman stated that grants have increased to \$500 for classrooms and clubs/sports and will be starting to accept grants from the middle school as well. Chair McElheny commended the PTCC board on the merge and is very excited on moving forward.

**Foundation:** Mr. Rafael Robles provided a read-ahead report. He stated an increase in unrestricted funds received with a successful end of year appeal of 35K total, 10K over goal. COL Knisely recommended advertising how the Foundation supports grants to SMA. Chair McElheny stated that the Flanzer Matching Program is continuing for 2022 and recommends the board to participate.

**Marketing and Communications Report:** N/A

**Committee Reports:** N/A

**Chair:** Chair McElheny stated the resignation from Mr. Warren Hudson has been submitted due to personal reasons. He recommends forming a nominating committee comprised of Jim Tollerton, Herb Jones and himself to present a name at the next board meeting on vice chair nominations. Chair McElheny stated the three areas of focus are to revise the budget process and approval prior to fiscal year; school grades and the new criteria that will affect grade; and increase transition from eighth grade to the high school.

**Old Business:** Chair McElheny stated he was impressed with the workshop presentation. Ms. Cynthia West inquired as to sharing the presentation explaining the school grade criteria to include the new changes Governor DeSantis plans on implementing.

**New Business:** N/A

**Public Comments:** MAJ Alex Vanston inquired as to when the bonuses for the highly effective teachers will be distributed in which SMA-COL Bowman replied that she would work with both heads of school in identifying the highly effective teachers on both campuses.

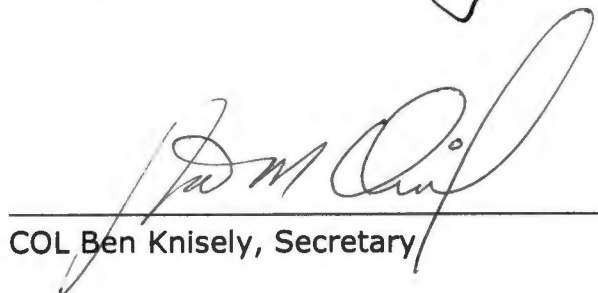
Ms. West inquired as to the board meetings being virtual in which Mr. Pete Skokos stated that he will look into the bylaws and SMA-COL Bowman replied that a new house bill might be adapting a virtual option.

The next board meeting will be on 8 February 2022 at 2:30pm at the High School campus.

The chair adjourned the meeting at 6:04 pm.

  
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Dr. Thomas McElheny, Chair

02-08-22  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
COL Ben Knisely, Secretary

2/8/22  
Date