

Sarasota Military Academy

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MEETING MINUTES

17 OCTOBER 2023

Board of Director Members' Attendance

Present:

Dr. Thomas J. McElheny, Former Capt, USMC, Chair
Erica Gregory, Lt Col, USAF (Ret), Vice Chair
Pete Skokos, Treasurer
Ben Knisely, COL, USA (Ret), Secretary
Linda Long, Assistant Secretary
Brent Bogart, Former LT, USN
Heather Koester, Former SGT, USAR
Carlos Moreira, 1st Sgt, USMCR
Michael Tollerton, Former CPT, USA

Absent: Richard Swoope, COL, USA (Ret); Herb Jones, Chair, SMA Foundation; SMA-LTC Cheryl Korwin, Assistant Head of Middle School; SMA-MAJ Charlie Carver, Athletic Director

SMA Administrative Staff in Attendance:

SMA-BG Scott Lempe, Interim Superintendent
SMA-COL Christina Bowman, Head of High School/Academy Provost
SMA-LTC Caitlin West, Assistant Head of High School
SMA-LTC Abby Williams, Assistant Head of High School
SMA-LTC Steve Kok, Director of Finance
LTC (Ret) James Nelson, SAI
SMA-COL Tom Vara, Head of Middle School

Guests in Attendance: SMA-CPT Ellie DeMurias, MS Faculty Representative; SMA-MAJ Michael Finley, Performing Arts Department Chair; SMA-CPT George Barbaresi, HS Faculty Representative; SMA-CPT Makayla Francis, Intensive Reading, HS; SFC Ernesto Ramirez, HS; Lisa Currie (virtual)

Location: SMA High School

The chair called the meeting to order at 2:28 pm.

Chair Thomas McElheny started the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion to Approve the 26 September 2023 Minutes:

COL Ben Knisely moved to approve the 26 September 2023 minutes; Vice Chair Erica Gregory seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

Superintendent Report: SMA-BG Scott Lempe provided a read-ahead report. He discussed the student achievement data report and thanked SMA-LTC Cheryl Korwin for compiling the raw data from grades six through twelve to include last school year and first progress monitoring of this school year. SMA-BG Lempe discussed areas at the middle school that need improvement and where there were proficiency gains on both campuses from the first test of the school year, to which the high school was high within five points of district. He mentioned meeting with the new superintendent with SMA-COL Christina Bowman went well and supportive of charter schools. SMA-COL Bowman stated the focus is on literacy and math with twenty-one cadets testing out of intensive reading after the first test. She mentioned the high school English and math teachers met with middle school teachers on professional day to work on progression from middle to high school. SMA-COL Tom Vara stated character development, reading skills and study skills are discussed daily in homeroom, as well as organization and mindset.

SMA-COL Bowman stated that two high school teachers attended the charter school conference for leadership opportunities. COL Knisely inquired as to how the board can assist in obtaining resources needed to move forward in academic success, in which SMA-COL Bowman replied that the momentum is moving in the right direction with good understanding and support in the classrooms. SMA-LTC Caitlin West discussed working on the district-wide Project 10 and happily reported SMA currently at a 95.3% graduation rate compared to the district's goal of 93% graduation rate, to which they are currently at 85.6%. She stated that the class of 2024 started the school year with eighty-nine cadets that did not pass testing to graduate, with now only twenty-one cadets left to pass.

Head of Middle School Report: SMA-COL Tom Vara provided a read-ahead report. He discussed a successful ESOL day held by SMA-CPT Kelli Kelly with two events to assist our non-English speaking families on how to navigate the family portal, check emails and register for newsletters. SMA-COL Bowman stated that SMA-CPT Luciana Meadows from the ESOL program at the high school attended and assisted.

Provost/Head of High School Report: SMA-COL Christina Bowman provided a read-ahead report. She discussed thinking maps and an admissions card mailing, as well as upcoming events such as Wreaths Across America, Veterans Day Parade and SPIN event at the middle school in January.

SAI Report: LTC James Nelson provided a read-ahead report. He discussed upcoming events for the Raiders such as Fort Knox in Kentucky, as well as the Rifle team placing second in the county meet. LTC Nelson stated a Flag Retirement event as an SLP for LET 4.

Academy Athletics Report: SMA-MAJ Charlie Carver provided a read-ahead report.

Treasurer's Report: SMA-LTC Steve Kok stated that the first quarter report would be presented in the November board meeting.

Foundation Report: N/A

Staff Representatives: SMA-CPT Ellie DeMurias stated the concern for loss of students and staff with increased workload has created low morale with staff. Ms. Heather Koester inquired as to additional incentives to put in place for staff to feel valued, in which Chair McElheny replied for Ms. Koester to compile a few ideas with SMA-BG Lempe on teacher appreciation throughout the year. Mr. Carlos Moreira suggested an advisory council where staff can meet with board members. SMA-CPT George Barbaresi stated the high school staff were questioning when the bonus would be paid out.

PTCC Report: PTCC provided a read-ahead report.

Superintendent Search Committee: Chair McElheny stated to open a formal search for Superintendent, to include parents and staff, which will be selected within timeframe of June/July 2024.

Board Committee: Ms. Michael Tollerton inquired as to the structure within the board in which Chair McElheny replied the Board Committee would include Vice Chair Gregory, Ms. Koester and Ms. Tollerton to review bylaws and discuss term limits.

Chair Report: N/A

Old Business: N/A

New Business: N/A

Public Comments: SMA-COL Bowman had guests introduce themselves.

The next board meeting will be on 14 November 2023 at 4:30 pm at the Middle School campus.

The chair adjourned the meeting at 3:49 pm.



Dr. Thomas McElheny, Chair

11/14/23
Date



COL Ben Knisely, Secretary

11/14/23
Date