

Sarasota Military Academy

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MEETING MINUTES

14 NOVEMBER 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
Richard Swoope, COL, USA (Ret) (virtual)
Michael Tollerton, Former CPT, USA (virtual)

Absent: Herb Jones, Chair, SMA Foundation; SMA-LTC Caitlin West, Assistant Head of High School; SMA-LTC Abby Williams, Assistant Head of High School

SMA Administrative Staff in Attendance:

SMA-BG Scott Lempe, Interim Superintendent
SMA-COL Christina Bowman, Head of High School/Academy Provost
SMA-LTC Steve Kok, Director of Finance
LTC (Ret) James Nelson, SAI
SMA-COL Tom Vara, Head of Middle School
SMA-LTC Cheryl Korwin, Assistant Head of Middle School
SMA-MAJ Charlie Carver, Athletic Director

Guests in Attendance: SMA-MAJ Dawn Sudbury, MS Science Lead; SMA-CPT Marsha Reinig-Umana; MS ESE Liaison; SFC Ernesto Ramirez, HS Business Entrepreneurship; Ms. Brenda Canales, PTCC President; Ms. Natalie Knipfer, parent; Ms. Sonya Johnson (virtual)

Location: SMA Middle School

The chair called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

Chair Thomas McElheny started the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion to Approve the 17 October 2023 Minutes:

Ms. Linda Long moved to approve the 17 October 2023 minutes; COL Ben Knisely seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

Superintendent Report: SMA-BG Scott Lempe provided a read-ahead report. He discussed the breakdown of areas and previous schools our students come from by presenting a report. SMA-BG Lempe mentioned concerns of the district's additional pay raise to faculty resulting in the highest paid teachers in the state, despite the recent announcement of a hiring freeze. Ms. Heather Koester recommended asking the teachers their needs to keep them satisfied at SMA. Chair Thomas McElheny stated the board would bring this up for discussion at every board meeting.

SMA-BG Lempe stated he is satisfied with the student improvement plan and will discuss test improvements at the February board meeting after PM2 tests have been taken for both campuses. SMA-COL Christina Bowman stated the school improvement plan would focus on ELA scores for grades six through eight, reviewing goals with students, how SMA relates to district and state, and content areas from both campuses working together. SMA-LTC Cheryl Korwin stated incentives and rewards were in place for students and grades with the largest increase in points, as well as building confidence in each homeroom to strive to do their best. Chair McElheny stated that everything is secondary to student achievement.

Ms. Koester moved to approve the Student Achievement Plan; Ms. Long seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

Head of Middle School Report: SMA-COL Tom Vara provided a read-ahead report. He stated progress reports that were sent home for the first time to be signed and returned by parents/guardians. SMA-COL Vara mentioned attending a middle school information night at Bay Haven Elementary and a second event for guiding ESOL Families

Provost/Head of High School Report: SMA-COL Christina Bowman provided a read-ahead report. She discussed admissions postcards mailed to 23K homes and agreeing with district's projections for enrollment, as they have been on target in previous years. Ms. Long inquires as to staff that attended the Charter School Conference in which SMA-COL Bowman replied that SMA-COL Vara attended for the middle school and the high school sent SMA-MAJ Ashley Wyka and SMA-CPT Bryan Burns.

COL Ben Knisely moved to approve this year's Out-of-Field Roster; Vice Chair Erica Gregory seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

SMA-COL Bowman asked of the board to gift to staff 22 December as a paid day off.

Mr. Brent Bogart moved to approve the 22 December as a paid day off to staff; Mr. Carlos Moreira seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

SAI Report: LTC James Nelson provided a read-ahead report. He discussed the success of past month's JROTC events.

Academy Athletics Report: SMA-MAJ Charlie Carver provided a read-ahead report. He discussed the need for upgrades to the facilities and retention of coaches. Chair McElheny stated for SMA-MAJ Carver to focus on three ideas to bring to himself and SMA-CPT Angela Cohen for discussion.

Treasurer's Report: SMA-LTC Steve Kok provided a read-ahead report. He discussed the profit and loss statements by campus, as well as the year-to-date figures including the payback of the SMA Foundation loan of 140K.

Foundation Report: SMA-LTC Kok provided a read-ahead report. He discussed the breakdown of financials with remaining restricted and unrestricted funds. Chair McElheny inquired as to the Flanzer Matching Program commencing on 1 January 2024.

Staff Representatives: Middle School Faculty Representative had nothing to report. High School Faculty Representative inquired as to when ESSR3 funds would be received to fulfill bonuses approved from the summer.

PTCC Report: PTCC provided a read-ahead report. Ms. Brenda Canales discussed upcoming events that are in the works for the remainder of the school year.

Superintendent Search Committee: SMA-BG Lempe recommended determining whether someone on the board or hiring a firm to own the process of the search. SMA-COL Bowman stated the stakeholders need to be part of the hiring process through surveys. SMA-BG recommended the search start in January but hiring in June/July for the new fiscal year. 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.

Chair Report: Chair McElheny stated the focus needs to be on student achievement through fundraising and the SMA Foundation. He discussed meeting with various staff and both boards to clarify talking points and packet. Vice Chair Gregory stated that she would like to share to the community information about SMA digitally.


Old Business: N/A

New Business: N/A

Public Comments: SFC Ernesto Ramirez reviewed strengths and weaknesses of both campuses, but highlighted the opportunities for marketing and better communication with stakeholders. COL Knisely agreed by stating the need to accentuate the positive. Chair McElheny recommended that each member of the board pick one event a month to attend, and SMA-COL Bowman stated that a calendar would be created on a landing page for the board.


The next board meeting will be on 19 December 2023 at 2:30 pm at the High School campus.

The chair adjourned the meeting at 6:10 pm.



Dr. Thomas McElheny, Chair

12/19/23
Date



COL Ben Knisely, Secretary

12/19/23
Date