

# **Sarasota Military Academy**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MEETING MINUTES

23 JANUARY 2024

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## **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, 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt, USMCR (virtual)

Richard Swoope, COL, USA (Ret)

Michael Tollerton, Former CPT, USA

Herb Jones, Chair, SMA Foundation

**Absent:** SMA-LTC Abby Williams, Assistant Head of High School

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

SMA-COL Christina Bowman, Head of High School/Academy Provost (virtual)

SMA-LTC Caitlin West, Assistant Head of High School (virtual)

SMA-LTC Steve Kok, Director of Finance

MAJ (Ret) Russ Osterfeld, SAI (virtual)

SMA-MAJ Charlie Carver, Athletic Director

SMA-COL Tom Vara, Head of Middle School

SMA-LTC Cheryl Korwin, Assistant Head of Middle School

**Guests in Attendance:** LTC Scott Lempe; SMA-CPT Makayla Francis, HS ELA Instructor (virtual); SMA-MAJ Dawn Sudbury, Science Chair, Middle School; SMA-MAJ Marsha Reinig-Umana, ESE Liaison, Middle School; SMA-CPT Ellie De Murias, ESE Educator, Middle School; LTC Jason Constable

Location: SMA Prep Middle School

The chair called the meeting to order at 4:39 pm.

Chair Thomas McElheny started the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair McElheny amended the agenda to introduce guest, LTC Jason Constable. Vice Chair Erica Gregory provided the board with LTC Constable's background and explained how he can be involved.

**Motion to Approve the 19 December 2023 Minutes:**

COL Ben Knisely moved to approve the 19 December 2023 minutes; Ms. Linda Long seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

**Foundation:** Chair Herb Jones discussed his positive experience in joining an admissions tour with our cadets. He further discussed his observations of where the high school campus could use upkeep and presented a donation from the Rotary along with a donor match to be used towards campus beautification. Chair Jones recommended dissolving the Foundation and transfer all fundraising efforts under SMA. He suggested the restricted funds for campus upgrades to be transferred to SMA to be utilized for campus needs.

Chair Jones recommends outsourcing grant writing as he emphasized how impactful this area can be to SMA. Ms. Heather Koester inquired as to the need to maintain the Foundation in order to receive specific types of donations, in which Chair Jones replied that it would be researched to verify. Vice Chair Gregory inquired as to any impact on giving if a Foundation isn't established, in which Chair Jones replied no known impact due to current donors still giving to SMA directly.

Chair Jones stated that a Foundation meeting would be scheduled in the near future.

**Head of Middle School Report:** SMA-COL Tom Vara provided a read-ahead report. He stated a successful change of command ceremony and a great job to cadet leadership with the eighth graders visiting the high school over two days. SMA-COL Vara invited board to attend SPIN event at the middle school on 25 January.

SMA-LTC Cheryl Korwin presented to the board data on student achievement. Ms. Long stated that communication to families is improving, in which SMA-LTC Korwin agreed with routine progress reports and attendance going home to families. COL Knisely inquired as to how the board can help with needed resources, especially for the lower achieving and ELL students. SMA-COL Vara stated additional devices used for translation would help as the fifteen currently have not enough. SMA-MAJ Dawn Sudbury commended the board for approving new science curriculum that includes translation resulting in all ELL students passing science. Chair McElheny inquired if this can be duplicated across other subjects, in which SMA-MAJ Sudbury replied it could but high expense.

He discussed successful outreach with enrollment presentations to area elementary schools as well as finalizing second semester admissions. SMA-COL Vara stated data would be provided at the next board meeting for the PM2 results.

**Head of High School/Provost Report:** SMA-COL Christina Bowman provided a read-ahead report. She stated data on student achievement will be presented at the next board meeting as testing is still in progress. SMA-COL Bowman discussed additional funds will be received through the Florida School Recognition Award Funding from increasing our school grade to a "B". She stated a survey went out to all staff on both campuses, including bus drivers, as to how funds should be distributed.

**Mr. Peter Skokos moved to approve the choice chosen by majority of staff through staff survey in distribution of funds acquired through the Florida School Recognition Award; Ms. Koester seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.**

SMA-COL Bowman stated the staff provided positive feedback with Chair McElheny on campus and classrooms regularly.

**SAI Report:** MAJ Russ Osterfeld provided a read-ahead report. He outlined the significant activities this month the cadet leadership participated in, such as COL Cork's services and eighth grade visit. MAJ Osterfeld invited the board to attend SMA's First Annual Flag Retirement Ceremony on 30 January. He discussed this event, as well as others, is part of the extensive list of items needed to ensure maintaining highest ranking of JROTC accreditation.

**Academy Athletics Report:** N/A

**Treasurer's Report:** SMA-LTC Steve Kok provided a read-ahead report. He discussed the profit and loss statements by campus.

**Staff Representatives:** SMA-CPT Ellie De Murias stated no staff concerns at this time.

**PTCC Report:** N/A

**Superintendent Search Committee:** N/A

**Chair Report:** Chair McElheny invited LTC Scott Lempe to address the board and he recommended decisions be made on ESSR funds prior to staff starting summer break. Chair McElheny stated a positive impact to SMA in a few years.

**Nominating Committee:** COL Knisely discussed the background, experiences and desire to join our board of a retired Brigadier General very involved in the community. He provided the resume to the board. Ms. Michael Tollerton stated knowing this nominee for some time and is currently the chair of the nominating committee for service academies. She stated this nominee would be a smart addition to the board. COL Knisely mentioned the need to create a memorial plaque to place on campus.

**Board:** Ms. Koester inquired as to a strategic plan on fundraising, in which Chair McElheny replied that one is being formulated now and will present.


**Old Business:** N/A

**New Business:** N/A


**Public Comments:** SMA-MAJ Sudbury shared the rocket launch experiments where cadets identify mistakes and make adjustments.

The next board meeting will be on 13 February 2024 at 2:30 pm at the High School campus.

The chair adjourned the meeting at 5:52 pm.

  
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Dr. Thomas McElheny, Chair

2/13/24  
Date

  
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COL Ben Knisely, Secretary

2/13/24  
Date