

# **Sarasota Military Academy**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MEETING MINUTES

16 APRIL 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  
Brent Bogart, Former LT, USN  
Heather Koester, Former SGT, USAR  
Carlos Moreira, 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt, USMCR (virtual)  
Jerry Neff, BG, USA (Ret)  
Richard Swoope, COL, USA (Ret)  
Michael Tollerton, Former CPT, USA (virtual)

Herb Jones, Chair Emeritus

**Absent:** SMA-COL Tom Vara, Head of Middle School; LTC Cheryl Korwin, Assistant Head of Middle School; LTC Scott Lempe; SMA-CPT Ellie De Murias, Middle School Faculty Representative

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

SMA-COL Christina Bowman, Head of High School/Academy Provost  
SMA-LTC Caitlin West, Assistant Head of High School (virtual)  
SMA-LTC Abby Williams, Assistant Head of High School  
SMA-LTC Steve Kok, Director of Finance  
MAJ (Ret) Russ Osterfeld, SAI  
SMA-MAJ Charlie Carver, Athletic Director

**Guests in Attendance:** CW4 Wes Rinehart, JROTC Instructor; CSM Jack Phinney, JROTC Instructor; SMA-MAJ Michael Finley, Drumline Instructor; SFC Ernesto Ramirez, High School Faculty Representative

Location: SMA High School

The chair called the meeting to order at 2:31 pm.

Chair Thomas McElheny started the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair McElheny amended the agenda to move Mr. Herb Jones to the Chair report and he stated the preliminary budget will be presented at the May board meeting.

**Motion to Approve the 26 March 2024 Minutes:**

COL Ben Knisely moved to approve the 26 March 2024 minutes; Ms. Heather Koester seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

**Head of Middle School Report:** SMA-COL Tom Vara provided a read-ahead report.

**Head of High School/Provost Report:** SMA-COL Christina Bowman provided a read-ahead report.

**SAI Report:** MAJ Russ Osterfeld provided a read-ahead report. He mentioned upcoming events such as the Flag Retirement Ceremony. COL Knisely inquired as to the number of ROTC scholarships this year in which MAJ Osterfeld replied there were a few.

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

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

**Staff Representatives:** N/A

**PTCC Report:** A read-ahead report was provided.

**Bylaws Committee:** N/A

**Chair Report:** Mr. Jones discussed a visit with a prospective donor to the high school campus and was highly impressed by our cadets' presentation and tour. He further stated a donation was made and asking the board to contribute to match the donation.

Chair McElheny shared a presentation with the board that explained the history and founders of SMA with extensive community footprint, the competition with public and new charter schools, and the vision going forward. He discussed taking our unique characteristics and building upon them. Mr. Brent Bogart stated introducing programs that entice new population such as the possibility of becoming a magnet technology school in cyber security. Vice Chair Erica Gregory emphasized that while SMA's offerings are evident, there is a need to introduce new programs.

COL Richard Swoope mentioned the perception has to change with JROTC as the center, to which everything else revolves around that program and values. He further stated the need to push to be better Americans. Chair McElheny stated the strategic plan was created but objectives are just now being identified to put into action. Vice Chair Gregory stated that data is needed for the board to review, in which SMA-COL Bowman stated that she would send exit interviews over the past 4-5 years.

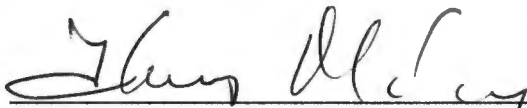
**Board:** Mr. Carlos Moreira stated routine virtual meets with SMA-CPT Angela Cohen to discuss expanding community outreach including our Veterans population.

**New Business:** N/A

**Public Comments:** SMA-MAJ Michael Finley stated cadets in the drumline conduct themselves in the community and can be replicated within every program, as cadets are great marketing tools. SFC Ernesto Ramirez stated that media highlighting programs and values are needed. CSM Jack Phinney stated the attention rates of our cadets is no different than at any other high school and need to look into cadets remaining with SMA after the first two years.

The next board meeting will be on 28 May 2024 at 2:30 pm at the High School campus.

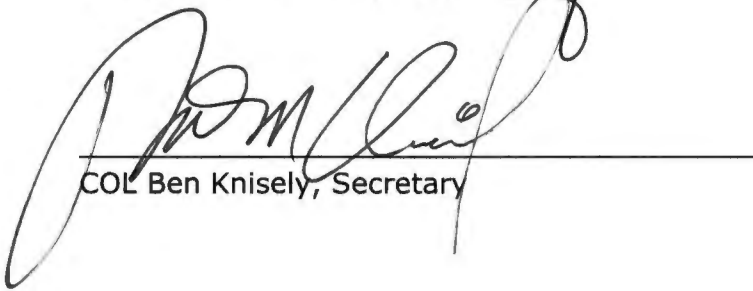
The chair adjourned the meeting at 3:46 pm.



Dr. Thomas McElheny, Chair

5/28/24

Date



COL Ben Knisely, Secretary

5/28/24

Date