

Sarasota Military Academy

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MEETING MINUTES

28 MAY 2024

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, 1st Sgt, USMCR
Jerry Neff, BG, USA (Ret) (virtual)
Michael Tollerton, Former CPT, USA

Absent: Herb Jones, Chair Emeritus; Richard Swoope, COL, USA (Ret); LTC Scott Lempe; SMA-LTC Caitlin West, Assistant Head of High School; SMA-LTC Abby Williams, Assistant Head of High School; MAJ (Ret) Russ Osterfeld, SAI; SMA-MAJ Charlie Carver, Athletic Director; 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-COL Tom Vara, Head of Middle School
LTC Cheryl Korwin, Assistant Head of Middle School
SMA-LTC Steve Kok, Director of Finance

Guests in Attendance: Mr. Ronald Skipper; SMA-MAJ Michael Finley, Drumline Instructor; SFC Ernesto Ramirez, High School Faculty Representative; Ms. Nikki Orth, PTCC President

Location: SMA High School

The chair called the meeting to order at 2:32 pm.

Chair Thomas McElheny started the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair McElheny amended the agenda to introduce Mr. Ron Skipper as a prospective board member. He stated Mr. Skipper's community involvement throughout Sarasota

over many years includes, but is not limited to, founder of the Community Foundation of Sarasota.

Motion to Approve the 16 April 2024 Minutes:

Ms. Heather Koester moved to approve the 16 April 2024 minutes; Mr. Carlos Moreira seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

COL Ben Knisely moved to approve the 29 April 2024 Special Meeting minutes; Mr. Moreira seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

Head of Middle School Report: SMA-COL Tom Vara provided a read-ahead report. He mentioned the successful events of the Honor of the Eagle award and the change of command ceremony. Ms. Koester stated that she enjoyed the Eagle award ceremony as she felt the pride families had in their cadets.

Head of High School/Provost Report: SMA-COL Christina Bowman provided a read-ahead report. She presented 5-year enrollment data with school grade and mentioned the increase in graduation rate as well as passing test scores. Chair McElheny inquired as to the discrepancy between our projected FTE goals and the district, and mentioned SMA needs to up its game to meet its goals.

Ms. Koester recommended inviting the university and college representatives to the graduation ceremony as well as companies that have collaborated with SMA to hire graduates.

SAI Report: MAJ Russ Osterfeld provided a read-ahead report. SMA-COL Bowman stated a successful year in JROTC retention.

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 and a preliminary budget for FY 2024-25. SMA-LTC Kok mentioned the upcoming campus upgrades, especially the roof issues at the high school. Mr. Moreira inquired as to the specific items that were cut to lower the deficit, in which SMA-LTC Kok replied health insurance decreased by 2% and SMA-COL Bowman replied staffing was re-allocated to maximize class sizes.

Ms. Michael Tollerton stated fundraising needs to be a focus now that the foundation has dissolved. SMA-COL Bowman agreed and added the need to create an Advancement Office under SMA.

COL Knisely moved to approve a 4% salary increase for 2024-25; Ms. Tollerton seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

Staff Representatives: N/A

PTCC Report: A read-ahead report was provided. Ms. Nikki Orth introduced herself as the new PTCC president and discussed data on grants, fundraising, and spirit wear with a mention to the next meeting on 17 June.

Bylaws Committee: Vice Chair Erica Gregory provided an update to include Ms. Koester and Ms. Tollerton. She mentioned the Gulf Coast Community Foundation has a

course on governance on 6 June and recommends the board participating. Vice Chair Gregory stated the committee recommends sub-committees be created to include community members not on the board as well as families to be responsible for addressing specific areas such as marketing, finance, fundraising, military alignment. Chair McElheny asked the committee to bring three actionable items to the next board meeting to start moving in the direction they recommend, as well as how to sign up for the governance event. He stated the need to obtain the current value of the high school property to address the decision of re-building or selling. COL Knisely concurred as he recently read that the Rosemary District is most desirable.

Nominating Committee: Chair McElheny stated Mr. Ron Skipper would be presented at the next board meeting for nomination.

Chair Report: N/A

Board: Ms. Tollerton inquired as to the status of the opportunity brought forward by COL Knisely with Galen Nursing, in which SMA-COL Bowman replied still in progress.

Old Business: N/A

New Business: Mr. Moreira stated he is not available from 10 – 28 June. COL Knisely stated the cadets at the Sarasota National Cemetery for the Gold Star Families ceremony were excellent.

Public Comments: N/A

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 4:03 pm.



Dr. Thomas McElheny, Chair

6/18/2024

Date

FOR


COL Ben Knisely, Secretary

6/18/2024

Date