

# SARASOTA MILITARY ACADEMY

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

29 APRIL 2025

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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

Ben Knisely, COL, USA (Ret), Secretary

Pete Skokos, Treasurer (virtual)

Scott Lempe, Lt Col, USAF (Ret)

Carlos Moreira, 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt, USMCR

Jerry Neff, BG, USA (Ret)

Ron Skipper, Former Capt, USAF

Richard Swoope, COL, USA (Ret) (virtual)

Michael Tollerton, Former CPT, USA

**Absent:** Brent Bogart, Former LT, USN; Heather Koester, Former SGT, USAR; Charlie Shugg, Brig Gen (Ret); SMA-LTC Bryan Burns, Assistant Head of Middle School; SMA-LTC Abby Williams, Assistant Head of High School; SFC Ernesto Ramirez, HS Faculty Representative; SMA-CPT Ellie De Murias, MS Faculty Representative

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

SMA-COL Christina Bowman, CEO/Head of High School

Dr. Cheryl Korwin, Head of Middle School

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

SMA-LTC Steve Kok, Director of Finance

MAJ (Ret) Russ Osterfeld, SAI

SMA-MAJ Charlie Carver, Athletic Director

**Guests in Attendance:** SMA-MAJ Michael Finley, Performing Arts Department Head; SMA-CPT John Geimer, Econ/Gov Faculty; Ms. Nikki Orth, PTCC President; Cadet/COL Mallory Edwards

Location: SMA High School

The chair called the meeting to order at 2:30 pm.

Chair Thomas McElheny started the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Motion to Approve the 25 March 2025 Minutes:**

BG Jerry Neff moved to approve the 25 March 2025 minutes with corrections; COL Ben Knisely seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

**Head of Middle School Report:** Dr. Cheryl Korwin provided a read-ahead report. She mentioned upcoming events such as the 8<sup>th</sup> grade semi-formal and success utilizing weekly progress reports for Raiders and sports participants. Chair McElheny mentioned he received feedback that the culture at the prep is stronger and inquired as to why. Dr. Korwin replied the students feel supported by the school and communication with parents has been better.

**CEO/Head of High School:** SMA-COL Christina Bowman provided a read-ahead report. She introduced Cadet/COL Mallory Edwards as the new cadet commander for next year. Cadet/COL Edwards presented herself and background, as the prep cadet commander, and on the Rifle team, Color Guard and National Honor Society, along with goals set for next year to increase student motivation and morale and decrease discrepancies. Ms. Michael Tollerton inquired as to her deciding factor for transitioning to high school, in which Cadet/COL Edwards replied that many of her friends were also matriculating to the high school. SMA-COL Bowman stated a current increase of 11% attending high school from previous year and still a number undecided. She mentioned a successful talent show sponsored by the athletic department and a staffing freeze at this time to total an 821K in savings for next year.

**Vice Chair Erica Gregory moved to approve the FSLA (Fair Labor Standards Act); Mr. Ron Skipper seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.**

SMA-COL Bowman shared the county video of Volunteers of the Year Nominees with our Rikki Pellegrino winning the Adult Volunteer of the Year Award for the county. She then introduced SMA-CPT John Geimer to speak about his HAM Radio class and direction. SMA-CPT Geimer discussed the history of the SMA Radio station and his goals to bring it back through a class offered that would develop into an extensive program. He mentioned the grants awarded that assisted in the install of tower on Urfer building and working with community partners and the prep to help in expanding STEM program. Mr. Carlos Moreira inquired as to job offerings through this program, to which SMA-CPT Geimer replied no direct jobs but can produce additional classes through FCC. Ms. Tollerton recommended reaching out to the National Guard units. COL Knisely inquired as to enough funds to carry program, to which SMA-CPT Geimer replied fundraising needs to continue regularly to offer licenses to students every year.

SMA-COL Bowman stated a new fingerprint process had been implemented requiring all board members to obtain the new fingerprints.

**SAI Report:** MAJ Russ Osterfeld provided a read-ahead report. He discussed successful JROTC events, such as the Flag Retirement Ceremony and the Change of Command Ceremony of the new Regimental Staff during formation, along with upcoming events such as the Raiders campout, Senior and JROTC Awards Nights and the Memorial Day Parade.

**Treasurer's Report:** SMA-LTC Steve Kok provided a read-ahead report. He discussed balance sheets for both campuses. SMA-LTC Kok announced his retirement in October of this year, and presenting Savannah

Kalka as the new Assistant Director of Finance. Chair McElheny and Lt Col Scott Lempe thanked him and his efforts over the years.

**Planning Committee Report:** Lt Col Lempe discussed the budget and the need to balance between staffing, enrollment, salaries and pay raises, and a spot for a commandant with the current opening in JROTC. He discussed a three to five year capital campaign for facilities and developing the character education through unique programs. Chair McElheny stated a goal of meeting with staff and board members once a quarter to discuss how we're funded and vision with the goal of building culture and trust.

**PTCC Report:** Ms. Nikki Orth provided a read-ahead report. She stated she is stepping down as president and the introduction of the new president, Amber Martin, will be at the next board meeting. Ms. Orth discussed the success of the prep walk-a-thon.

**Chair Report:** Chair McElheny stated student achievement is top priority but the facilities at the high school is getting old and presented two options to the board. He discussed a visit with Mussman Architects and they recommended two proposals; one being a facilities assessment of maintaining the current campus for three to five years, and two being a master plan for high school campus buildout. Chair McElheny thanked Mr. Pete Skokos for his assistance in reviewing both proposals.

**Mr. Skipper moved to approve Mussman Architects contract; Ms. Tollerton seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.**

Vice Chair Gregory inquired as to receiving a comparison of both options, to which Chair McElheny replied the first is the facilities assessment and then one option of master plan to redo the campus. Ms. Tollerton inquired as to how Mussman Architects would be paid, to which Chair McElheny replied that part of it would be paid through funds saved.

Chair McElheny discussed the second option with Michael Saunders on acquiring an updated property appraisal and work with internal commercial development department on obtaining potential offers for current campus. He discussed this option to obtain properties available to build new campus and the current value based on zoning and the possibility of rezoning for higher value. Chair McElheny stated the goal is to strengthen student achievement and JROTC, as well as the differentiation of programs offered from other schools and charters in county.

**Old Business:** N/A

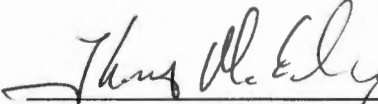
**New Business:** N/A

**Public Comments:** N/A

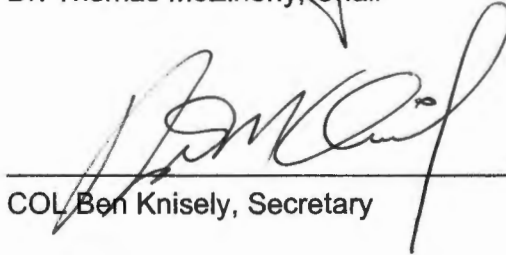
**Board Comments:** Ms. Tollerton recommended fundraising placed back on the agenda of the board with either creating a sub-committee or developing plans on how to assist with the dissolution of the foundation and upcoming funding needs.

The next board meeting will be on 20 May 2025 at 2:30pm at the High School campus.

The chair adjourned the meeting at 3:44pm.

  
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Dr. Thomas McElheny, Chair

6/24/25  
Date

  
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COL Ben Knisely, Secretary

6/24/25  
Date