

# SARASOTA MILITARY ACADEMY

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

26 AUGUST 2025

---

### **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  
Jerry Neff, BG, USA (Ret)  
Charles Shugg, Brig Gen, USAF (Ret)  
Ron Skipper, Former Capt, USAF  
Michael Tollerton, Former CPT, USA  
W. Scott Wallace, GEN, USA (Ret)

**Absent:** Scott Lempe, Lt Col, USAF (Ret); Pete Skokos, Treasurer; Richard Swoope, COL, USA (Ret); Carlos Moreira, 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt, USMCR; Heather Koester, Former SGT, USAR; SMA-LTC Bryan Burns, Assistant Head of Middle School; SMA-LTC Caitlin West, Assistant Head of High School; SMA-MAJ Charlie Carver, Athletic Director; 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 Abby Williams, Assistant Head of High School  
MAJ (Ret) Russ Osterfeld, SAI  
SMA-LTC Steve Kok, Director of Finance  
SMA-MAJ Savannah Kalka, Assistant Director of Finance

**Guests in Attendance:** SMA-CPT Esther Jaffee, HS Faculty Representative; CW4 Wes Rinehart, AI; SFC Ernesto Ramirez, AI; SMA-MAJ Michael Finley, Performing Arts Department Chair; Amber Martin, PTCC President; Maria Urrestta, PTCC Treasurer; C/MAJ Sam Bonser; Joseph and Fioy Long (virtual); Ms. Nikki Orth (virtual)

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 24 June 2025 Minutes:**

Mr. Ron Skipper moved to approve the 24 June 2025 minutes with corrections; BG Jerry Neff seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

Chair McElheny amended the agenda with moving the nominating committee to the top of the agenda.

**COL Ben Knisely moved to nominate GEN W. Scott Wallace as director of the board of directors; Mr. Skipper seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.**

**Head of Middle School Report:** Dr. Cheryl Korwin provided a read-ahead report. She mentioned a great start of the new school year with the change in schedule allowing additional time at formation. Dr. Korwin mentioned reinstating the cadet handbook and discussed enrollment is at capacity with a waiting list.

**CEO/Head of High School:** SMA-COL Christina Bowman provided a read-ahead report. She mentioned a great start of the new school year initiating the expectations meetings by grade level. SMA-COL Bowman discussed administrative goals would be presented at the next board meeting and introduced C/MAJ Sam Bonser, who will be representing cadet leadership at all board meetings going forward. She introduced SMA-CPT Esther Jaffee as the new high school faculty representative and her role as debate coach, to which SMA-CPT Jaffee stated the debate team has grown substantially from the novice team last year. SMA-COL Bowman expressed gratitude for a board member's generous \$10,000 donation to the Athletics Department.

**GEN W. Scott Wallace moved to approve the Employee Handbook with revisions; BG Neff seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.**

**SAI Report:** MAJ Russ Osterfeld provided a read-ahead report. He discussed working with the service academy cohort on the nomination process and physical fitness. MAJ Osterfeld mentioned the upcoming event of the Military Ball on 20 November 2025 at the Lakewood Ranch Country Club. He discussed new changes to leadership with setting goals for the start of the school year.

**Treasurer's Report:** SMA-LTC Steve Kok provided a read-ahead report. He discussed balance sheets for both campuses using the new budget format and FTE based on enrollment for both campuses. SMA-LTC Kok explained the quarter penny oversight by the district to all charter schools and the timeline for repayment. He mentioned his retirement at the end of December and introduced SMA-MAJ Savannah Kalka taking his place.

**Committee Report – Facilities:** Chair McElheny discussed the status of both options of a new high school campus or updating the existing one. He stated the architect company would provide a report by the end of year on a proposed upgrade to the existing campus and awaiting a final appraisal from realtor of the current property at the current zoning. Chair McElheny discussed he and Lt Col Scott Lempe looked at the buildout of Skye Ranch and stated how expensive it is to build a new school. He discussed additional options with financing firm that will offer a leased purchase with a buyout option.

Chair McElheny discussed the priority is student achievement and the need for hiring a commandant to assist in JROTC culture and community outreach. He mentioned looking for a lieutenant colonel rank or higher, to create a committee to search for commandant that will provide support to SMA-COL Bowman, and to integrate

a program that serves all grades six through 12. Chair McElheny stated the strength of the program is to compliment JROTC and character development. GEN Wallace stated he could assist in connecting with someone who can assist in identifying those who are ready to leave service.

**PTCC Report:** Ms. Amber Martin provided a read-ahead report. She discussed a great start of the new school year on both campuses with a strong presence at orientation and selling spirit wear. Ms. Martin discussed the new items this year, introducing the new cadet jacket at the high school to replace the hoodie. Chair McElheny inquired if there is a noticeable difference in spirit from previous years, to which Ms. Martin replied there is a visible difference with the ninth grade very excited to be at the high school and more engagement from parents and cadets. Ms. Martin mentioned her memory of the high reputation of SMA when she was in local high school and her goal to bring that back.

**Chair Report:** Chair McElheny discussed his inquiry to the district for a representative to explain to the board how the school grade is compiled and evaluated, how to assist the highly effective teachers that result in low value scores, and identify programs the board can assist to adopt to benefit SMA's faculty.

**Old Business:** N/A

**New Business:** N/A

**Public Comments:** Ms. Michael Tollerton asked if the Leadership and Ethics Conference Committee could remain after the board meeting for a quick update.

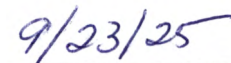
COL Knisely stated he would like to introduce an SMA Alumni to the board and their accomplishments. He presented class of 2018, Anastasia Osborne, who graduated from United States Military Academy at West Point and is one of only fifteen approved to the next step in becoming an astronaut.

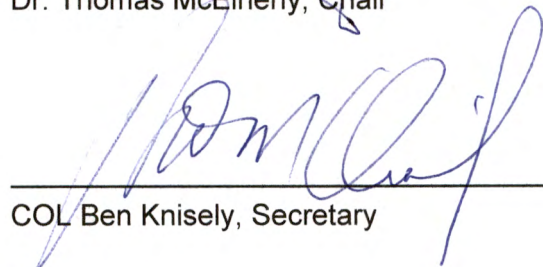
**Board Comments:** N/A

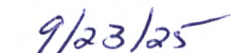
The next board meeting will be on 23 September 2025 at 2:30pm at the High School campus.

The chair adjourned the meeting at 3:22pm.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Thomas McElheny, Chair

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
COL Ben Knisely, Secretary

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date