

SARASOTA MILITARY ACADEMY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
25 AUGUST 2026

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

Absent: Pete Skokos, Treasurer; Richard Swoope, COL, USA (Ret); SMA-LTC Abby Williams, Assistant Head of High School; SMA-CPT Jared Lauther, MS Athletic Director

SMA Administrative Staff in Attendance:

SMA-COL Christina Bowman, CEO/Head of High School
Dr. Cheryl Korwin, Head of Middle School
SMA-LTC Bryan Burns, Assistant Head of Middle School (virtual)
SMA-LTC Caitlin West, Assistant Head of High School (virtual)
MAJ (Ret) Russ Osterfeld, SAI
SMA-MAJ Savannah Kalka, Director of Finance

Guests in Attendance: SMA-MAJ Marsha Reinig-Umana, MS Faculty Representative; SMA-CPT John Geimer, HS Faculty/Amateur Radio; Herb Jones, Chair Emeritus; Carlos Moreira; Richard Upton

Location: SMA High School

The chair called the meeting to order at 2:25 pm.

Chair Thomas McElheny started the Pledge of Allegiance.

SMA-CPT John Geimer presented to the board the updates on the Amateur Radio program, the successful licensing status, and the announcement of SMA chosen along with thirteen other schools nationwide to make contact with an astronaut through International Space Station (ISS). He stated the date has not been confirmed but will happen some time in October.

Motion to Approve the 23 June 2026 Annual Minutes:

Mr. Ron Skipper moved to approve the 23 June 2026 minutes; Mr. David Black seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

Head of Middle School: Dr. Cheryl Korwin provided a read-ahead report. She discussed the leadership handbook that was created to incorporate goal settings, the seven army core values, and Getting Things Done, a partnership with author Mark Wallace. Dr. Korwin stated there are leadership days and advisory where the Medal of Honor character program lesson is introduced school-wide one time a month.

MS Faculty Representative: SMA-MAJ Marsha Reinig-Umana provided a read-ahead report. She discussed the Leader in Me framework as a great transition to the high school and commended the administration for their leadership in the start of the school year.

MS Athletics Report: SMA-CPT Jared Lauther provided a read-ahead report.

CEO/Head of High School Report: SMA-COL Bowman provided a read-ahead report. She discussed a smooth start to the school year with a successful rollout of the new transportation process and partnership with SSAS, commending SMA-LTC Abby Williams and SMA-LTC Bryan Burns. SMA-COL Bowman mentioned areas to make gains that will assist with the school grade with increasing CTE credits, as well as other areas to assess. She stated the Medal of Honor character program lessons are incorporated throughout the high school, with the additional 9/11 lesson executed academy-wide.

Mr. Black inquired as to enrollment status compared to previous year and our current school grade, to which SMA-COL Bowman replied that there is much work to accomplish and areas to make gains. Chair McElheny requested a list of areas being addressed towards increasing the school grade be presented to the board at every meeting.

HS Faculty Representative: SMA-COL Bowman announced the new high school faculty representative, SMA-CPT Stephanie Sifrit, will attend the next meeting.

HS Athletics Report: Coach Mick Fallis provided a read-ahead report.

Cadet Report: N/A

SAI Report: MAJ Russ Osterfeld provided a read-ahead report. He stated the JROTC accreditation is this year, and working towards the goal of elevating the standards. MAJ Osterfeld discussed the upcoming Raiders events, along with the new Archery team that will enter competitive tournaments for the first time. He mentioned Cadet Command working on curriculum for a drones and robotics package and he attended the training this past summer. MAJ Osterfeld invited the board to attend a special formation for 9/11 and starting an annual Army/Navy flag football game with Admiral Farragut right before the Army/Navy football game in December.

Treasurer's Report: SMA-MAJ Savannah Kalka provided a read-ahead report. She discussed the breakdown of revenue and expenses by campus, as well as the intended millage funds from the district.

Chair McElheny stated the millage funds can be used for real estate and recommended Mr. Black to chair the financing committee along with BG Jerry Neff on committee. BG Neff recommended opening a brokerage account, to which Mr. Black agreed and stated to open one now with whatever cash is available.

Strategic Planning Committee Report: Vice Chair Erica Gregory provided a presentation to the board on the goal of the committee to gather and collate information to support the board for facilities and academics restructuring, revising the strategic plan and reinforcing a plan for financial stability. She discussed four key priorities: developing the physical plan for new campus, determining the ideal FTE count for future of SMA, clearly defining the role of Commandant of Cadets, and reviewing and revising the strategic plan. Vice Chair Gregory requested a list of criteria for enrollment in the other JROTC programs, as well as ours.

Commandant Search Report: GEN Scott Wallace distributed the job description for Commandant and stated the first task is to create a committee, second task is to define the job description, third to determine the selection process, and fourth to conduct interviews. He mentioned expanding the search through military associations to the surrounding states and start collecting resumes for an intended start of the 2027-28 academic school year.

Chair McElheny stated adding the commandant will only strengthen and deepen the JROTC program and culture.

Mr. Black moved to approve to start a Commandant Search Committee; General Charles Shugg seconded the motion and the board unanimously approved.

Real Estate Report: Mr. Black introduced the new marketing video created by Michael Saunders for prospective buyers. Chair McElheny stated he met with Fred Starling who reiterated that the due diligence needs to be completed before May for construction to be completed by July 2028. General Shugg inquired as to the transition process of the prep while construction is in place, to which Chair McElheny replied the athletic field will be out of commission for nine months. Mr. Black stated that any buyer will be contingent on them obtaining the necessary permits, which could take up to a year at most.

Nominating Committee Report: N/A

Facilities Committee Report: N/A

Chair Report: N/A

PTCC Report: N/A

Alumni Recognition: N/A

Old Business: N/A

Old Business: N/A

New Business: GEN Wallace discussed building a relationship with MOAA and requested a meeting and visit to SMA and formation.

Public Comments: N/A

Board Comments: N/A

The next board meeting will be on 22 September 2026 at 2:30pm at the High School campus.

The chair adjourned the meeting at 3:57pm.



Dr. Thomas McElheny, Chair

9/22/26
Date



COL Ben Knisely, Secretary

9/22/26
Date

SKIPPER BOARD

MEMBER

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