

VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA 24450-0304

Board of Visitors Executive Committee Meeting Minutes January 25, 2024

A meeting of the VMI Board of Visitors Executive Committee was held in Lexington, Virginia on Thursday, Jan. 25, 2024, at 4 p.m. pursuant to public notice.

Executive Committee members present:

Thomas R. Watjen '76, president
Hugh M. Fain '80
Thomas E. Gottwald '83

Others present:

Maj. Gen. Cedric Wins '85
Col. John Young
Col. Bill Wyatt
Patrick O'Leary '90
Thierry Lemercier '98
Briana Williams

Board of Visitors members present:

Conrad Garcia

1. Tom Watjen called the meeting to order at 3:59 p.m.
2. Watjen's opening remarks included the following:
 - a. He acknowledged the addition of Kate Todd as a new member of the Board of Visitors and this will be her first, in-person board meeting.
 - b. He told the committee there will be an extra closed session on Friday morning to consult with the commonwealth's solicitor general, Andrew Ferguson.
 - c. Proposed board by-laws will be discussed in the Nominations and Governance Committee but will not be brought for approval. Rather, Conrad Garcia will solicit comments over the next few months.
3. Teddy Gottwald brought up the topic of the board management software, OnBoard, and expressed concern over the volume of material for the board meeting. He wondered if there was a way to designate material as actionable vice reference.
4. Gussie Lord expressed concern over the lack of civility in the submitted public comments. Both Gottwald and Watjen agreed that on the public notice for the meeting there might be an encouragement to keep comments civil.
5. Teddy Gottwald raised the issue of Inclusive Excellence training. Board members did not receive the schedule for the fall semester and were not able to attend any of the sessions. He asked if, as a regular practice, if the schedule could be circulated to board members at the beginning of each semester.

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6. Hugh Fain made a motion, seconded by Gussie Lord, to approve the Executive Committee minutes from Oct. 31, 2023. The motion passed unanimously.
7. Maj. Gen. Cedric Wins, VMI superintendent, provided an update to the executive committee on a number of topics:
 - a. Brig. Gen. (ret.) Chris Burns is the leader-in-residence. He's been on post and is interacting with cadets.
 - b. Founders Day was a wonderful event. Conrad Hall was honored with the Distinguished Alumni Award.
 - c. Braver Angels debates continue to be conducted on many timely topics.
 - d. Participated as a panelist in the Governor's Higher Education Summit on Free Speech.
 - e. Ranger Challenge finished first at the brigade level qualifying them to compete at the national Sandhurst Competition.
 - f. Kate Taylor '24 received the Three-Legged Stool award.
 - g. Cadet-athletes continue to be recognized for their work in the classroom and in their sport.
 - h. Football coach, Danny Rocco, was nominated for national coach of the year honors.
 - i. 35 cadets graduated in December. 9 graduates commissioned into the Army. Two graduates from May returned to commission into the U.S. Coast Guard.
 - j. The full board will receive a brief on current admissions efforts. The goal for the fall 2024 matriculating class is 495. Average GPA for appointees is 3.72.
 - k. Call to Duty scholarship interest is strong. 11 have been awarded to date, 9 out-of-state and 2 in-state.
 - l. VMI is partnering with the Alumni Association to start the Pass in Review program where the 50-year reunion class mentors the corresponding class in barracks, e.g. Class of 1977 mentors the Class of 2027 throughout the course of their cadetship.
 - m. Staff leads have been assigned to each of the strategic plan initiatives. Specified and implied tasks and metrics are being developed. The board will be briefed at their May meeting. Discussions are in progress on how to rollout the strategic plan from a marketing perspective.
 - n. Discussed the creation of a task force to look at athletics and develop series of recommendations that will look at the cadet-athlete experience, assess how to make VMI competitive on a regular basis, and provide the resources for VMI athletic teams to be successful, among other issues.
 - o. Currently on track with the budget. 53% of the budget is available for the remainder of the year.
 - i. Gottwald raised concern about the athletic budget. He doesn't see any evidence of implementation of budget reduction efforts. Maj. Gen. Wins has asked the athletic director to brief the Athletics Committee on



budget issues.

Gottwald said the athletic fund balance is gone. Expenses will continue to be covered by the fund balance until we fix the structural problem with the athletic budget.

- p. Discussed the ongoing efforts in Richmond to establish relationships with the many new legislators. Maj. Gen. Wins has visited Richmond twice this year. He said there is likely to be few capital projects funded this year. A number of legislators and cabinet officials visited VMI this fall.
 - q. Budget formulation for the next fiscal year is under way.
 - r. VMI has signed an admission agreement with Valley Forge Military Academy.
 - s. The Swedish Chief of Defense visited VMI.
 - t. The director of the Secret Service visited post with agents who were VMI and Citadel graduates as a recruitment opportunity.
 - u. The problems with cadet registration have been rectified. All cadets' schedules who experienced problems have been reviewed and adjusted as necessary.
8. Watjen made a motion that was seconded by Hugh Fain to enter closed session. The motion passed unanimously, and the Executive Committee entered closed session at 5:59 p.m. to discuss:
- a. Matters related to the employment, assignment, appointment, or performance of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of the public body, and evaluation of performance of departments or schools of public institutions of higher education pursuant to Va. Code Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1), relating to review of the Superintendent's performance objectives and to special staff and the evaluation of specific departmental operations.
 - b. Consultation with legal counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel pursuant to Va. Code Section 2.2-3711 (A) (7), pertaining to actual or probable litigation of the Institute.
 - c. Consultation with legal counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel pursuant to Va. Code Section 2.2-3711 (A) (8).
9. The Executive Committee returned to open session at 6:32 p.m. Watjen made a motion seconded by Mr. Fain to certify the closed session. The motion passed unanimously. Each Executive Committee member was then asked, via roll call, to certify that only matters lawfully exempted from public disclosure and only those matters identified in the closed session motion were discussed in closed session. Board members Fain, Garcia, Gottwald, Lord, and Watjen all voted yes, thereby certifying the closed session.
10. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:34 p.m.

