

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 5, 2023, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The Executive Committee (“Committee”) of the Board of Regents (“Board”) of the Smithsonian Institution (“Smithsonian”) conducted a videoconference meeting on September 5, 2023. Participating were Board and Executive Committee Chair Risa J. Lavizzo-Mourey, Vice Chair John Fahey, and Committee member Barbara M. Barrett.

Also present by invitation of the Committee were Secretary Lonnie Bunch; Counselor to the Chief Justice Robert M. Dow, Jr.; Chief of Staff to the Secretary Greg Bettwy; Acting General Counsel Farleigh Earhart; Deputy Chief of Staff to the Regents Kate Forester; Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer Meroë Park; and Chief of Staff to the Regents Porter Wilkinson.

CALL TO ORDER

Board and Executive Committee Chair Risa J. Lavizzo-Mourey called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m. and reviewed the agenda.

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the draft minutes of the August 15, 2023, Committee meeting were approved without modification.

FISCAL YEAR 2024 FEDERAL AND TRUST CONSOLIDATED BUDGET

The Committee reviewed the fiscal year 2024 federal and trust consolidated budget for approval. Secretary Bunch informed the Committee that the Smithsonian is preparing for budget cuts in fiscal year 2024 and developing plans to reduce spending levels. He also noted that the Smithsonian could begin fiscal year 2024 operating under a Continuing Resolution (“CR”). The Committee reviewed the projected financial needs of the Institution and the potential challenges for the Smithsonian. The Smithsonian’s fiscal year 2024 federal appropriation request is \$1,241.0 million, which includes \$976.0 million for Salaries and Expenses and \$265.0 million for Facilities Capital. The Executive Committee was asked to approve the budget on behalf of the Board of Regents because approval was required prior to the next meeting of the Board.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the following motion was approved:

VOTED that the Executive Committee, on behalf of the Board of Regents pursuant to Board Bylaw 3.01, (1) approves the budget of appropriated funds for fiscal year 2024 when signed into law by the President and the Institutional budget totaling \$914.4 million for Trust funds for fiscal year 2024 as reflected in this report, and (2) authorizes expenditures by the Secretary in accordance therewith. Any material changes in program plans incorporated into this budget shall be made only with the approval of the Board of Regents or its Executive Committee.

FISCAL YEAR 2025 FEDERAL BUDGET REQUEST TO OMB

Next, the Secretary briefed the Committee on the fiscal year 2025 federal budget request to the Office of Management and Budget (“OMB”). The Smithsonian is requesting a total of \$1,212.0 million for its fiscal year 2025 federal budget, inclusive of \$987.0 million for Salaries and Expenses and \$225.0 million for Facilities Capital. The request prioritizes protecting major and ongoing projects from significant reductions and includes funding for digital transformation, education programming, scientific research, the two new Smithsonian museums, and facilities maintenance. The Committee was asked to approve the fiscal year 2025 federal budget request to OMB on behalf of the Board because it is due by September 11, 2023, prior to the Board meeting in October.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the following motion was approved:

VOTED that the Executive Committee, on behalf of the Board of Regents pursuant to Board Bylaw 3.01, approves the Smithsonian Institution’s \$1,212.0 million appropriation budget request to the Office of Management and Budget for fiscal year 2025. Any material changes in program plans incorporated into this budget shall be made only with the approval of the Board of Regents or its Executive Committee.

OCTOBER BOARD MEETING

Dr. Lavizzo-Mourey led a discussion on the upcoming meeting of the Board of Regents to be held on October 23, 2023. The Board will discuss key matters at the Smithsonian, including the Institution’s federal budget appropriation and Congressional relations, the America 250th celebration, collections care, and the 2024 Board Leadership Elections.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

The Secretary provided an update on the state of the Smithsonian and previewed additional topics he expects to discuss with the Board at the October meeting.

Secretary Bunch first updated the Committee on the Washington Post’s recent coverage regarding human remains in the Smithsonian’s collections. The Smithsonian is expanding efforts to repatriate human remains and unethically obtained artifacts in its collections and accelerating the pace of ethical returns and repatriation. The Secretary will further brief the Board as the planned ethical return develops.

The Secretary also briefed the Committee on security operations and living collections at the National Zoo. On August 29, the Zoo was evacuated due to a reported bomb threat. The evacuation was a precautionary measure, and both officers from the NZP Police and the Metropolitan Police Department responded. As a result of the threat, the National Zoo was closed to the public for the day and resumed normal operations on August 30.

The Secretary also gave an update on the giant pandas at the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute ("NZCBI"). The current giant panda research and breeding agreement with the China Wildlife Conservation Association requires Mei Xiang, Tian Tian, and their cub, Xiao Qi Ji to return to China by December 7. The Secretary noted that the giant pandas have drawn visitors from around the world to the Zoo and on the Panda Cam; they have also given the Smithsonian an unparalleled opportunity to study giant panda behavior, health, reproduction, disease, nutrition, and ecology. The National Zoo is planning to celebrate its three giant pandas with Panda Palooza, a nine-day onsite and online series of events from September 23 to October 1. The Secretary informed the Committee that the Institution hopes to continue its collaboration between Chinese colleagues and NZCBI's team of animal care staff, scientists, and researchers in the future.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Committee moved into an executive session at approximately 2:42 p.m. to discuss confidential business and personnel matters.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other business to consider, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Risa J. Lavizzo-Mourey, Chair