

MINUTES OF THE MAY 18, 2011, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The Executive Committee (“the Committee”) of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution met in the Regents Room, Smithsonian Institution Building, on May 18, 2011, beginning at 11:00 a.m.

Participating were Board Chair Patricia Q. Stonesifer, Vice Chair Alan G. Spoon (by telephone), and Committee member Robert P. Kogod. Also participating by invitation of the Committee were Secretary G. Wayne Clough; Counselor to the Chief Justice Jeffrey Minear (by telephone), Chief of Staff to the Secretary Patricia Bartlett; Chief of Staff to the Regents John K. Lapiana; General Counsel Judith Leonard; and Evelyn Lieberman, Director of Communications. Also attending for Agenda Topic 5 (Branding) were Mary Ellen Muckerman and Marissa Voster from Wolff Olin.

Ms. Stonesifer called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The draft minutes of the Committee’s meetings on March 31, 2011, and April 11, 2011, were approved by the Committee without modification.

STRATEGIC UPDATE

Ms. Stonesifer noted that the meeting materials contained a series of “strategic updates,” or information papers. While in depth discussion was not anticipated on any one of them, she stressed that each was an important and will remain on the committee’s radar screen. Two of the topics related to proposed potentially sensitive exhibitions: “HIV/AIDS” at the National Museum of American History and “Shipwrecked” at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. Another paper updated the committee on a possible acquisition of a major art collection. The Secretary noted that the potential acquisition was in its earliest stages and that he would continue to consult with the Committee as the negotiations continue.

The Secretary also provided an update on the status of a bequest of an island off Panama to the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Since the bequest was conditionally accepted by the Regents in 1998, ownership has been contested by alleged business associates of the decedent, Manoucher Mohageri, in Panamanian courts. The Secretary recently met with the President and Vice President of Panama and both shared a desire for the Smithsonian to be able to conduct research on the island under an arrangement similar to that governing the Barro Colorado relationship. The Panamanian government is actively exploring opportunities to resolve the ownership issues. The Secretary also noted that Panamanian courts have already recognized that the Smithsonian has a 20 percent interest in the island. Some settlement may require the Smithsonian to consider surrendering that interest.

Ms. Stonesifer noted that surrendering or forgoing a property interest in the island should trigger serious oversight by the Board and suggested that a committee of Regents be fully

briefed and actively monitor further negotiations. Members concluded that the Facilities Committee would be the best vehicle for an orderly review of this “fairly unusual transaction.”

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

- **Major Initiatives.** The Secretary directed the Committee to the “major initiatives” progress report in the materials. He noted that all were moving forward and highlighted three currently confidential gift negotiations.
- **Budget Hearings.** Next, the Secretary reported on his testimony before the House Appropriations Interior Subcommittee hearing. He found the discussions to be informed and the questions from the members thoughtful. Overall, he characterized the hearing as going “very well.” The Secretary noted the possibility that a fiscal year 2012 budget may not be passed and that the Smithsonian will have to operate under a continuing resolution, or similar mechanism, pegged at fiscal year 2010 appropriation levels.
- **USFA/CFO Search.** The Secretary provided a progress report on the search for the Under Secretary for Finance and Administration/Chief Financial Officer. He said the search committee was pleased with the candidate pool and that a selectee could be in place by September. The final two candidates will meet with Ms. Stonesifer in mid-June.
- **Exhibition Policy Panel Response.** The Secretary then discussed the draft response to the report of the Regents’ Exhibition Review Panel. The response was shaped by significant input from the museum directors. The Secretary will present the report to John McCarter, the Regent chair of the panel, for his consideration prior to the June 27, 2011, Regents’ meeting.
- **National Museum of the American Latino.** The Secretary discussed the recently released report of the President’s Commission on the American Latino. He noted that the Smithsonian remains concerned about the proposed funding mechanism (no Federal support for at least the first six years) to support the operations for, and construction of, the museum. The Secretary plans on briefing key members of Congress on the Smithsonian’s concerns. Members both expressed strong concern on the impact of a new unfunded museum on the national campaign. The Secretary added that under the timeframe identified by the commission, the Smithsonian would be simultaneously raising funds for both a Museum of the American Latino and the National Museum of African American History and Culture.
- **Financial Snapshot.** Ms. Stonesifer complemented the Secretary and his financial leadership team for navigating well in an uncertain fiscal climate.
- **Other Issues.** The Secretary noted the successful groundbreaking for the Charles Mathias Center at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (which was attended

by Representative Steven LaTourette). Ms. Stonesifer and Mr. Kogod both attended the unveiling of the Bill and Melinda Gates portrait at the National Portrait Gallery, and observed that the staff and supporters were extremely positive and forward-looking following the *Hide/Seek* controversy.

BRANDING INITIATIVE

Ms. Lieberman began the presentation by describing confidential negotiations with a Smithsonian benefactor to help launch the implementation of the branding initiative. In previewing the presentation, Ms. Lieberman predicted that the Committee would find the proposed strategy “fresh, modern, and fun,” that still “plays up the Smithsonian’s traditional institutional strengths.” Mindful of the Committee’s previous comments, Ms. Lieberman said that the strategy is both aspirational and achievable. She added that the proposed strategy reflects valuable input by the committee, the Secretary’s cabinet, the unit directors, and key staff.

Ms. Muckerman then presented a series of slides describing the foundations for, and development of, the branding strategy. She said the ultimate goal of the initiative is to make the Smithsonian more accessible, more relevant, and more diverse. The strategy should take the Smithsonian beyond “the Nation’s attic” to something that is “part of people’s today and their tomorrow.” She described the research and findings supporting the strategy and “shifts” will happen to make the Smithsonian more relevant, particularly relying on existing strengths within the Smithsonian and the unexploited opportunities for outside partnerships -- including connecting with “real people rather than the public in general.”

Ms. Muckerman described the differences and uses of internal and external taglines. The internal tagline or internal “rallying cry”-- “exciting the learning in everyone” -- will define the Smithsonian’s role in the world for the Smithsonian community. Ms. Muckerman then described some possible implications and applications of “exciting the learning in everyone” on how the Smithsonian should re-focus its activities. The external tagline -- “Seriously Amazing -- will reflect to the outside world what the Smithsonian is and does, she said. It is, she said, both “an invitation and a promise,” as well as a unifying message across all units. Ms. Muckerman concluded the formal presentation with an overview of the proposed implementation steps for the branding initiative.

Generally, members were “favorably impressed” with the proposed strategy, including the two taglines. Although recognizing that much more work needs to be accomplished to complete and implement the strategy, Mr. Spoon noted that the external tagline, or “the lynchpin” for the strategy, is very solid. Ms. Stonesifer identified the benefits of immediately identifying a few programmatic initiatives that could illustrate “Seriously Amazing” and devote more resources there. Mr. Kogod suggested that the strategy highlight the concept of “lifetime learning” more. In looking toward the presentation of the strategy to the full Board, Mr. Minear recommended that the materials make clear unit director support. The members also asked that further information be provided on any market testing of the external tagline and information on

rejected alternatives. Ms. Lieberman concluded the discussion with an outline of the milestones that would take place in anticipation of the June 27, 2011, Regents' meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Committee went into executive session to discuss Board personnel issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Patricia Q. Stonesifer
Chair