

MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 14, 2023, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The Executive Committee (“Committee”) of the Board of Regents (“Board”) of the Smithsonian Institution (“Smithsonian”) conducted a videoconference meeting on November 14, 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; Special Assistant to the Regents Mallory Gianola (recorder); 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 11:02 a.m. and reviewed the agenda.

Dr. Lavizzo-Mourey reminded the Executive Committee that, as part of the Smithsonian’s ongoing commitment to transparency, the Regents typically host an annual public forum to provide an opportunity for direct interaction with the public. The Committee reviewed the format and proposed topics for discussion at the Regents’ annual public forum to be held on December 19, 2023.

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the draft minutes of the September 5, 2023, and October 12, 2023, Committee meetings were approved.

APRIL 2024 STRATEGIC MEETING

Dr. Lavizzo-Mourey then updated the Committee on the April 8, 2024, meeting of the Board of Regents. The meeting date coincides with the next total solar eclipse, and the Office of the Regents is exploring an opportunity for the Regents to combine the meeting with travel with the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory and Smithsonian Journeys to Johnson City, Texas, which will be in the path of totality.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

The Secretary provided an update on the state of the Smithsonian. Secretary Bunch first briefed the Committee on the November 14 “March for Israel” rally. Smithsonian operations continue as normal, and the Smithsonian Office of Protection Services and Office of Emergency Management remain in contact with local public safety partners to monitor the event and receive pertinent information as it relates to security and visitor operations.

The Secretary also updated the Committee on giant pandas Tian Tian (tee-YEN tee-YEN), Mei Xiang (may-SHONG), and Xiao Qi Ji (SHIAU-chi-ji). On November 8, the Giant pandas began their departure from the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute ("NZCBI") to Chengdu, China. The Secretary noted the giant pandas have drawn visitors from around the world to the Zoo and on the Panda Cam; and their departure drew extensive media coverage nationwide. The Smithsonian remains committed to the conservation of giant pandas and is exploring continued collaboration with Chinese colleagues to study giant panda behavior, health, reproduction, disease, nutrition, and ecology.

Secretary Bunch also led a discussion on the possibility of a government shutdown on November 17, when the first Continuing Resolution ("CR") for fiscal year 2024 expires. The Smithsonian is closely monitoring the situation and has begun planning in the event of a lapse in federal appropriations. The Secretary reminded the Committee that the week surrounding the Thanksgiving holiday is traditionally one of the heaviest visitation days for the Smithsonian, and the Institution plans to utilize carryover funding to remain open to the public for the holiday week in the event of a government shutdown.

To conclude, the Secretary updated the Committee on the progress of the executive search for a new General Counsel.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Committee moved into an executive session at approximately 11:17 a.m. to discuss personnel matters.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other business to consider, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Risa J. Lavizzo-Mourey, Chair