

# MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 11, 2020, SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS

## ATTENDANCE

On August 11, 2020, the Board of Regents (“Board”) of the Smithsonian Institution (“Smithsonian”) convened a special meeting by videoconference to discuss current key matters at the Smithsonian. The Board received updates on the status of the phased reopening, the Institution’s new normal, a Virtual Smithsonian, and major initiatives such as the Race, Community, and Our Shared Future Initiative and the Smithsonian American Women’s History Initiative. Chancellor John G. Roberts, Jr. welcomed Regents and staff and called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Participating were Regents:

Senator John Boozman  
Senator Patrick J. Leahy  
Representative Doris Matsui  
Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Representative John Shimkus  
Steve Case, Chair  
John Fahey

Roger W. Ferguson, Jr.  
Michael Govan  
Risa J. Lavizzo-Mourey, Vice Chair  
Michael M. Lynton  
Denise M. O’Leary  
David M. Rubenstein

Franklin D. Raines, Nominated Regent  
Kathryn Hall, Investment Committee Chair  
Dennis Keller, Smithsonian National Board Chair

Vice President Michael R. Pence and Senator David Perdue were unable to participate in the meeting.

Smithsonian and Regent staff present by invitation of the Board were:

Lonnie G. Bunch III, Secretary  
Greg Bettwy, Chief of Staff to the Secretary  
Roger Brissenden, Acting Under Secretary for Science and Research  
Victor Castillo, Office of Representative Roybal-Allard  
Kate Forester, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Regents  
Mallory Gianola, Special Assistant to the Regents (recorder)  
Kevin Gover, Acting Under Secretary for Museums and Research  
Cathy Helm, Inspector General  
Toni-Marie Higgins, Office of Senator Boozman  
Judith Leonard, General Counsel  
Julissa Marenco, Assistant Secretary for Communications and External Affairs and Chief Marketing Officer

Era Marshall, Director of the Office of Equal Employment and Supplier Diversity  
Mike McCarthy, Under Secretary for Administration  
Kevin McDonald, Senior Adviser to Senator Leahy  
Jeffrey P. Minear, Counselor to the Chief Justice  
Ruki Neuhold-Ravikumar, Acting Under Secretary for Education  
Meroë Park, Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer  
Craig Roberts, Office of Representative Shimkus  
Vernon L. Simms, Director of the Office of Government Relations  
Robert J. Spiller, Assistant Secretary for Advancement  
Porter N. Wilkinson, Chief of Staff to the Regents

# SPECIAL VIDEOCONFERENCE MEETING

## REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### Welcome

Board and Executive Committee Chair Steve Case reviewed the agenda and acknowledged the Smithsonian's anniversary on August 10. Mr. Case noted that since its founding 174 years ago, the Smithsonian has become the world's largest museum, education, and research complex, with 19 museums, the National Zoo, and nine research facilities.

### Executive Committee Approvals

Mr. Case briefed the Board on one action taken by the Executive Committee on behalf of the Board, pursuant to Board Bylaw 3.01. The Executive Committee approved a request to seek updated Congressional authorization to previously approved authorization to design, build, and construct an additional collections storage facility ("Pod 6") at the Museum Support Center in Suitland, Maryland. The update incorporates necessary changes to authorizing legislation to reflect the addition of the National Gallery of Art ("NGA") as a partner in the project. Mr. Case noted that the Executive Committee's approval was requested on behalf of the Board due to exigent circumstances.

## APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

### Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda ("Agenda") was presented for the Board's approval. Action items listed on the August 11, 2020, Agenda included: the approval of minutes from the June 8, 2020, Regents' meeting; the appointment and reappointment of candidates to 12 Smithsonian Advisory Boards; and amendments to the bylaws of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute Advisory Board. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Board voted to adopt the Agenda, constituting the approval of all action items listed therein.

**See attached Actions 2020.08.01** (*Minutes of the Board of Regents, Appendix A*).

## STRATEGIC REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

### Strategic Report of the Secretary

Secretary Bunch began his report by sharing that Advancement Committee Chair Christine Udvar-Hazy agreed to serve as one of the chairs for the next Institution-wide capital campaign. The Secretary expressed his gratitude for her willingness to help advance mission-critical initiatives for the Institution.

### Phased Reopening Strategy

The Secretary briefed the Regents on the Smithsonian's phased reopening strategy. The National Zoo and the National Air and Space Museum's Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, Virginia, reopened to the public on Friday, July 24. Secretary Bunch explained that the two locations were chosen based on factors such as the ability to facilitate crowd management and social distancing, the ability to maintain a hygienic environment, and the availability of parking at both locations. The Board reviewed the new health and safety measures in place, including

requesting that visitors who are sick or do not feel well stay home, requiring visitors ages six and older to wear face coverings during their visit, limiting the number of people in each facility by requiring all visitors to obtain a free timed-entry pass in advance of their visit, implementing safe social distancing, providing hand sanitizing stations for visitors, and conducting enhanced cleaning throughout both facilities. The Smithsonian has been releasing 5,000 timed passes per day for the Zoo and 1,500 passes per day for the Udvar-Hazy Center. The Secretary noted that the limited reopening will provide an opportunity to improve the new processes and learn from the visitor experience, with the goal of opening additional museums in the upcoming months when it is safe to do so. The Board discussed progression and regression criteria, which the Secretary noted is subject to change given the complexity and fluidity of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **New Normal**

Next, the Secretary reported on the progress of efforts undertaken by the New Normal Committee and the Reopening Task Force. At the request of the Secretary, Smithsonian Organization and Audience Research (“SOAR”) prepared and distributed an all-staff survey on June 11 to gain perspectives and input that will inform the path forward for the Institution. The Secretary plans to share proposed fundamental and incremental changes with the Board at the October meeting, as the Smithsonian moves toward a new phase of operations and continues to plan its new normal.

#### **Virtual Smithsonian**

The Regents also received an update from Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer Meroë Park on programs and initiatives to enhance a Virtual Smithsonian. The Smithsonian is continuing to implement the Institution’s vision with digitally focused programs and activities, spurred in part by the COVID-19 crisis. Staff have been organizing around the digital strategic goal, and a digital steering group has been focusing on best practices for effective digital leadership and creative ways that the Smithsonian can reach new and diverse audiences. The Deputy Secretary also discussed contributions from the Strategy, Innovation, and Technology Committee that will help to guide Smithsonian efforts around key cultural and structural reforms needed to support a truly “One Smithsonian” digital approach.

#### **Race, Community and Our Shared Future Initiative**

The Secretary then highlighted progress on the Race, Community and Our Shared Future Initiative. In addition to serving as a primarily digital platform of engagement around issues of social injustice and racism, the initiative will provide cultural and research institutions around the country with an enhanced opportunity to utilize their content and collections to add context to critical local conversations. Smithsonian partners and collaborators will host a series of dialogues around the country through virtual town halls, outdoor exhibitions, and online resources supported by Smithsonian instructional, educational, and scholarly resources. Roll-out planning is underway for the first quarter.

#### **American Women’s History Initiative**

Secretary Bunch also briefed the Board on the American Women’s History Initiative (“AWHI”). On August 1, the Institution launched the first “Because of Her Story” animation series, an eight-part series developed for social media platforms that shares the stories of diverse communities and their early

contributions to the fight for women’s suffrage. To mark the centennial of the 19th Amendment, the Smithsonian will also collaborate with the Library of Congress and National Archives to share 19 stories on women’s suffrage. The Secretary shared that the Department of the Treasury will issue the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commemorative Coins in late August, and proceeds received from the sales of the coins will benefit the American Women's History Initiative.

**Diversity, Equity, Access,  
and Inclusion**

To conclude, Secretary Bunch briefed the Board on the Smithsonian’s efforts to uphold the core values of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion (“DEAI”). The Board discussed the potential creation of a Chief Diversity Officer position, a review of organizational processes and policies that may have inadvertently created barriers to inclusivity, integrating and standardizing DEAI training across the organization, strengthening supervisory DEAI skillsets, increasing senior leadership’s focus on inclusivity, and identifying funding and resourcing strategies to implement DEAI efforts across the Institution’s functions and operations.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION: “GATEKEEPER” REPORTS**

**Executive Session:  
“Gatekeeper” Reports**

The Board then closed the open session at 11:56 a.m. to conduct executive sessions with the Smithsonian’s Gatekeepers, including the Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer, Under Secretary for Administration, General Counsel, and Inspector General.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Adjournment**

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at approximately 12:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lonnie G. Bunch, III  
Secretary

## APPENDIX A: ACTIONS OF THE AUGUST 11, 2020, SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS

**VOTED** that the Board of Regents adopts the Consent Agenda, which constitutes the approval of all action items listed therein. [2020.08.01]

**VOTED** that the Board of Regents approves the minutes of the June 8, 2020, meeting of the Board of Regents.

**VOTED** that the Board of Regents approves the proposed slate of candidates for appointment or reappointment to 12 Smithsonian Institution Advisory Boards.

**VOTED** that the Board of Regents approves the proposed amendments to the bylaws of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute Advisory Board.