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Smithsonian Institution

Office of General Counsel

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

January 30, 2024

RE: Your Request for Smithsonian Records (request number 745936417)

This responds to your request, dated September 17, 2021 and received in this Office via U.S. Mail on September 30, 2021, for “a copy of the meeting minutes of the National Postal Museum Council of Philatelists for each meeting between January 1, 2016 to the present.” The Smithsonian responds to requests for records in accordance with Smithsonian Directive 807 – Requests for Smithsonian Institution Information (SD 807) and applies a presumption of disclosure when processing such requests. The policy is posted on our website at <http://www.si.edu/OGC/Records-Requests>.

Enclosed are 20 pages of material constituting minutes of meetings of the National Postal Museum Council of Philatelists from November 2017 – September 2021. Please note that a reasonable search was conducted and no other meeting minutes from the requested timeframe were located.

Certain information has been redacted from the enclosed documents consistent with SD 807. Information related to the value of Smithsonian collections has been redacted consistent with Smithsonian policy under Exemption 2. Information related to certain fundraising and donor-related activities has been redacted consistent with SD 807 under Exemption 4, where release of the information would likely impair the Smithsonian’s ability to raise private funds. Certain pre-decisional and deliberative information has been redacted consistent with SD 807 under Exemption 5. Finally, personal information, such as donor-identifying information, has been redacted consistent with SD 807 under Exemption 6, where disclosure of such information would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of the personal privacy of a third party with no overriding public interest.

This concludes the Smithsonian’s response to your request. Thank you for your interest in the Smithsonian.

Office of General Counsel

Smithsonian Institution

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Best Wishes,



David Larson
Assistant General Counsel

Enclosures

You have the right to appeal a partial or full denial of your request. Your appeal must be in writing, addressed to the Smithsonian Institution Office of General Counsel at the address below, SIRecordsReq@si.edu, or (202) 357-4310 (fax number), and made within sixty days from the date of this response letter. Your letter must explain your reason(s) for the appeal. The Smithsonian Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer will decide your appeal and will respond to you in writing. You also have the right to request mediation services from the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS), within the National Archives and Records Administration, to resolve disputes about the withholding of information. Your request for mediation should include language authorizing OGIS to make inquiries on your behalf, including the right to review all documentation that OGIS deems necessary regarding your request. You should note that you understand that any documents you provide to OGIS, except those provided in confidence, may be copied and forwarded to Smithsonian Institution officials as a part of the dispute resolution process.

Council of Philatelists Meeting Minutes

November 6th, 2017

Action Items:

- Review of Council Mission and any comments are sent to Elliot Gruber by December 18th, 2017.
- Identification and assistance in reaching out to individuals and companies to support the National Postal Museum (NPM)

In Attendance: Don Sundman, Chair, Gordon Eubanks, Ian Gibson-Smith, Sonny Hagendorf, Liz Hisey, Anna Lee, Exemption 6, Doug Mattox, Charles Shreve; Smithsonian: Elliot Gruber, Daniel Piazza, Calvin Mitchell and Emma Auburn. USPS: Exemption 6

Minutes:

Chair Opening Remarks:

- Our goals for this meeting are to meet our new director and discuss the future direction of the museum.
- Meeting dates for 2018 will be distributed soon.

Director Elliot Gruber Remarks:

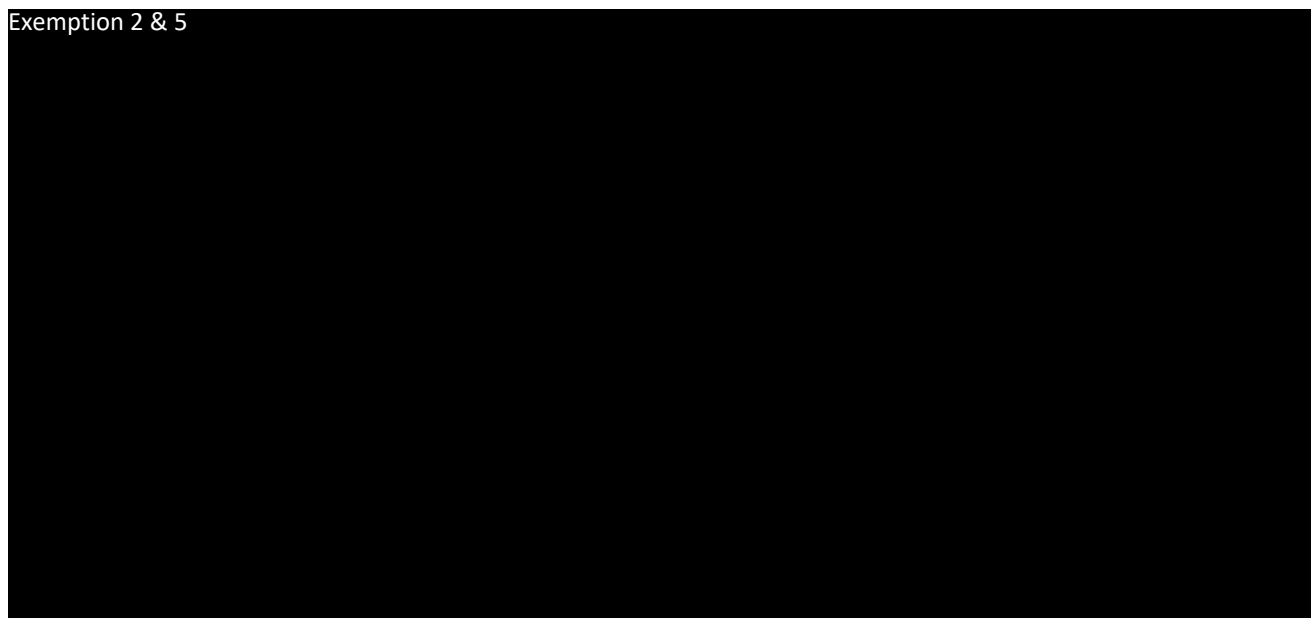
- Elliot will be working with staff to develop, refine – and realize – the museum’s goals for the next five years
 - Goal 1: Become recognized by others as the best postal museum in the world.
 - Goal 2: Become recognized as one of the best museums in the world.
- To accomplish this we need to Exemption 5
- Staffing:
 - We currently have approximately 30 staff with an additional five open positions. In consultation with the senior team, we will identify our hiring priorities and move forward as quickly as possible. One position already agreed upon is the need to hire a Paper Conservator to care for our collection which is more than 90% paper-related. We will also hire a Exemption 5 development director. We will make sure a stable relationship with the council and donors will happen with this development transition
- Visitor Experience:
 - Significant improvements can be made to the visitor experience NPM currently offers. A Visitor Services Working Group will be established shortly to make recommendations that will be acted upon.
 - We are known as the family friendly Smithsonian and we need to build upon this strength.
- Education:
 - We are planning to significantly expand our programming through our Education Department.
- Marketing, PR and Branding:



- A draft Marketing Plan has been developed to help NPM expand its current reach both in traditional media, the web, social media and creative outreach and partnership with groups from around the country.
- A style guide will be created to ensure that all of our material and brand is consistent across the entire organization.
- Exhibitions:
 - The Exhibit Team has met and identified improvements that can be made to the process include the establishment of criteria in deciding upon which exhibition ideas to approve.
 - Future exhibitions include *Letters with Wings* to coincide with the 100th anniversary of Air Mail (May 2018) and *Baseball* to coincide with the 150th anniversary (April 2019).
 - Future on-site exhibitions will be developed with an eye toward converting as many as possible into traveling exhibitions. It was suggested that the Postmaster General's stamp art should be showcased in one or more traveling exhibitions in art museums. We plan to Exemption 5 [REDACTED].
 - Develop exhibitions that will create new partnerships and opportunities to expand the reach and visibility of the National Postal Museum (e.g. Exemption 5 [REDACTED]).
- Collections
 - Our collection holdings are the foundation of NPM. The collection allows us to tell just about any story from American history that we choose and we have many stories from around the world given the breadth and depth of our international collection.
 - We will review our Collections Plan as well as our deaccessioning plan.
 - We need to take better care of our collection by hiring a paper conservator.
 - We need to make a concerted effort to bring more of our collection out on display: on-site, traveling shows and virtually.

Benjamin Miller Collection:

Exemption 2 & 5



Group took a tour of Beautiful Blooms: Flowering Plants on Stamps

Royal Philatelic Society London (RPSL):

- October 17-19th, 2019, NPM will be hosting the Anniversary of North American Celebration
 - Including public non-competitive exhibition of 48 frames in the Byrne Education Loft (mounted on the 16th), symposium and the Smithsonian Philatelic Achievement Awards weekend.
 - **Exemption 5**
 - The SPAA Gala should be a ticketed event.
 - Thursday the 17th there will be an evening event at the British Embassy.
 - Luncheon for the 80th anniversary of the 1931 royal visit between George the 6th and FDR.
- Also a reminder that STOCKHOLMIA 2019 is in May.

Increasing Visibility and Putting NPM on the Road

- Our goals are to partner across Smithsonian.
- We are pursuing internship and fellowship opportunities to bring more research.
- We want to other museums to do things for and during our 25th Anniversary.
 - Possible ideas: Mail art collaboration with American Art Archives.
- Form a stronger relationship with American Philatelic Society (APS), Girl Scouts, and Boy Scouts.
- Bring ourselves on the road through exhibits and shows:
 - We want to show on the Mall.
 - Stamp shows circuit
 - Richmond, UN Expo, Hong Kong (March 8-10th).
 - We want to look into the international shows.
 - Association for the Study of African American Life and History's Black History Luncheon invitation.
 - Traveling Baseball Exhibit and possibly partnering with Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibitions (SITES).
 - Making sure our future exhibits are travelable.
 - Collaboration with **Exemption 6**
 - Elliot visited the first week in November.
 - We could use our stamp art to connect with art museums.
 - We want to connect with museums but also use our collections in their space.
 - Council members are interested in investing in stamp art and make a traveling exhibit.
- **Exemption 5**

Exhibits

- We are planning to set up the exhibit for 2019- Centennial of baseball.
 - **Exemption 5**
 - Baseball will be the first example.



- Other baseball exhibits around DC for the All Star Games: Library of Congress, 2021 SITES exhibit, National Museum of American History, National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the Smithsonian Latino Center is collecting items.
- Baseball could use the outdoor space to attract people from outside.
- Was there any baseball players who were stamp collectors?
- This will be artifact based but we want it to be more about the experience.
- We need Smithsonian to commit to supporting NPM Baseball
- Connections:
 - Pepe has a connection at Cooperstown she will find out what they are doing and how we can connect with them.
 - APS has a traveling exhibit on baseball
 - John Bennett has a first day cover baseball exhibit.
- Airmail Anniversary:
 - Short-term to make something bigger so we are doing an exhibit in the Franklin Foyer cases and connect it with the beacon in the atrium.
 - USPS is planning to recreate the first flight.
 - Scott Trepel brought the Curtiss Jenny plane to the NY stamp show
 - During Westpex this April the American Airmail Society is having a meeting
 - Where are other societies meeting and we can send out targeted material with our collections to those groups?
- Exemption 5 [REDACTED]
 - Informed delivery: we want to let visitors know this is a thing.
- Exemption 5 [REDACTED]
- When council members travel we would love to connect you to museums for tours and have you as our ambassadors.
 - Gordon mentioned that the Herzl collection in Switzerland would be nice to bring here. We have tried in the past and it was complicated and was canceled in the end.

25th Anniversary:

- July 30th, 2018 is our 25th anniversary. We want to more than just one weekend but do a whole year.
- Our 25th gives a reason for a visit. Internally it is great to celebrate but externally not as exciting. It is an opportunity to get our name out there.
- Ideas:
 - One of our objects could be features at the other SI museums on their topic.
 - Bring children from other museums to throw a party for us at each museum.
 - Every month on the website go through past museum exhibits.
 - Use this as a way to get repeat visits by pushing it on social media.
 - Exemption 4 [REDACTED]
 - Use it as a way to thank anyone who has been a part of the museum instead of congratulating ourselves. Use it as a way to introduce Elliot and show them what we have done.



- **Exemption 5**

- A pictorial cancel.
- Feature the museum in Linn's Article, Siegel catalogs and USA Philatelic articles.
- Do something similar like Graceful Envelope, possibly Birthday Cards, and share it on social media.
- What is the museum's single message/tag line? Use that a connector through all 25th anniversary articles, activities and exhibits
- **Exemption 5**

Next Steps:

- How can we improve retail?
 - **Exemption 5**
 -
 - Stamp collecting cart or supplies.
- Responsibilities
 - Councils: opening doors, helping with prospects and raising funds for the museum.
 - NPM: Keep the council engaged, be conscious of how your interests and meaningful involvement and meetings.
 - We will be visiting council members and taking council meetings on the road.
 - We could piggyback meetings in DC or elsewhere and combine it with a council meeting.
- What is the council going to do?
 - Need to re-think mission post-Gross Gallery.
 - **Exemption 5**
 - Should people volunteer for different teams?
 - **Exemption 5**
 - Should we have conference calls in between in-person meetings.
- The Smithsonian can bring artifacts for talks in different locations across the country.
 - Mattox hosted a successful event in the past.
 - Shreve went to an event where Richard Kurin spoke.
 - Shreve and Eubanks volunteered to host small, intimate and targeted groups for similar events.
 - It is about friend-raising and the hosting council member would speak about why they're passionate about the museum.

Deltas and Pluses:

- Good meeting to air out the council and meet Elliot.
- The smaller council is better and more productive.
- **Exemption 5**
- Council needs a mission.
- Council needs minutes and action items.
- The COP meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Council of Philatelists Meeting Minutes
October 29th, 2018

Action Items:

- Please send prospective council member suggestions to Hannah Trumbull.
- Michelle Buhr will send out gala, endowment and *Baseball* information.
- Complete the Council Meeting Follow Up Survey.
- A list of fundable projects will be sent to Council members.

In Attendance: Chair Don Sundman, Ian Gibson Smith, Sonny Hagendorf, Liz Hisey, Patrick Maselis, Doug Mattox, Wade Saadi, Charles Shreve, and Alan Whitman; Smithsonian: Provost John Davis, Elliot Gruber, Michelle Buhr, Dan Piazza, Hannah Trumbull, and Emma Auburn.

Minutes:

Chair's Opening Remarks:

- Since William H. Gross Stamp Gallery opened in 2013, 7 million people have visited.
 - 5 rotating exhibitions: *Favorite Finds*, *Pacific Exchange*, *Freedom Just Around the Corner*, *Trailblazing: 100 Years of Our National Parks*, *Alexander Hamilton: Soldier, Secretary, Icon*.
 - The Byrne Education Overlook has been an amazing space for educational programs, including Lunchtime Lectures, Story time and Wine and Design.
 - Every member has contributed to the Gallery's success, financially and even loaning items
- Thank you to **Exemption 6** who have made gifts towards the *Baseball: America's Homerun* match challenge
- Next steps for CoP: We will discuss 3 5 year strategic plan

Directors Report:

- CoP Update: We are changing the way we are running the Council through many ways, including a survey moving towards engaging, collaborative discussions.
- We look forward to exploring new locations for meetings
- Education update: We have working prototypes of the education stations, two of which are up with three more to follow.
 - We are gathering feedback from visitors to make the final stations.
 - Thank you to **Ex. 6** for his support and vision for the education stations.
- Thank you to **Ex. 6** for hosting the Museum in August and allowing us to introduce the Smithsonian and museum to a new group of people; this enhances both Museum and Smithsonian exposure
- Attendance update: Over 500,000 visitors for FY18, a new record!
- This increase has likely been due to an increase in programs and the popular *Alexander Hamilton: Soldier, Secretary, Icon* exhibit
- Baseball Update:

- Timeline revision: Now opening April 2020
- Exhibition update: Originally this exhibit was planned to be mostly a philatelic show but it has expanded to include 10 Smithsonian units' artifacts. We have a Latino curator via the Smithsonian Latino Center allowing it to be bilingual and have a more diverse perspective. We are working with outside institutions such as National Baseball Hall of Fame World of Little League Museum and Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, as well as potential private collection contributions as well.
- **Exemption 4**
- MLB & Nats meetings: Currently meeting with most senior levels of leadership
 - We are fostering a relationship with MLB's VP of Communications
 - **Exemption 4**

Vision and Priorities: Discussion exploring the following themes:

- How do we help the museum have a bigger impact and a broader reach?
- How can we reimagine the visitor experience?:
 - Optimize online/digital material? Improve curb appeal? Programming, security, signage, etc.
 - How do we increase visibility and bring awareness to international audiences about the Museum's international collection?
- Director's Priorities
 - Fundraising so we can make these ideas happen and as the museum's catalyst.
 - Creating both philatelic and non philatelic visitor experiences
- Visitor experience priority: Cohesive branding, creating visitor excitement
 - Reimagine the atrium spaces and making it match the upstairs.
 - Creating an advisory council of Council of Philatelists and Museum Advisory Committee members along with USPS to advise on change.
 - Synergizing postal history and philately in the space
 - Improve flow from the William H. Gross Stamp Gallery to the rest of the museum
 - Thinking outside the box, how do we attract non philatelists to the museum?
- Collection priority:
 - **Exemption 5**
- Digitization priority
 - The Smithsonian's Strategic Plan has prioritized digitization.
 - We need to prioritize our digitization, highlighting significant items in our collection.
 - We need to connect all Smithsonian museum's databases so visitors can see any collection items that relate across the institution
- Consider giving stamp societies digital access specialized for them and an onsite program for them We need to bolster philatelic outreach
 - Remote curator talks or videos could be helpful to stamp clubs **Exemption 5**

- How does stamp art fit into these priorities?
 - The Council would like a list of six projects to choose from, prioritize and get behind
- How can we develop an international strategy?
 - *The Queen's Own: Stamps That Changed the World* was last big international blockbuster exhibit. Discussion ensued.

Committee Recap—See Committee Meeting Minutes

Smithsonian Philatelic Achievement Awards Gala and Royal Philatelic Society of London 150th Anniversary Discussion. Activities discussed. Events will be from October 17th 20th, 2019

- Next Steps:
 - Finalize Gala committee, set up meeting schedule, confirm goal, and create confirmed set of prices and slate of benefits

Provost Report

- Introduction of the Provost:
 - John Davis is the Provost and Undersecretary for Museum, Education and Research
- John has been here for a year and his main focus has been on a strategic plan
 - Catalyzing conversations, reaching 1 billion people, reaching 21st century audiences where they are, these are the most exciting parts of the plan.
- American Women's History Initiative:
 - This is to celebrate, spotlight and research cultural and other achievements of American women
 - The Smithsonian wants to raise Exemption 4
 - Exemption 4
 - The 1998 Breast Cancer Stamp is a part of the campaign and will be featured in an upcoming Smithsonian book as well as in the Initiative's October communications
- Year of Music:
 - The Smithsonian has pledged there will be a music event every day of 2019.
 - There are opportunity funds available for the units.
 - For the Postal Museum, we're incorporating the upcoming baseball exhibit with organ music.
 - We are discovering ways to expand the footprint within DC for the Postal Museum.
 - Union Station may be a place for music events and will hopefully drive visitors to the Museum.
- London Plans:
 - Exemption 5
- There are new additions to the Smithsonian's senior leadership, which is bringing in a lot of new point of views and ideas.

- Rob Spiller just joined as the Assistant Secretary for Advancement.
 - The annual campaign's goal of Exemption 4
 - NPM FY19 fundraising _ is Exemption 4
 - Exemption 4
 - Only five Smithsonian Directors are endowed and increasing this is a priority. Exemption 4
 - There will be a renewed focus on principal gifts Exemption 4
- Julissa Marenco has joined as the Assistant Secretary for Communications and External Affairs.
 - She looks to update the museum _ strategies through practices such as social media
- Budget
 - In FY18 the Federal budget was 1.04 billion.
 - The FY 19 is currently under continuing resolution but the possible budget is \$1.055 billion
 - There is a two year lead time to get projects budgeted.
 - An FY 20 item requested is to get new federal curatorial position for the Museum.

Closing remarks

- There is an atmosphere of collaboration within the Smithsonian.
 - We are working with The National Museum of African Art for an exhibit and the National Air and Space Museum will mention the Postal Museum in exhibits about airmail and Sally Ride exhibits
- The strategic plan is under way, and the Museum will take advantage of these opportunities.



**Council of Philatelists
April 6, 2020
Smithsonian National Postal Museum**

Attendance

Don Sundman, Chair, Ian Gibson-Smith, Sonny Hagendorf, Vince King, Patrick Maselis, Doug Mattox, Dan Ryterband, Wade Saadi, Charles Shreve, and Alan Whitman.
NPM Staff: Elliot Gruber, Toby Mensforth, Rebecca Ben-Atar, Heidi Eitel, Anissa Kossakowski, Dan Piazza, and Erin Penn

Minutes

- Introductory Remarks

Don Sundman, council chair started the meeting.

- State of the Museum

Elliot provided an update about the Smithsonian and National Postal Museum during this time. Currently, the Smithsonian has no re-opening date and is re-assessing this every two weeks. The Postal Museum was able to have an orderly temporary closure. Two staff have been checking weekly on our collections and exhibits. Overall, the Museum is finding new ways to adapt, respond to this opportunity, and find other ways to lead.

- Digitization

Rebecca Ben Atar provided an update on behalf of the Digitization Committee and Museum. Currently, the Museum is working on making more of our collection accessible on our website. We are tracking website visitor traffic and where they visit. The Digitization Committee agreed with the COPs digitization priorities and are making plans to act on these recommendations.

Our digitization partners have stopped all mass digitization and are downsizing their staff. This shift will affect the Fall kickoff date to mass digitize NPM's collections. In addition, the Museum is partnering with the Smithsonian's Transcription Center to make data accessible. The current priority is to work with volunteers to see if they will be able to access Scott catalogue numbers while transcribing. Elliot plans on connecting with Amos Media to discuss catalogue access.

- Baseball

Heidi Eitel confirmed that the design for *Baseball: America's Home Run* is complete and implementation is in progress. However, the current phase requires onsite work. The exhibit is experiencing delays and will not be opening on the original date of June 27th. As the situation is still evolving, the team is not able to set a new opening date. Heidi believes that once everything opens back up again there will be a six month period needed to get the exhibit ready for opening.

- Advancement

Anissa Kossakowski shared that the October Gala was Exemption 4





Smithsonian
National Postal Museum

In general, Smithsonian fundraising Exemption 4

- Conversation: How should NPM behave with the philatelic community in this new world now face?

The Council discussed their ideas about how NPM can reach and support the philatelic community during and post Covid-19. Ideas ranged from virtual stamp shows, a virtual speaker series, videos varying in content, emails that highlight our website, online fundraising gala, coordinating with Smithsonian to create new content, supporting stamp shows by hosting an expert talk, sharing – or creating - YouTube videos about stamp collecting in general, and highlighting stamps through a topical lens.

It was a very robust and informative discussion.

Next Steps

- The Museum's Management Team will discuss these ideas to see what can be done.
- Schedule a call within the next 60 days for a COP conference call, and try to include a representative from the United States Postal Service.



Smithsonian

National Postal Museum

Council of Philatelists

Friday, July 10, 2020

Attendance

CoP: Don Sundman, Chair, Gordon Eubanks, Sonny Hagendorf, Liz Hisey, Dan Ryterband, Wade Saadi, Alan Whitman

NPM: Elliot Gruber, Toby Mensforth, Rebecca Ben-Atar, Heidi Eitel, Marty Emery, Anissa Kossakowski, Dan Piazza, Alli Matlesky, and Erin Penn

Minutes

I. Opening Remarks

Museum Director Elliot Gruber opened the meeting with updates about the [Exemption 6]
[Redacted]. Elliot and Secretary Lonnie Bunch have reached out to him. [Exemption 6]
[Redacted]

The Council discussed the Museum's lease and the role of the USPS during this pandemic. Elliot confirmed that the [Exemption 5]
[Redacted]

Elliot shared an update relating to COVID-19. NPM staff is safe and secure and are staying connected through regular formal and social meetings. He also provided an overview of the Smithsonian's reopening plan. NPM will be part of the third reopening group. Plans are underway for the first group of museums (National Zoo and Udvar-Hazy) to open in late summer. Reopening considerations include extensive cleaning, staffing resources, updating signage, visitor service training, and e-ticketing. The goal continues to keep staff teleworking as much as possible until risks are mitigated.

II. National Postal Museum Re-opening Plans & Overview of Exhibitions Planning Group

Heidi Eitel shared how the Museum is planning to reopen to the public. Currently, the Museum is looking into safe gallery occupancy, exhibit offerings and interactives, cleaning protocol, and training staff to have conversations about safety with visitors.

Heidi also presented the creation of an Exhibit Planning Group which includes staff from across the Museum to develop creative and meaningful exhibits through an informed and thoughtful process.

III. Staff Updates

Dan Piazza introduced Alison Bazylynski, our new Assistant Curator. Alison is completing her PhD in American Studies focusing on how mail orders transformed the lives of women in the first half of 20th century.

Anissa Kossakowski introduced Alli Matlesky, our new Advancement Specialist on the Advancement Team. Alli comes to NPM from the central Smithsonian Office of Advancement's Constituent Engagement Team where she worked with the Smithsonian National Board. Prior to joining the Office of

Advancement, Alli has worked at the National Zoo and volunteered at Natural History's Q?rius, its interactive science education center. Alli recently graduated with a master's degree in Museum Studies and certificate in Nonprofit Management from the Harvard Extension School.

Toby Mensforth introduced Maureen Leary, our new Early Learning Program Manager. Maureen has worked for more than 20 years at the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center (SEEC), with the last three as Site Director of SEEC's Natural History Center. She has also been active with the Smithsonian's Early Learning Collaborative. Maureen spent many years as the Kindergarten Spanish teacher at SEEC, in addition to designing and teaching a bilingual program in Spanish/English for toddlers and their caregivers. She will be a champion for our Story-time program and our efforts towards engaging the growing Spanish (speaking and learning) communities.

IV. Collections Update

Rebecca Ben-Atar provided an overview of the skylight replacement project in the Museum's atrium. We are using the Museum's closure to work with GSA to replace 12 skylights above the atrium that are cracked and fogged. All objects that were at risk were protectively covered to ensure no damage.

V. Virtual NPM


Chief Curator's Update

Dan Piazza shared that the Curatorial Department has been creating new digital content for the website including podcasts and uploading the recent Sundman lectures. Dan is working with Patrick Maselis and Wade Saadi to film new content covering Belgium exploration and the Liberty Series. Council members are encouraged to contact Dan if they would like to participate in an interview.

Dan is reaching out to USPS Unions to secure images and objects about COVID-19's effects on USPS. At this stage, NPM is building relationships and will collect when it is safe to do so. Dan is also looking to collect material that document stamp shows that have been canceled.

The Museum has secured an updated VSC 8000 imaging machine. Susan Smith, Winton M. Blount Research Chair, has been working with Gordon Morrison on an article for the July issue of the *American Philatelist* titled "The 'Handshake in Space.'" The article discusses the political climate surrounding the 1975 stamps commemorating the docking of the U.S. Apollo Module and the U.S.S.R. Soyuz Orbital Module, the diplomatic high of the Cold War's détente period.

At the request of Secretary Bunch, Smithsonian museums are going through a review of galleries and on-line material for outdated language or objects in need of additional context. The Curatorial Department will be conducting this review remotely, and expect few concerns as most material has been written recently. Exemption 5



Richard Kurin & Regional Council Webinars

Anissa Kossakowski shared two upcoming web events. On July 22, Elliot and Dan will present a webinar about our Baseball exhibition. This event will be held in partnership with the Central Office of Advancement for their *Smithsonian Insider* series for Regional Councils and the Smithsonian National Board. In late August/early September, Richard Kurin, Smithsonian Distinguished Scholar and Ambassador-at-Large, will host an evening talk about the Smithsonian and the National Postal Museum.

Anissa asked that the Council share both events widely with their network. Invitations will be forthcoming.

VII. Open Discussion/ Social Time

Is Stamp Collecting Growing During the Pandemic?

The Council discussed trends from the world of philately. Exemption 5

Sonny Hagendorf is hearing from auction houses that business has increased, and more people are collecting during this time. Sonny also stressed the changing role of museums in the virtual world. Webinars are a way to reach broader audiences and encourage visits. Gordon Eubanks recommended using various social media platforms to engage with different and younger audiences. Marty Emery and Elliot shared that the Museum has a full-time social media person now and our numbers are going up. The Museum is still looking to augment our online presence.

Philatelic Jeopardy

Elliot shared a suggestion Exemption 5

The Council was intrigued by the idea. In general, members were supportive and concurred that the audience would be primarily the stamp world and not the general public.

The conversation changed to how stamp shows, and exhibitions are changing in the virtual world. Many shows are moving to the virtual space, including the German Philatelic Society, India Stamp show and the American Philatelic Society. Council members discussed how the pandemic is forcing collectors and exhibitors to quickly learn new technology as they move to a digital world. All agreed that the future of stamp shows will look vastly different. On the positive side, societies are seeing increased interest and participation from non-members which is ultimately beneficial for the hobby.

Exemption 6



Smithsonian

National Postal Museum

Council of Philatelists

Thursday, August 13, 2020

3:30-4:30 p.m. Eastern

Attendance

CoP: Don Sundman, Chair, Doug Mattox, Gordon Eubanks, Ian Gibson Smith, Sonny Hagendorf, Liz Hisey, Wade Saadi, Charles Shreve

NPM: Elliot Gruber, Toby Mensforth, Anissa Kossakowski, Dan Piazza, Carly Dwyer, Alli Matlesky, and Erin Penn

Minutes

I. **Welcome & Museum Re-opening Updates**

Director Elliot Gruber welcomed Council members. He provided a COVID update on the museum, sharing that community metrics are not being met yet so no re-opening date has been proposed.

Exemption 6 shared **6** experience with COVID in a medical setting, highlighting that the pandemic is ongoing and impacting daily life. Council members shared their experiences with the virus and what its like where they are living.

II. **Virtual Opportunities**

The Council discussed virtual stamp shows. They have found them to be great opportunities for connecting with people all over the world. The Council discussed the benefits of creating a virtual platform that is interactive and displays original exhibits for use by the stamp shows. This virtual platform can also work to preserve all exhibitions. Chief Curator Daniel Piazza shared that NPM shares and preserves its original exhibits virtually.

The Council discussed virtual and webinar opportunities for the museum following the success of our *Baseball* webinar. The Smithsonian and the National Postal Museum have prioritized the virtual realm and will share plans as they are developed.

III. **Baseball Exhibition**

The Council and Staff discussed baseball updates. NPM is developing a plan to propose the best time to open the exhibition, taking into consideration when it is possible to do so safely.

IV. **“New Normal” at the National Postal Museum**

The Council discussed what the museum will look like in the post-pandemic future. Elliot shared the museum is doing more online activities but still need to build a strategy and perhaps reshuffle staff to manage bandwidth.

Regarding school groups and education, the schools and parents are trying to limit screen time. They appreciate offline activities, not necessarily more online content. NPM education staff are developing programming to meet these needs. They are examining how the National Postal Museum could help fill “Your City, Your Town” needs in local public school curriculums.



Smithsonian

National Postal Museum

Elliot acknowledged that the museum has many stories to tell but is limited by staffing constraints. The museum has five staff vacancies and Smithsonian hiring for new positions is a slow-moving process. He wants to connect with Smithsonian expertise and pull in their resources to help build an integrated strategy.

Fundraising is a major focus while the museum is closed. The museum is uniquely poised to tell the story of America in many ways, and is strategizing how to use this in its revised development plans.

The Council discussed the museum's reliance on school groups, which account for roughly 20% of visitors. Most groups are local and programming relies on one full time educator. We are is developing a strategy for online interactive experiences that prioritize the local community. At this moment in time, building access is still limited and camera crews to film content are not authorized to enter.

V.

Exemption 6





Smithsonian

National Postal Museum

Council of Philatelists

March 10, 2021

ATTENDANCE

COP: Don Sundman, Gordon Eubanks, Ian Gibson-Smith, Sonny Hagendorf, Liz Hisey, Patrick Maselis, Wade Saadi, Charles Shreve, Alan Whitman

COP member-elect: **Exemption 6**, Yamil Kouri, Edmund Truell

NPM: Elliot Gruber, Jessie Aucoin, Rebecca Ben-Atar, Carly Dwyer, Marty Emery, Anissa Kossakowski, Alli Matlesky, Toby Mensforth, Dan Piazza, and Erin Penn

MINUTES

I. Opening Remarks

Council Chair Don Sundman called the meeting to order at 10:02 am Eastern. He opened the meeting with a few updates about Smithsonian happenings including sharing information from the All Advisory Chair meeting. Don highlighted Smithsonian's focus on equity, diversity, accessibility and inclusion. He also updated the Council on the recent legislation for two new museums: the National Museum of the American Latino and the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum.

II. New Member Intros

Don Sundman and other Council members introduced the newly elected members to the Council of Philatelists: Yamil Kouri, **Exemption 6**, Edmund Truell, and Scott Guthrie. Their names have been submitted to the Board of Regents for appointment on April 12, 2021.

The members-elect shared their gratitude for joining the Council and a bit about their background. Yamil Kouri is an accomplished philatelist and writer who collects philately from the Spanish-American war.

Exemption 6 collecting interests include air mail and UPU air issues. Edmund Truell collects and reconstructs Penny Blacks, a Lady McLeod, and several SG1s from around the world. Charles Shreve shared that Scott Guthrie, who was unable to attend, collects One Cent Blue stamps and covers from Great Britain.

III. General Museum Updates

Director Elliot Gruber and museum managers shared updates about the Museum. Elliot confirmed we still do not know when the Postal Museum will open. The pandemic has caused us to work hard at being closed, the museum is strategically thinking about how to open safely.

Elliot provided the Finance Department update on behalf of Polone Bazile. The Museum has received the final Federal and Trust allocations for Fiscal Year 2021. However, the Postal Service has not yet approved our annual grant operating budget which limits our cash flow. The Museum has focused spending on COVID mitigation measures, digital offerings, and facilities.

Director of Advancement Anissa Kossakowski shared the Advancement team **Exemption 4**

[REDACTED]

Anissa thanked the Council for all the positive feedback for the new Stakeholders email.

Chief Curator Dan Piazza shared that work continues on *Baseball: America's Home Run!* exhibit. The Curatorial Department plans to return to exhibiting at stamp shows in 2022, potentially beginning with London 2022 in February. The Curatorial Department is working on digital content, including sharing past lectures. The department is also actively working on collecting oral histories and objects around voting by mail.

Director of Collections Rebecca Ben-Atar shared, on behalf of Heidi Eitel, Director of Exhibitions, a targeted date of Spring 2022 for the opening *Baseball: America's Home Run!* The registrar and collections managers are preparing mounts and scheduling loans. We expect final production to resume in November.

Director of Education and Visitor Services Jessie Aucoin shared several virtual initiatives in process, including the Smithsonian's first interactive virtual Story Time program and virtual docent tours. The department is looking ahead and scheduling programs for the remainder of the year. Jessie also shared a recent [Smithsonian Magazine article](#) about how the museum is teaching Social and Emotional Learning during the pandemic.

Director of Public Relations and Internet Affairs Marty Emery provided an overview of how NPM has adapted its communication strategy to increase both internally with museum staff and externally with our Council members in the Stakeholder email. Following advice from Council members, the Postmark email frequency has changed to every two weeks, where it continues to maintain successful engagement markers such as a 34% open rate.

IV. NPM Virtual Discussion

Deputy Director Toby Mensforth and Marty presented on the Museum's current virtual engagement programs as well as future ideas to broaden our reach and impact. Toby talked about the pivot the Museum has been making from primarily in-person experiences into the digital space. He shared that the Museum is focusing on a digital-first engagement strategy by digitizing NPM's large collection and supporting digital learning. The Museum's goals include global collaboration with other philatelic organizations, educational groups and general audiences. Marty shared some examples and invited the Council to share ideas on how to leverage our assets.

The Council discussed their ideas to engage with a virtual audience and to promote the Museum. Council members shared ways to create content and promote to our various audiences. These ideas ranged from connecting with topical associations, gathering data from visitors, increasing the frequency and varying the format of our social media posts, and highlighting our work on the website through social media and direct email to our audiences. Other ideas included a focus on visuals such as video, connecting with topical groups who may not be philatelists, and encouraging daily interactions through history-focused posts. Council members shared examples from other organizations who are thriving in the digital arena.

V. CONCLUSION

Elliot thanked the Council members for their active participation. The meeting concluded at 11:30 am Eastern.



Smithsonian

National Postal Museum

Council of Philatelists Meeting Monday, September 13, 2021

Attendance

COP: Chair Don Sundman, **Exemption 6** Gordon Eubanks, Ian Gibson-Smith, Scott Guthrie, Sonny Hagendorf, Liz Hisey, Yamil Kouri, Patrick Maselis, Doug Mattox, Dan Ryterband, Wade Saadi, Charles Shreve, and Alan Whitman

NPM: Elliot Gruber, Rebecca Ben Atar, Heidi Eitel, Marty Emery, Anissa Kossakowski, Alli Matlesky, Toby Mensforth, Erin Penn, and Chris Warren.

MINUTES

I. Opening Remarks

Museum director Elliot Gruber called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm Eastern. He opened the meeting hoping all were doing well despite COVID-19, and looks forward to when the Council can meet in person. Council Chair Don Sundman thanked everyone for coming. Elliot confirmed that the location for the December meeting will be decided closer to that date.

II. Director Updates

Elliot presented a surprise celebration of Don's tenure as chair of the Council of Philatelists. Elliot highlighted some of the many accomplishments Don oversaw and the **Exemption 6**

[REDACTED]. Fellow Council members Charles Shreve, Sonny Hagendorf and Wade Saadi shared personal anecdotes and compliments of Don's leadership and service.

Don thanked everyone for this surprise and was humbled by their thoughtful words and presentation.

III. Interpretive Master Plan Discussion

Director of Exhibits Heidi Eitel presented the Museum's Interpretive Master Plan (IMP) which will be finalized this Fall. This plan serves as a guidepost for the museum to meet its objectives and goals as it approaches a redesign of the Atrium level galleries and public spaces. The Museum's mission and vision guided the development of the IMP.. The IMP also explores areas of growth such as updating facilities, additional space for education programming and an improved welcoming experience.

Staff from all departments contributed to the plan over a several month period, aided by data from audience research and with a commitment to DEAI. Key themes that developed include **Exemption 5**

Elliot thanked Heidi for her leadership. When finalized, the IMP will be shared with the COP for further discussion and conversations.

The Council asked questions about the priorities of the IMP and next steps. These questions looked at the possibility of physical space for philatelic frames, digital interactives on-site and on the web and Exemption 5 at the Museum in the coming years.

IV. Management Update

Director of Collections Rebecca Ben-Atar shared an update on the Department of Education and Visitor Services (DEVS) for Director Jessie Aucoin. The DEVS team has been focusing on the museum's reopening while also hosting virtual programming and creating Learning Lab collections. Re-opening is going well, with a crowd favorite being styluses for visitors to use with interactives and pull-out frames. Starting September 17, volunteers will return onsite to help staff the Welcome Cart. Docent-led highlights tours remain on hiatus.

Director of Advancement Anissa Kossakowski shared that the Advancement team will be updating records and reaching out to Council members for confirmation of bios, headshots and contact information. Anissa announced the "Smithsonian Legacy Challenge." As part of the Smithsonian's 175th birthday, Exemption 4
Exemption 4
Exemption 4. To date, the Museum has raised more than Exemption 4. Anissa thanked the Council for their generous support of the Museum.

Manager of Public Relations and Internet Affairs Marty Emery shared that the Museum continues to market our website and digital content. The special events staff are promoting and highlighting the Museum's space for event rentals to create a revenue stream. In terms of digital engagement, staff continues to establish infrastructure to support digital offerings and events. Marty also shared that since March 2021, the newsletter subscribers have grown by 3,300 thanks in large part to suggestions from Council members.

Director of Curatorial Affairs Chris Warren shared that Curator Dan Piazza is Exemption 6

Exemption 6 The Curatorial department has finished its oral history program and is starting interviews to capture the institutional knowledge of postal workers. Curatorial staff has also worked on several series that will be available soon like podcasts and filmed interviews. In addition to partnering with several institutions, the Curatorial department has also begun the process to produce unique video content for the Museum.

V. Exemption 6

Exemption 6 The meeting closed at 2:30 pm Eastern Daylight Time.