



governmentattic.org

"Rummaging in the government's attic"

Description of document:	Smithsonian Institution (SI) Meeting Minutes, National Postal Advisory Council, Oct 2017 - May 2021
Requested date:	09-September-2021
Release date:	30-January-2024
Posted date:	12-February-2024
Source of document:	Records Request Assistant General Counsel Smithsonian Institution Office of General Counsel MRC 012 P.O. Box 37012 Washington, DC 20013-7012 Fax: 202-357-4310 Email: SIRecordsReq@si.edu

The governmentattic.org web site ("the site") is a First Amendment free speech web site and is noncommercial and free to the public. The site and materials made available on the site, such as this file, are for reference only. The governmentattic.org web site and its principals have made every effort to make this information as complete and as accurate as possible, however, there may be mistakes and omissions, both typographical and in content. The governmentattic.org web site and its principals shall have neither liability nor responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused, or alleged to have been caused, directly or indirectly, by the information provided on the governmentattic.org web site or in this file. The public records published on the site were obtained from government agencies using proper legal channels. Each document is identified as to the source. Any concerns about the contents of the site should be directed to the agency originating the document in question. GovernmentAttic.org is not responsible for the contents of documents published on the website.



Smithsonian Institution

Office of General Counsel

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

January 30, 2024

RE: Your Request for Smithsonian Records (request number 622774916)

This responds to your request, dated and received in this Office on September 9, 2021, for “a copy of the meeting minutes of the National Postal Museum Advisory Council for meetings from January 1, 2010 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 22 pages of material constituting minutes of meetings of the National Postal Museum Advisory Council from October 2017 – May 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 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.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Larson".

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.

Museum Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

October 13th, 2017

Action Items:

- Review By-Laws and send comments to Elliot by December 1, 2017
- Propose additional council members
- Identification and assistance in reaching out to individuals and companies to support the National Postal Museum (NPM)
- Museum Advisory Council (MAC) meetings dates for 2018 will be set and distributed to the Council shortly

In Attendance: John Nolan, co-chair, Michael Critelli, co-chair, Bert Berkley, Sylvia Cyrus, Pat Donahoe, Mark Shearer and Hamid Saleemizadeh. Smithsonian: Elliot Gruber, Michelle Delaney, Office of the Provost, Marty Emery and Emma Auburn.

Minutes:

Co-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.
- USPS executives were not able to attend but they will at the future meetings.

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 Exemption 5 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- 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.
- 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.
 - It was suggested that NPM needs a virtual guide – an app – to guide visitors throughout the museum. The app could tell rich, multi-media stories.
 - Exemption 5 [REDACTED]
 - 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 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.
- USPS:
 - Upcoming 50th Anniversary
 - NPM's relationship with the USPS is vital to our success
 - We need to Exemption 5 [REDACTED].
 - NPM staff need to Exemption 5 [REDACTED].
 - Members stated and agreed that the:



- USPS is the epicenter of businesses, providing commerce and communication opportunities.
 - USPS and the mailing industry are changing and innovating their business models to better serve businesses and consumers.
- It was stated that the museum should talk about the past, present and future of mail and the mailing industry in the United States and that we should follow-up with **Ex. 6** [REDACTED] regarding **Exemption 5** [REDACTED]
- Mike Critelli suggested we tell the fascinating story about the history and relevance of physical addresses. He cited an example of how electronic addresses can be tied to physical addresses.
- Mike also suggested that we should highlight how the Postal Service has stimulated a great deal of innovation in other industries as a lead customer (e.g. airlines), an enabler (e.g. targeted direct marketing), and a provider of vital services (e.g. residential delivery of mail order pharmaceuticals and genetic test kits).
- Sylvia Cyrus suggested that we **Exemption 5** [REDACTED] She suggested that stamps are the natural way of recognizing important Americans, including African Americans and said that that she will advocate (on behalf of the museum) getting schools and classrooms into the museum. NPM's proximity to Union Station and its close, personal quarters makes the museum unique, and very attractive to visit. She suggested that **Exemption 5** [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Sylvia also suggested that the museum utilize big, digital displays throughout the museum that can be easily be changed to show varying content.
- Hamid Saleemizadeh suggested the following stories:
 - The Evolution of Technology: Manual to Automation. Capture in a time-line and utilize multi-media technologies to provide the learning experiences.
 - The Creation of Address Redirection: The fascinating story of how the USPS uses technology to process change of address requests for forwarding mail to members of the public and businesses (Postal Automated Redirection System, or PARS) through Computer Forwarding System sites nationwide.
 - USPS as First Responders: The Postal Service does amazing work during natural disasters (Katrina – from the human experience perspective).
 - USPS' Impact on Human Lives: Tell the stories of how USPS employees have saved lives and gone above and beyond the call of duty to assist people in need. Tell the story from an historical standpoint, up to present day.
- It was suggested that the museum should **Exemption 5** [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- The meeting took a break to have a preview tour *Beautiful Blooms: Flowering Plants on Stamps* exhibition before its official opening on October 20th.
- Digital ideas:
 - The Council suggested using digital displays in the museum to connect to visiting groups.
 - Virtual guide that can be tailored to a specific group's interests that will guide them through the museum and share more in-depth stories that would be appealing to them.
 - Timeline and evolution of the Postal Service could be displayed.



- Exemption 5 [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- America's Mailing Industry:
 - The Smithsonian's National Postal Museum has embarked on a venture to tell the story of American's Mailing Industry. This research project investigates the 200 year-old partnership between private industry and the United States Postal Service, who together provide efficient and effective communication and commerce channels to consumers and businesses across the United States and the world. The industry supports over 8 million US jobs, generates over \$1.3 trillion in sales revenue and comprises 8% of the US GDP.
 - The project currently has 80 companies telling their stories and 16 donors to the program.
 - We are looking for additional companies to tell their stories and be recognized, in an appropriate manner, within the milestones of USPS history.
- Museum Advisory Council Members Roles:
 - Council members act as advocates and emissaries for the Museum by developing relationships with the public and various constituents of the Museum.
 - If you know you are traveling, staff at NPM would be happy to make arrangements for Council members to visit a museum close by (postal-related or not). Please contact either Emma or Elliot.
 - Fundraising:
 - Council members have a fiduciary responsibility to the National Postal Museum. It is important that each member not only make a personal contribution but also help us identify individuals, foundations and companies that might be interested in becoming more involved in the NPM.
 - The Council identified companies, from a list provided, where they could be helpful.
 - NPM staff will follow-up with each Council member to discuss whom and how they can help NPM raise additional private sector funds. This could include Council Members reaching out to their contacts directly as well as opening doors for NPM staff. Council members also indicated their willingness to send thank you cards or make thank you calls to current donors.
 - Council members suggested Exemption 5 [REDACTED]
 - Bert Berkley stated that he would look into trying to get Elliot to speak at next year's Envelopes Manufacturer's Association meeting.
 - The suggestion was made that Exemption 5 [REDACTED]
 - It was suggested that Elliot should Exemption 5 [REDACTED]
- By-laws:



- Council members were asked to review the draft by-laws, which were developed last year, and to send any comments back to Elliot by December 1.
- Council Membership:
 - Elliot reminded Council members that the maximum number of members on the MAC is 25. Exemption 5 [REDACTED]
 - Council members discussed qualities that would make a good Council member, expanding the skill sets and connections of Council members, increasing diversity within the Council (including but not limited to racial, sex, geography). Members should be persons of distinction in their fields or communities and have a strong interest in serving and supporting the NPM and its mission.
 - Member suggestions Exemption 5 [REDACTED]
 - Exemption 5 [REDACTED]
- Creating Partnerships:
 - Ideas discussed included the Greeting Card Association Gala, MTAC meetings, Supply Management event, Postal Legislation Day events and a Top 150 USPS suppliers event.
- Council Meetings:
 - Bert Berkley suggested that the MAC have two phone meetings in addition to the two face-to-face meetings yearly since a lot of momentum is lost between the two face-to-face meetings. He also suggested that the phone meetings' agenda be limited and more compact.
- The MAC meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Museum Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

March 14th, 2018

Action Items:

- The next Museum Advisory Council meeting will be held via conference call on June 12th from 10:00 am to 11:00 am EST.
 - The council will continue its review of the Smithsonian's Strategic Plan.
- Send any press contacts for media release announcement of the Council to Emma Auburn.
- Any council members who would like to be added to the USA Philatelic magalog mailing list, please tell Emma.
- Hannah Trumbull will send out a list of prospective new corporate members. Please let Hannah know if you can help make an introduction.
- John Nolan will introduce the Museum to the person who runs the Nationals Baseball Academy.
- Michael Critelli will introduce the Museum to his connection at Uber and MLB.

In Attendance: John Nolan, co-chair, Michael Critelli, co-chair, Bert Berkley, Sylvia Cyrus, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Hamilton Davison; USPS: Margaret Pepe; Smithsonian: Elliot Gruber, Hannah Trumbull and Emma Auburn.

Minutes:

Co-Chair opening Remarks:

- Two Council members have retired: Mark Shearer and Mark Proulx.
- We need to identify qualified prospective Council members.
- The Museum shares the wonderful story of the resilience of the USPS and it celebrates what brings us together.

Director Elliot Gruber Remarks:

- Council business:
 - Council members agreed that bringing us together for a dinner the night before our Council meeting was a good idea. In the future we will continue doing dinners the evening before for members to promote a bonding among our board members.
 - The board voted that the Museum for report Council minutes within 20 business days rather than the original 10 days in the by-laws. The Museum will also send out the agenda and other appropriate documents two weeks ahead of meetings.
 - A media advisory will be distributed to the Museum's press contacts. Council members were asked to provide Emma Auburn with any additional press contacts they may have. Council members were also encouraged to forward this media release through their channels.
- William H. Gross upcoming stamp auction
 - The principal donor of the William H. Gross Stamp Gallery will be auctioning his stamp collection that has an estimated value of [REDACTED]
 - The sale proceeds will go benefit selected non-profit organizations. The Museum is working to be included in this list. Possible Museum-related projects include:

▪ [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



- [REDACTED] Exemption 4 [REDACTED]
- Staffing:
 - The museum is re-building and establishing new relationships across the Smithsonian.
 - The Museum continues to make progress in hiring new staff including a Conservator, Director of Development and a part-time special events contractor.
- China and Hong Kong:
 - Elliot, Chief Curator of Philately Dan Piazza and Loan Coordinator Patricia Raynor represented the Museum at the World China Philex 2018 Hong Kong organized by Ex. 6 [REDACTED], a member of our Council of Philatelists. Elliot met with the China National Post and Postage Stamp Museum in Beijing and the Shanghai Post Museum. This was the first step in creating a working partnership with the two leading postal and philatelic institutions in China. China is now home to 25% of all philatelists world-wide.
- Postmaster General, Smithsonian Provost and Undersecretary meetings
 - Provost John Davis visited the Museum and met with Elliot and spoke at the All Staff meeting. This was the first time the recently hired Provost had visited the Museum. John was also given a tour of the exhibitions and visited the Museum's vault.
 - Postmaster General Megan Brennan and several of her senior team met with Elliot to discuss the progress made over the past several months. The Postmaster expressed her strong support for the Museum and its new direction.
 - The first Coordinating Committee meeting since Elliot's arrival will take place on April 17. This will provide an excellent opportunity for the Postmaster General to meet the new Provost. The meeting will focus on developing deeper relationships between the US Postal Service and the Smithsonian.
- Recent and Upcoming Speaking Engagements
 - Elliot presented at the March meeting of the Mailers' Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC). MTAC is a venue for the US Postal Service to share technical information with mailers, and to receive their advice and recommendations on matters concerning mail-related products and services, in order to enhance customer value and expand the use of these products and services for the mutual benefit of Mailing Industry stakeholders and the Postal Service. Hannah and Elliot met many corporate industry leaders.
 - The Museum will be attending and exhibiting at the annual National Postal Forum in San Antonio Texas. This will be an excellent opportunity for the Museum to meet industry leaders and introduce them to the Museum.
 - Elliot will be the key note speaker at the Tiffany Dinner at the Columbus Stamp Show in August. This is the largest annual stamp show in the United States.
 - Elliot will also be speaking at the National Philatelic Exhibition (NAPEX) annual stamp show in June in McLean, Virginia.
- Exemption 6 [REDACTED]
 - Exemption 6 mission is to inspire business professionals to engage with their local nonprofits to transform communities.
 - Six nonprofit organizations were chosen to participate in a four month engagement.
 - The Museum has outlined Exemption 5 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



- Our project's end goal is to identify several areas where the Museum can become a "best in class" museum.
- Visitor Experience:
 - The Museum should determine what the optimal number of daily visitors in the Museum is while still providing a quality visit, keeping in mind that the Museum is a family-friendly experience.
 - The Museum should study ways to follow-up with visitors to attract them to return again.
- Education:
 - There has been significant growth in the number of programs offered and in the number of visitors attending these programs.
 - The museum has doubled the number of family day programming. All family days now are held on both Saturdays and Sundays.
 - School visits continue to grow. The Museum is one of the few Smithsonian museums that all school tours are led by an educational facilitator.
 - The biggest challenge is funding transportation for field trips.
 - This could be a fundraising opportunity.
 - Possibly Ex. 4 could partner with us to transport students. Michael Critelli has a connection to Ex. 4
 - If any board members have connections to companies interested in education or educational programming, please let Museum staff know.
 - Possible ideas for educational programs
 - Target postal workers whose stories are told in the Museum.
 - Exemption 5
 - Building upon the interest in the National Museum of African American History and Culture create joint programs with this museum.
 - Exemption 5
- Marketing, PR and Branding:
 - The banners outside of the Museum are being replaced Exemption 6
 - The Museum should work on ways to increase its web presence, especially on sites like TripAdvisor to see how we can improve our ranking. Currently the Museum is ranked #14 out of 120 museum in Washington, DC. It has a rating of 4.5 stars on TripAdvisor.
 - The Museum should market a visit to the museum as a bundle visit with a larger museum.
 - To visit multiple big mall museums is overwhelming for most visitors, but the Postal Museum offers a more relaxed visit.
 - The Museum should look Exemption 6

Smithsonian Strategic Plan:

- Elliot reviewed the first three goals (seven total) of the Smithsonian's new Strategic Plan.
- Goal 1: Be One Smithsonian
 - All units across the Smithsonian need to unite together.
 - The museums should increase the level of cross promotion and increase the level of staff communication and exchange.

- It was announced recently that next year will be the Year of Music across the Smithsonian.
 - The Museum should find ways to connect stamps Exemption 6 to stories of music.
 - Black History Month could be a unique opportunity to connect history, music and stamps.
 - Make a Smithsonian passport book, similar to the National Parks Service's.
 - Each museum could have its own cancellation.
 - Check if Exemption 6 could make a pictorial cancellation with our image.
 - These all could be themed to the Year of Music.
- Goal 2: Catalyze new conversations and address complex challenges.
 - How does the Museum facilitate conversations?
 - The Museum should be seen as a safe place to have these conversations.
 - Exemption 5
- Goal 3: Reach 1 billion people a year with a digital-first strategy.
 - Tie in the Smithsonian passport book and make it into an app.
 - Each museum you visit you get a stamp tied to their theme.
 - Exhibit more collections online.
 - Invite groups to do guest blogs or YouTube videos.
 - Social media influencers
 - Exemption 6
 - Exemption 5
 -
 -
 - Augmented Reality
 - How can we use it in the Museum?
 - An interest was expressed in making a Virtual Reality Tour for the website and other remote connections to the Museum.
 - The Exemption 6
- The Smithsonian is holding a May director's retreat in May to discuss the implementation in of the Strategic Plan at the unit level.

Exhibitions:

- *Postmen of the Skies:*
 - Nancy Pope spoke about the new exhibition.
 - The exhibit will open May 1st, 2018.
 - This is the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the world's first regularly scheduled airmail service.
 - The exhibit will be located in one of the exhibition galleries in the Atrium and connect to the beacon and airplanes.
 - The Museum is partnering with the College Park Aviation Museum.
- *Alexander Hamilton: Soldier Secretary, Icon*
 - Dan Piazza and Ted Wilson spoke about the new exhibition.
 - The exhibit will open May 25th, 2018 to coincide with the premiere of the musical Hamilton at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. This exhibit will be located in the



Postmasters Office in the Historic Lobby and will focus on the imagery of Hamilton on stamps, original mail sent and signed by him and include loans from within the Smithsonian as well as outside organizations such as the Society of the Cincinnati.

- The Museum is working with [Exemption 6] to try to secure a loan of Alexander Hamilton's dueling pistols for the first month of the exhibition. We should know in the next several weeks if we are able to come to an agreement.
- *Baseball at the Smithsonian*
 - Dan Piazza spoke about next year's major exhibition.
 - *Baseball* will open in the second quarter of 2019.
 - The exhibit will explore America's national pastime through US and international stamps, stamp artwork, postcards, and baseball memorabilia.
 - The exhibit will combine the great postal stamp art and themed stamps in our collection with a wide range of loans from museums and private collectors.
 - Bert suggested that we visit the Negro League Baseball Museum in Kansas City.
 - Margaret said she would check if the Play Ball stamp series has any video content.
 - Possible corporate sponsorship prospects include [Exemption 6]
 - [Redacted]
 - [Redacted]
 - [Redacted]

United States Postal Service Remarks:

- The Postal Service and Museum have been strengthening their relationships over the past six months. The Postal Service, like the Museum, is trying to strengthen their outreach to attract a strong base of philatelists.
 - USA Philatelic magalog
 - Any Council members who would like to be added to this mail list please let Emma know.
 - The USPS is continuing to transition from a catalogue to a magalog.
 - Augmented reality is being interwoven into the publication to interest the younger generation and to show the beauty of how stamps are created.
 - Subscribership has increased since these updates have been made.
 - The magalog is also becoming a platform for educational resources and new content idea including a philatelic corner.
 - The magalog has recently included Museum-related content into the publication.
 - The Museum should consider hosting a weekend event for postal workers.
 - The Museum should consider [Exemption 6]

Fundraising Update:

- Fundraising successes:
 - The Smithsonian Latino Center awarded the Museum a Curatorial Assistant position to assist with our upcoming Baseball exhibit.
 - The Smithsonian Women's Committee awarded our Education Department a grant to translate the Museum's brochures into 10 different languages. (Spanish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Arabic).



- Postal Forum
 - The Museum will have an exhibit table highlighting upcoming exhibits and a photo-op with Mr. and Mrs. Zip. Elliot will be attending evening receptions.
 - The Museum should consider promoting its meeting spaces at the forum.
 - There will be opportunities in advertising. Elliot will also attend the Postal Customer Council evening event.
- Corporate Members Program
 - The Museum's Corporate Members Program allows corporations to fund exhibits, programs and other projects.
 - Vault tours are very valuable **Exemption 5**
 - **Exemption 6** should be included as a prospective member.
 - Associations could use the Museum's rentable spaces as a meet up location for interesting events.
 - Talk to association leaders such as the **Exemption 6**
 - Corporate sponsorship of a blog post/ blog post collaboration.
- *Baseball at the Smithsonian*
 - A matching gift challenge of \$100,000 was announced by **Exemption 6**
 - Hannah will send out a list of prospective corporate members. Please let Hannah know if you can help make an introduction.
 - Michael Critelli said he had a connection to the MLB.
 - Possible prospects could include **Exemption 6**
- Maynard Benjamin gave an informal talk over lunch about the mailing industry and the challenges that face these companies.

Closing Business:

- The next Museum Advisory Council meeting will be held via conference call on June 12th from 10:00 am to 11:00 am EST. An agenda and call in number will be sent out ahead of the meeting.
- Council recruitment
 - Jason Dies, executive Vice President and President of SMB Solutions at Pitney Bowes, will replace Mark Shearer.
 - The Council briefly discussed adding approximately five new members over the next year.
 - The Museum should consider how it can educate and engage visitors in the mailing industry as well as on the volume of mail and parcels that the USPS handles on a daily basis.

Museum Advisory Council
March 2nd, 2020
Smithsonian National Postal Museum

Attendance

In-Person: John Nolan, Co-Chair, Mike Critelli, Co-Chair, Sam Bright, Sylvia Cyrus, Exemption 6
Karen McCormick, Chris Thompson, and Tom Underkoffler
Call-In: Bert Berkley and Jason Dies
NPM Staff: Elliot Gruber, Toby Mensforth, Rebecca Ben-Atar, Heidi Eitel, Marty Emery, Anissa Kossakowski, Dan Piazza, Carly Dwyer, and Erin Penn

Minutes

- Introductory Remarks

Council co-chairs and museum director introduced the meeting, addressed the staffing update and hiring timeline at the museum, leadership changes at the Smithsonian, and the Postal Museum lease of the building.

- MAC Membership

Elliot Gruber discussed working towards a strategic approach for the Museum Advisory Council. Members talked about their preferences for meetings, meeting times and potential new members for the councils. Main takeaways included keeping the Sunday/Monday structure, recommend a longer meeting time if needed, and more pre-reads for presentations.

Exemption 6

We should strive to have three additional council members by Fall 2020.

- Baseball: America's Home Run Update

Heidi Eitel and Dan Piazza presented to the council the exhibition deck which reviews the galleries and the exhibition's objectives. Marty Emery shared the advertisement and promotion plans for the exhibit. The council discussed the exhibit's measurables and analytics and talked about the importance of having these clearly defined.

- The United States Postal Service Update

Chris Karpenko presented an update to the council Exemption 5

- Curseen-Morris Move

Rebecca Ben-Atar presented about the NPM's recent collections move to a Smithsonian storage unit, Museum Support Center (MSC). This project moved 82 crates and ensures the museum staff has better access and control of the collection. She thanked the USPS for providing the Curseen-Morris storage space Ex. 5 for so many years.



- Sylvia Cyrus Presentation
Sylvia shared the packet on the Association for the Study of African American Life and History with the council. Her team and other guests were glad to have Elliot present the newly released Gwen Ifill stamp. The NPM will use the event to make new connections and broaden the museum's reach.
- Eduardo Diaz Presentation
Eduardo Diaz, Director of the Smithsonian Latino Center shared his unit's work with the council. The Latino Center works across the Smithsonian and with affiliated museums to highlight and advance the understanding of Latino history and U.S. Latino contributions to the arts, humanities and science. They will soon be opening a new gallery at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.
- Website Update
Bill Lommel and Katie Burke presented the new website with the council, sharing that the website achieved the goals of consolidating our content into one website. It also serves as a pre-visit planning tool by refining the previous website's navigational tools and visuals. NPM shared that they are working with Smithsonian Libraries to digitize the recently acquired Sally Ride philatelic collection. The website team also shared NPM's participation in the Smithsonian's new Open Access initiative, highlighting a portion of our collection with high-resolution, downloadable images.
- Advancement Update and Discussion
Anissa Kossakowski thanked the council for their participation in supporting the baseball exhibit.
Exemption 4

Action Steps

- The Council will share names for potential new council members.
- NPM will explore the best way to present pre-reads and share them with the council.

Museum Advisory Council

May 6, 2020

Smithsonian National Postal Museum

Attendance

Council Members: John Nolan, Co-Chair, Mike Critelli Co-Chair, Bert Berkley, Sylvia Cyrus, Hamilton Davison, Jason Dies, Karen McCormick, Chris Thompson, Tom Underkoffler

NPM Staff: Elliot Gruber, Toby Mensforth, Rebecca Ben-Atar, Heidi Eitel, Marty Emery, Lynn Heidelbaugh, Anissa Kossakowski, Dan Piazza, Carly Dwyer, and Erin Penn

Minutes

- Introductory Remarks

Council co-chairs, John Nolan and Mike Critelli and museum director Elliot Gruber introduced the meeting. They shared updates to teleworking and Smithsonian's plans for reopening. Plans include potential capital improvements and employee rotations.

- Exemption 5

[REDACTED]

- National Postal Museum's Virtual Presence

Marty Emery discussed the Postal Museum's new online initiatives including virtual exhibits, coloring pages and online lessons. The team is also using this time to update the website, including inputting ADA approved images and updating the search function regarding collections.

- Baseball Timeline

Heidi Eitel shared that the exhibit is experiencing impacts due to COVID-19. The exhibit is delayed and it is unknown when it will be able to open. The exhibit loan shipments, fabrication and construction are temporarily on hold.

- Advancement Update

Anissa Kossakowski shared Smithsonian and the Postal Museum's approach to advancement during COVID-19. Smithsonian has

Exemption 4

[REDACTED]

- NPM's COVID-19 Collecting Plan

Dan Piazza and Lynn Heidelbaugh along with the council discussed the plan to collect artifacts and oral histories around COVID-19. Lynn provided a further history when the Postal Museum collected around 9/11 and the anthrax mail attacks. The curators are actively building relationships with postal worker unions and other employees to

prepare for collecting and cataloguing this time. Dan is also looking towards collecting topics such as voting by mail and medical testing kits.

MAC members shared their additional ideas and connections. For example, John Nolan recommended highlighting postal service and crisis management. Hamilton Davis brought up Exemption 5. Mike Critelli described his experience with voting by mail while he was at Pitney Bowes. Jason Dies suggested documenting the public's reaction to the USPS and to mail carriers. Karen McCormick reaffirmed that the industry is rallying and will continue to share articles she finds.

Action Steps

- The Council will continue to send connections and ideas for collecting.
- NPM will share specific requirements and areas of interest for collecting around COVID-19 from both the mailer and postal service side.



Smithsonian

National Postal Museum

Museum Advisory Council

August 4, 2020

Attendance

MAC: John Nolan, Mike Critelli, Bert Berkley, Sam Bright, Sylvia Cyrus, Hamilton Davison, Joel Quadracci, David Sable, Chris Thompson

NPM: Elliot Gruber, Toby Mensforth, Rebecca Ben-Atar, Heidi Eitel, Anissa Kossakowski, Carly Dwyer, Alli Matlesky, and Erin Penn

Minutes

I. Opening Remarks

Council Co-Chair Mike Critelli opened the meeting with the Council's goals to expand membership. The Council discussed updates regarding the mailing industry and the recent changes to USPS operations.

Museum Director Elliot Gruber shared updates about the Smithsonian re-opening and confirmed that the first round of openings of the National Zoo and the National Air and Space Museum's Udvar-Hazy Center were successful. Elliot also provided an overview of the NPM's strategic planning process, stressing this unique opportunity to reimagine a virtual presence.

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

Heidi Eitel, Director of Exhibits, shared how the Museum is preparing protocols for safe gallery occupancy, exhibit offerings and interactives, cleaning practices, and staff training to have conversations about safety with visitors. The Council discussed

Exemption 5

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. The Council encouraged digital exhibits and exhibits corresponding with required educational curriculum and resources.

III. Staff Updates

Alison R. Bazylnski is our new Assistant Curator for the Smithsonian National Postal Museum. She recently completed her PhD in American Studies at William & Mary and holds an MA in History from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her dissertation, "Fabric Makes the Woman: Rural Women and the Politics of Textile Knowledge,"

examined cotton, silk, and rayon in the interwar United States to interrogate the relationships between people and fabric as part of the interconnected processes of production and consumption. Alison has spent the last ten years pursuing opportunities in museum work and public history, and most recently held fellowships at Cornell University and the Chrysler Museum of Art. Her research interests include material culture, textiles, cultural history, history of consumption, and business history.

Alli Matlesky is 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.

Maureen Leary is 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 used the Museum's closure to work with GSA to replace 12 skylights above the atrium that were cracked and fogged. All objects that were at risk were protectively covered to ensure no damage.

V. Prospective Council Members

The Council reviewed prospective members and suggested additional names and organizations. Members highlighted they are interested in contacts that can lend expertise in subject areas not already covered by the Council, such as online events and tech industries. The Council recommended reaching out to various corporations regardless of known philatelic interest to cast a wide net. Suggested members included

Exemption 6

NPM staff will follow up with the potential contacts and contact individual Council members for prospect ideas and connections.



Smithsonian

National Postal Museum

Museum Advisory Council

February 4, 2021

ATTENDANCE

MAC: John Nolan, Mike Critelli, Bert Berkley, Sylvia Cyrus, Hamilton Davison, Jason Dies, Graham Grady, Karen McCormick, Rhonda Powell, Joel Quadracci, David Sable, Julia Taylor, Chris Thompson, and Tom Underkoffler

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

MINUTES

I. Opening Remarks

Council Co-Chairs John Nolan and Mike Critelli called the meeting to order at 2:30 pm Eastern. They opened the meeting with encouragement for all members to actively participate and share ideas during meetings. John and Mike shared their goal for the Council to think big to help the Museum meet the needs of virtual visitors now and into the future.

II. New Member Introduction

Museum Director Elliot Gruber introduced new Council member Graham Grady, a lawyer from Taft, Stettinius & Hollister, LLP. Graham thanked John, Mike, and Elliot for help in the onboarding process. Graham shared that **Exemption 6**

Exemption 6 Graham looks forward to getting to know other Council members.

III. Smithsonian & NPM Updates

Elliot shared several Museum updates. First, he will be meeting with the Postmaster General in **Exemption 5**

Exemption 5 Second, Elliot shared that the Smithsonian is still closed and looking to start a phased opening in April. NPM will likely open in late Summer or early Fall. The Museum plans to **Exemption 5**

The Council discussed opportunities to engage with a virtual audience to promote the Museum and mail service at large during this period of closure. **Exemption 5**

Exemption 5 Elliot confirmed that the Museum is working to collect postal stories and share the challenges of this time for the future.

Finally, Elliot highlighted and asked for input on the Museum's strategic goal to improve the museum's visitor experience and to focus on digital experience. Post-pandemic, people will still expect some sort of virtual experience even though in-person will never be replaced.

The Council considered the challenges of the virtual environment and came up with ideas and initiatives to ameliorate the online experience. Ideas ranged from audio tours online to activities for parents and teachers. Council members shared potential connections to help improve the museum's virtual offerings in ways that maximize our assets. A strong focus emerged to ensure materials are accessible and meet the needs of educators and families. Council members expressed interest in continuing the discussion at a later date.

IV. Increasing Online Access to NPM's Collection

Director of Collections Rebecca Ben-Atar highlighted the Museum's efforts to improve available information and publish more of our collections on the website. She demonstrated how to navigate through areas where NPM collections are featured, such as the [NPM US Classics Philatelic Collection](#). She shared that publishing special collections through the Smithsonian Learning Lab is just one piece of the puzzle to increase online access to our collection, and helps bring our content to the wider Learning Lab users which include hobbyists, educators, and youth and adult learners. During the pandemic, her team has made great progress in updating records and releasing additional images into the [Smithsonian's Open Access](#) collection. New accessions will be published twice a year to the website.

Database Manager Katie Burke highlighted how thousands more of the museum's collection will soon be accessible for those who use screen readers thanks to modernized standards for providing information. NPM has joined the Smithsonian Description Center project initiative for increased accessibility, enabling Katie to develop standards for image descriptions that are specific to our postal and philatelic collections. The project is being tested by our Collections intern **Exemption 6** as it is developed, and there will be opportunity for volunteers to serve as writers for the Description Center project after its official launch.

The Council discussed how these descriptions will benefit all who use the website, and encouraged the Collections team to add tags to easily explore different topics. NPM staff discussed the various user-friendly website updates that are being implemented as staffing and technology allow.

V. Conclusion

Mike and John thanked Council members for their active participation. The meeting concluded at 3:49 pm Eastern.



Smithsonian

National Postal Museum

Museum Advisory Council

May 11, 2021

ATTENDANCE

MAC: Mike Critelli (Co-Chair), John Nolan (Co-Chair), Bert Berkley, Sam Bright, Sylvia Cyrus, Hamilton Davison, Jason Dies, Graham Grady, Karen McCormick, Rhonda Powell, David Sable, Julia Taylor, Chris Thompson, Tom Underkoffler

Exemption 6

NPM: Elliot Gruber, Toby Mensforth, Jessie Aucoin, Polone Bazile, Heidi Eitel, Marty Emery, Dan Piazza, Alli Matlesky, and Erin Penn

MINUTES

I. Opening Remarks

Council Co-Chair John Nolan called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm Eastern Time. He opened the meeting by summarizing the All Advisory Chair meeting. John highlighted Congressional authorization for the Smithsonian to create two new museums: the National Museum of the American Latino and the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum. John also mentioned the Smithsonian is continuing to work in the digital sphere and refining its hiring process.

Council Co-Chair Mike Critelli shared that the museum is still looking for funding sources for their projects and acknowledged that any gift helps at this time. Mike reminded Council members **Exemption 4**

II. USPS Updates

Exemption 5 & 6

III. General Museum Updates

Director Elliot Gruber and museum managers shared updates about the Museum.

Elliot shared general staff updates, including that Exemption 6

The museum has hired a new Director of Curatorial Affairs Chris Warren who will be starting May 24th. Chris most recently worked at the Library of Congress. This is a new position for the museum.

Director of Exhibits Heidi Eitel shared that the Museum has started planning to renovate the Atrium level exhibits and public spaces and is working on an interpretive master plan. This plan will guide the design and exhibit implementation. In addition, the museum is being prepared for reopening later this summer with object rotations and spring cleaning, and training staff on updated cleaning protocols all taking place.

Director of Education and Visitor Services (DEVS) Jessie Aucoin shared several initiatives and programs her team has transitioned to the virtual space. This includes Story Time for young children and Wine and Design for adult crafting. In the coming months, our DEVS team will launch a book club called “Postmarks and Paperbacks” and a home activity “postcard with heART,” partnering with local artists to work and develop messages to send to those in refugee camps around the world. There will also be a social change panel and virtual field trips for the next academic year. Additionally, her team is reviewing standards and protocols in preparation for reopening, with a focus on training in de-escalation strategy and customer service.

Chief Curator of Philately Dan Piazza shared a recent collaboration between the Postal Museum history curators and NYU students researching postal uniforms. This work creates the foundation from which we can begin collecting oral histories of Postal Service employees. Dan also shared that Elliot and he are working with Exemption 6 at USPS to present at the Mailers' Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC) on objects which the museum wishes to collect related to covid-19 and voting by mail.

Associate Director of Finance and Administration Polone Bazile provided an FY21 budget overview. The

Exemption 5

Director of Public Relations and Internet Affairs Marty Emery provided an overview of how NPM has bolstered its communication strategy both internally with museum staff and externally with Council members. This also includes a new *Stakeholder* newsletter. *Postmark*, the Museum’s monthly e-newsletter, has grown its subscribership by one thousand people in recent months. Marty also announced Cara Nolan has been hired as the new Special Events manager.

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 through creating “snackable” content. Marty and Toby provided some examples and invited the Council to share ideas on how to leverage our assets.

The Council discussed their ideas and asked questions on how to engage with a virtual audience and to prioritize the Museum’s engagement strategy. These ideas included creating community through constant communication, looking into how we hope to connect with audiences, collaborating with various industries **Exemption 6**, and managing internal resources to capitalize on our strengths.

V. CONCLUSION

Elliot thanked the Council members for their active participation. The meeting concluded at 4:30 pm Eastern Time.