

National Archives and Records Administration  
**Presidential Libraries Advisory Committee Meeting**  
National Archives Building - Washington DC  
February 23, 2017

**Official Minutes**

**Advisory Committee Members**

Jerry Fleagle	Hoover Presidential Foundation
Cantwell Muckenfuss	Roosevelt Institute ( <i>alternate</i> )
Alex Burden	Truman Institute
Stephen Hauge	Eisenhower Foundation
Steven Rothstein	John F. Kennedy Library Foundation
Larry Temple	Lyndon Baines Johnson Foundation
William Baribault	Richard Nixon Foundation ( <i>alternate</i> )
Joseph Calvaruso	Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation
Amy Carter	Carter Center
Frederick J. Ryan, co-chair	Ronald Reagan Foundation
James Cicconi	George Bush Foundation
Bruce Lindsey, co-chair	William J. Clinton Foundation
Kenneth Hersh	George W. Bush Foundation

**Foundation Association Members in Attendance**

Clyde Wendel	Truman Institute
Meredith Sleichter	Eisenhower Foundation
Red Cavaney	Gerald R. Ford Foundation
Amy Barbee	Lyndon B. Johnson Foundation
Jerry Zuk	Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation
David Jones	George Bush Foundation
Stephanie Streett	William J. Clinton Foundation
Brian Cossiboom	George W. Bush Foundation
Tobi Young	George W. Bush Foundation
Robbin Cohen	Barack Obama Foundation
David Simas	Barack Obama Foundation
Dana Remus	Barack Obama Foundation

## **NARA Staff in Attendance**

The Honorable David S. Ferriero	Archivist of the United States
Debra Wall	Deputy Archivist of the United States
William Bosanko	Chief Operating Officer
Micah Cheatham	Chief of Management and Administration
Christopher Runkel	Senior Counsel
Susan Donius	Acting Executive - Legislative Archives, Presidential Libraries and Museum Services
Tom Putnam	Acting Director, Office of Presidential Libraries
Stephen Heaps	Acting Deputy Director, Office of Presidential Libraries
Thomas Schwartz	Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum
Paul Sparrow	Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum
Kurt Graham	Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum
Timothy Rives	Dwight D. Eisenhower Library and Museum
Mark Updegrove	Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library and Museum
Michael Ellzey	Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum
Meredith Evans	Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum
Duke Blackwood	Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum
Warren Finch	George Bush Presidential Library and Museum
Terri Garner	William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum
Patrick Mordente	George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum

## **NARA Staff Participating By Phone**

James Roth	John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum
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## **Introductions**

The Archivist of the United States, David Ferriero, welcomed participants and the new faces around the table including Cantwell Muckenfuss, Clyde Wendel, Steven Rothstein, Red Cavaney, Amy Carter, David Jones, Kenneth Hersh, David Simas and Robbin Cohen. Additionally, he welcomed Patrick Mordente, the new Director of the George W. Bush Library, who, at the time, had been on the job for two weeks. General Mordente commented that his first days on the job had been “outstanding” and he was proud to be associated with the presidential library system. The Archivist stated that he was pleased that General Mordente accepted NARA’s offer and is appreciative of his service.

## Obama Presidential Library

Susan Donius provided an update on the Obama Presidential Library. NARA staff have been busy transferring materials since October 26, 2016, to the Library's temporary warehouse located at Hoffman Estates, outside of Chicago, Illinois. Currently there are 14 full time NARA staff - many of whom began working with the materials at the National Archives in Washington DC and at the White House. Ms. Donius announced that as the committee was meeting, the last truck of material was being packed and outside the Archives building departing for Chicago.

At the present time, in terms of historical materials relating to the Obama administration, NARA has in its possession 16,000 cubic feet of textual records, 52 terabytes of audio and visual materials, over 32,000 artifacts, three million born digital photographs, and approximately 489 million emails within the ERA system. On January 20, 2017 NARA launched the official *Barack Obama Presidential Library* web site at [www.obamalibrary.gov](http://www.obamalibrary.gov) which includes a frozen version of President Obama's White House website. This site is now available for research.

The overall effort to launch the Obama Presidential Library is supported by many divisions within the agency including NARA's Facilities Division; the Presidential Materials staff; the Offices of General Counsel; Innovation; Information Services; Human Capital, and - of course - the Office of Presidential Libraries. NARA's most important partner is the Obama Foundation. Ms. Donius thanked David Simas, the CEO of the Obama Foundation and Robbin Cohen, its Executive Director, for coming to the meeting and for their ongoing support.

David Simas stated that the Obama Foundation is looking forward to working with NARA, the other Presidential Foundations, and the thirteen Presidential Libraries. Mr. Simas thanked the entire team at NARA for the manner in which the collaborations with the Obama Foundation have unfolded - many of which have never been done before.

When completed the Obama Presidential Center will be an archives and museum as well as an "engagement center." It will be one of the first Presidential Libraries built in the middle of an urban center. It was important for the President and First Lady for this to be hosted on the South Side of Chicago as it is where they met and launched their careers. In June the Obama Foundation announced the lead architectural team of Tod Williams and Billy Tsien (TWBTA) from NYC and Interactive Design Architects (IDEA) from Chicago. All of the contractors will have a Chicago-based focus. This will be a large project and it is President Obama's intention that the project bring economic growth and development to the South Side of Chicago. The site will be at Jackson Park in a space that has a rich history. The goal is to open up this jewel that exists on the South Side and be inclusive of the community in everything they do. They have started an "inclusive council" that will look at diversity and inclusion. Given the footprint, there is an opportunity to develop an accessible public space adjacent to the Library and Museum.

The Obama Foundation launched its website, [www.obama.org](http://www.obama.org), on January 20, 2017, which includes a video of President Obama and the First Lady. The video asked the public for feedback on what the work of the Foundation should be. The intention is for the foundation to represent the American people. They received over 150,000 responses in the first week – including e-mails, stories, selfies, etc. The President stated in his farewell address that he wants all citizens to believe in their capacity to bring about change. All of the Obama Foundation’s programming, partnerships, and initiatives will be about empowering people. They will create exhibits that aim to ask people to explore what *they* can do to make their world better. This is their organizing principle. This is consistent with what FDR said when he dedicated the first Presidential Library when he observed that a nation needs three things: 1) An appreciation of its past; 2) an appreciation of its future; and 3) a citizenry that can look to the past and build upon that to correct mistakes that occurred previously. Mr. Simas concluded by reiterating that he and his colleagues are looking forward to working with NARA and the other presidential libraries and foundations.

### **General Principles Document**

Tom Putnam, Acting Director of the Office of Presidential Libraries, and Larry Temple, Chairman of the Board of Trustees at the Lyndon B. Johnson Foundation provided an update from the General Principles sub-committee (for which they served as co-chairs). Mr. Putnam explained that approximately one year earlier when the group met at the LBJ Library, the National Archives presented the “Guiding Principles” document to the full advisory committee and the foundation representatives provided reactions to the initial draft.

In response, the Archivist created a subcommittee of the Archivists Advisory Committee to edit and propose a new draft. In addition to Mr. Putnam and Mr. Temple, subcommittee members included William Baribault, Meredith Evans, Kurt Graham, and Stephanie Streett (with Susan Donius serving as NARA’s designated official). Mr. Putnam noted that the group worked over the course of this past year to refine the principles and that this was one of the first times in his memory where representatives of the libraries and the foundations discussed these issues at a global level. Mr. Putnam thanked Mr. Temple for his efforts serving as co-chair of this subcommittee.

Larry Temple said the group owed appreciation to whoever wrote the original draft as it proved helpful to launching the discussion. One point on which the foundation representatives all agreed was that they did not want a prescriptive document to which all of the libraries and foundations would need to conform. Mr. Temple asserted that everyone agrees that there is a uniqueness to every library and, in turn, to each library and foundation partnership.

The committee presented a new draft of the document which they believe is aspirational and unanimously recommended it to the full advisory committee. No one in the room had questions or comments. Tom Putnam said there was no need to vote formally. Unless there are objections, the document will go to the Archivist for his consideration.

The Archivist commented that he has been updated throughout the year-long process and is very pleased with the product and with the recommendation to create a separate document for the library directors giving them an official charge that encompasses the top duties and responsibilities of their position.

Mr. Putnam concluded the presentation by sharing a story based on his former work at the Kennedy Library. He concluded that the work and mission of presidential libraries is immeasurably enhanced when working in partnership with their respective foundations. Speaking on behalf of his fellow subcommittee members, he stated that if this document encourages greater collaboration between libraries and foundations, it will have been well worth the effort.

## **Budget Update**

The Archivist introduced Micah Cheatham, NARA's Chief of Management and Administration, to provide an update on the government wide hiring freeze and on the FY 2017 budget. On January 23, 2017 a Presidential Memorandum was issued that froze all Federal hiring with limited exceptions. It is unclear how long the freeze will continue. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is developing a plan to shrink the overall size of the Federal government and details will be announced in the spring of 2017.

There are very few exceptions that can be made to the hiring freeze. One, for example, is for "public safety" and NARA is trying to determine which, if any, positions within the agency qualify. The guidance does permit the hiring of positions that serve at the pleasure of the Archivist which means that the current (and future) searches for library directors can continue.

There is also a process to reallocate within the workforce. For example, NARA can permit *temporary* lateral assignments or promotions not to exceed 120 days. The agency is trying to determine a fair way to grant these opportunities that would allow flexibilities within the workforce. The other provision of note is the prohibition on contracting out staffing as a means of circumventing the freeze. This is very important for libraries who have relied, in the past, on foundations for staffing. The guidance is clear that NARA cannot contract out staff positions in order to avoid the hiring freeze. For example, if there is work that was being performed by a NARA employee before the hiring freeze was initiated, that work cannot now be contracted out to be performed by a Foundation staff member.

It is expected that the President will issue a “skinny budget” on March 15, 2017 for the 2018 fiscal year. Mr. Cheatham explained that he expects cuts at NARA, although not the 25% cuts quoted across many other agencies. Like the rest of the Federal government, NARA is currently operating on a continuing resolution that ends on April 28, 2017. Mr. Cheatham concluded his remarks and asked for questions.

The Archivist stated that if other Federal agencies are shut down or reorganized, there will be an impact on NARA because the paper and electronic records of those agencies will have to be handled appropriately.

Larry Temple asked about the difference between “contracting out” in the typical sense of the government having to pay a contractor for those services versus a Foundation deciding to hire a staff person if the Library cannot meet a specific programming need. The former would not save the government money but the latter clearly would.

Mr. Cheatham replied that the hiring freeze is not about cost, it is about limiting the size and scope of Federal government.

Bruce Lindsey asked if NARA cedes certain types of work could the foundation take on those responsibilities. Mr. Cheatham said in some cases this would be acceptable.

William Baribault expressed his uncertainty regarding the different situations. If the government shrinks and a nonprofit is willing to pick up the activity, what is the issue?

Mr. Cheatham explained there is a difference between ceding a responsibility permanently and the Foundation paying for an activity that is currently considered part of NARA’s mission.

Debra Wall asked if we would get more guidance on this from OMB. Mr. Cheatham did not think so.

Bruce Lindsey stated that many foundations have or are working out agreements with NARA to possibly keep the jointly run museum and public spaces open if the government shuts down. Does the hiring freeze address this issue? In other words do those agreements still apply or would they need to be cancelled? Chris Runkel responded that NARA does not have clear guidance from OMB on this issue. Micah Cheatham concurred and stated there is currently no staff in OMB who can review these agreements.

Steven Rothstein wondered if Mr. Cheatham thought there would be another continuing resolution on April 29, 2017.

Mr. Cheatham responded that it was possible. The House of Representatives is pushing forward with 12 appropriation bills in hopes of passing a budget, not just a continuing resolution. The Senate majority has said they do not have time to consider these appropriation bills with all the work that is underway related to various confirmation hearings. The House and Senate are not in alignment on strategy so it is hard to say.

The Archivist closed this session by thanking Mr. Cheatham for his service and his expertise.

(10 minute short break)

### **Conversation with Nixon Historians Mary Brennan, David Farber, Dean Kotlowski, Lien-Hang Nguyen.**

The Archivist opened the second half of the meeting stating that in his opinion one of the reasons why the new Nixon Library permanent exhibits have been well received is because of the role professional historians played in the process.

Before introducing the historians, Nixon Library Director Michael Ellzey provided some historical background. The Nixon Library and Museum was opened as a privately run institution in 1990. President Nixon was actively involved in every aspect of the planning, design, and opening of the Library. In 2007 the Nixon Library and Museum became part of NARA under a Joint Operating Agreement with the Nixon Foundation. At the time, while there was a change in curatorial oversight of the museum, for the most part the exhibits went unchanged. In 2011 the library director and curatorial team curated and opened a new exhibit on Watergate.

In 2013, NARA and the Nixon Foundation began to discuss a new permanent exhibit which would be a fairer, more balanced, and factual presentation of President Nixon's life and presidency. The Library and Foundation knew all eyes would be on the Nixon Library. The Foundation shared the same motivation in developing a more factual presentation. Mr. Ellzey introduced the historians: Dean Kotlowski, Mary Brennan, David Farber and Lien-Hang Nguyen. Professor Kotlowski was present in the room and the three others joined by phone. Mr. Ellzey concluded his remarks stating that the process worked well and that the four independent historians reviewed every iteration of the script and the media interactives. As a result - when the new museum opened it was very well received by the public and by the museum critics. Conspicuously absent were any negative reviews. The Archivist commented that Edward Rothstein gave a very positive review in the Wall Street Journal and that he is known as one of the toughest museum critics in the country.

Before the historians spoke, William Baribault shared a few words from the perspective of the Nixon Foundation. He noted that Foundation engaged *Thinkwell* for writing the script and credited them with taking a different approach in which the museum experience does not begin chronologically with President Nixon's childhood but instead immerses visitors in the turbulent times of the 1960s. He noted that it was an interesting process for him to observe as the *Thinkwell* staff had not lived through the era. After *Thinkwell* drafted the script, it was reviewed by the Foundation, NARA, and the four historians. He noted the comments from the historians fell into three main categories: 1) factual errors; 2) the need for more information and context about a particular item and; 3) reconciling differing opinions on outcomes or facts. He concluded that the best test of the new exhibits has been the response from the visitors who have reported walking away from the museum with a totally different perspective of President Nixon and of that time period in our nation's history. He suggested that members of the press have also commented on their perspective having been changed after their visit.

Professor Dean Kotlowski spoke first and discussed his experiences working on the project. His specialty was civil rights and he was asked to review for factual errors. Professor Kotlowski stated that he agreed with the decision to begin with the 1960s and the Nixon presidency. He also applauded the replica of the Oval Office in the heart of the museum. He then briefly recounted a few lessons learned throughout the process. First, he stated, that there is a clear difference between academic history and public history, including the idea of how much text to include in a museum. He appreciated that NARA has developed a means to bring academic historians into these conversations about museum redesigns and felt that the discussions were open and free flowing. Overall he felt he and his colleagues were listened to, although he realized the historians did not have final control over the finished product.

In terms of ways the process could be improved upon in the future, he suggested NARA could go even further and deeper than they did. NARA could possibly engage more historians although he acknowledged that there needed to be limits. He commented that there is a perception that presidential libraries are always favorable to the president and asserted that this issue can be assuaged by consulting with professional historians which will help NARA to meet the expectations of its varied constituents and other historians. In the end, he suggested, what is most important is for the museums at presidential libraries to present our former presidents as complex and multifaceted individuals. The goal is to build on what the Nixon team has done in terms of its new exhibits and strive to paint a nuanced and balanced portrait of each president.

Professor Mary Brennan described her experience as very positive. Before the meeting she had reviewed some of the comments and reviews she had submitted during the process. In the end she was very pleased with how NARA and the Nixon Foundation handled her suggestions. While they didn't make all the changes she suggested - they did take the ones that she thought were the most important.

In the future, Professor Brennan would recommend that the historians have more interaction with people who were initially writing the story. This would help the historians to understand the writer's original intentions and help the writer to appreciate the historians' perspective. She felt that in the end the new exhibit is an example of what can and should be done with exhibits that are accessible to the public but do not make historians grit their teeth. Professor Brennan is an expert on Pat Nixon and was initially disappointed that Mrs. Nixon didn't get more coverage, although when she visited the museum she realized that the First Lady is a sizeable presence in the museum. She felt that NARA had chosen a good blend of historians. She commented that, in the future, she didn't think a larger group was necessary but that it is important to have specialists representing different areas of the presidency. Ultimately she felt that in this process that NARA had accomplished its goal.

David Farber shared four points from his experience: 1) fact checking is critical though the review needs to include more than just that; 2) make sure that the historians that are chosen can comment on the areas that are going to be most focused on in the museum; 3) consider historical perspectives outside of the presidential narrative and; 4) allow the historians to push harder about the various roles played by the president such as "the president as a politician." In terms of future improvements, he suggested that the historians could and should perhaps communicate between each other and discuss matters more collaboratively.

Professor Nguyen described her experiences working on the project and felt overall they were all quite positive. She felt the exhibits were successful in conveying the choices Nixon grappled with in dealing with Vietnam and in addressing the various perspectives on the Vietnam War. In terms of future museum redesigns, her most important recommendation is to include the historians earlier in the process. In her case, Professor Nguyen was asked to comment on the documents that were chosen related to Vietnam which she did and her comments were fully considered. But had she been involved earlier, she would have made different choices in terms of the documents to be displayed.

Tom Putnam thanked the four historians for their participation. He mentioned that the Truman and Eisenhower Libraries have both begun the process of redesigning their museums and that the lessons learned from the Nixon Library experience will be applied to these two initiatives.

Bruce Lindsey said he understood the advantage of a historian panel for libraries like the Eisenhower or Truman where there are 50 years of history. He asked whether this same model is applicable to developing a new museum like the one at the Obama Library.

Professor Kotlowski responded that by all means historians should play a role in developing the Obama museum. Contemporary history covers historical developments that can be as recent as yesterday. Many colleges and universities have specialists and historians on contemporary

history. Moreover the debates and developments that occurred during President Obama's administration all stem out of our national history - and historians can help to put the exhibits that are being designed at the Obama museum into a larger historical context.

Clyde Wendel asked if historians had input on which issues were covered in the exhibits.

Professor Brennan responded that the historians commented on the factual accuracy of the script they were given but had less of a role in determining the topics that were covered or the overall direction of the script. As Professor Nguyen has suggested, Professor Brennan made the point that had she been given the opportunity, she would have potentially chosen different archival materials to highlight. For example, in the Pat Nixon section of the exhibits, the museum designers chose to include President Nixon's schedule while they were in China but not hers.

### **Kennedy Centennial Activities**

Steven Rothstein, Executive Director of the Kennedy Library Foundation, provided an update on the Kennedy Centennial efforts that are underway. On Presidents Day (February 20, 2017) the U.S. Postal Service issued a new stamp in JFK's honor. President Kennedy was born on May 29, 1917. That happens to fall on Memorial Day this year and the Kennedy Library Foundation is planning a weekend celebration and all are invited. One of the highlights will be a forum with historian, David McCullough. Mr. Rothstein shared pins with everyone in the room that were developed for the centennial. James Roth, the Library's Acting Director, was on the phone and he noted that both the Kennedy Library and NARA are involved in the planning for the centennial.

### **Archivist's Closing Remarks**

The Archivist mentioned that he is being open and transparent with all NARA staff as NARA receives information from OMB. He committed to doing the same with the Foundations.

Tobi Young from the George W. Bush Foundation commented that it would be helpful to get a list about what the Trust Fund *can* and *cannot* be used for so that the Libraries and Foundations don't waste time requesting things that will not be approved by the Trust Fund. The Archivist agreed to develop a document with these guidelines.

The Archivist mentioned that this advisory committee meeting was Mark Updegrave's last as he has accepted another position outside the agency. He praised Mark for a job well done and having transformed the LBJ Library. Mark thanked the Archivist and Susan Donius for their leadership and said that during his tenure he had observed how the presidential libraries have grown better and stronger over time.

Mr. Updegrave also thanked Larry Temple of the LBJ Foundation for their partnership. Mr. Updegrave concluded by stating that the current set of library directors is, in his opinion, the strongest group of leaders that he has known during his years working for NARA.

The Archivist closed the meeting by announcing that the group will meet next in Grand Rapids at the Ford Museum which has also recently been re-designed. Ideally the meeting will be in the fall or early winter of 2017 but that will depend on finding a date that works for all.

### **Action Items**

1. Submit Report of the General Principles Subcommittee to the Archivist for review and acceptance.
2. Develop guidance for presidential libraries and foundations concerning the proper use and purposes of Trust Fund expenditures.
3. Schedule next Archivist Advisory Committee meeting at the Ford Museum in Grand Rapids, Michigan in the fall of 2017 or early 2018.