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Treasury Contender Allison: Meeting Trump ‘Like a Job Interview’

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Former BB&T Corp. CEO John Allison, a potential Treasury secretary nominee, said Tuesday that his meeting with President-elect Donald Trump and top aides “looked like a job interview and also I think a sincere effort to get a little advice.”

Allison said on Fox News that his meeting Monday in New York also included Vice President-elect Mike Pence and Trump strategist Steve Bannon. Two people familiar with Trump’s selection process said Nov. 23 that Allison was a late entrant to the Treasury short list.

A director at investment bank Moelis & Co. who has called for a repeal of 95 percent of regulations, Allison, 68, reiterated his desire to see such cuts, particularly those that he said stifle the creation of small businesses. Some rollbacks may be politically unpalatable, he said.

“I’d like to see the repeal of Dodd-Frank,” Allison said of the banking regulation bill passed after the 2008 financial crisis that set strict capital requirements on banks. “I don’t think that’ll happen politically, but Dodd-Frank can be radically revised.”

A critic of the Federal Reserve who also served as CEO of the libertarian-leaning, nonprofit Cato Institute, Allison said his “long-term ambition” for monetary policy “would be to get rid of the Federal Reserve and get back to a private banking system.” The Fed is “a scary organization because there’s no control,” he said.

Allison said he would want to see rules that would constrain or define the Fed’s ability to change interest rates in response to economic conditions because of what he called “a very difficult mess.” He didn’t specify the nature, but both Allison and Trump have said low interest rates create or exacerbate asset bubbles.

Although the two work closely together, the Fed is independent of the Treasury.

Steven Mnuchin, a former Goldman Sachs Group Inc. partner who served as finance chairman for the Trump campaign, on Nov. 23 was said to be a leading candidate for the job, while David McCormick from Bridgewater Associates LP was also said to be under consideration.

Pence told reporters Monday “there will be a number of very important announcements” on Tuesday. Trump in a statement Tuesday said he planned to nominate Representative Tom Price of Georgia as his secretary of Health and Human Services and Seema Verma as administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Another Cabinet announcement will be made Tuesday afternoon, Trump spokesman Jason Miller said on CNN.