

NJ MOTION PICTURE AND TELEVISION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, May 22, 2024

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE: Chairman Michael Uslan; Commissioner Tim Sullivan; Commissioner Carol Cuddy; Mayor Janice Kovach; and Commissioner Michael Vezza.

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE VIA CONFERENCE CALL: Commissioner Daniel Bryan; Commissioner Tom Bernard; Dr. Thomas Haveron; Joseph Petrecca representing Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo; and Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Tahesha Way.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Vice Chairman David Smith; Secretary Shelley Adler; Commissioner Karen Kessler; and Commissioner Elizabeth Mattson.

COMMISSION STAFF IN ATTENDANCE: Steven Gorelick, Senior Advisor; Charles Ricciardi, Senior Project Officer; Elizabeth Parchment, Team Lead, Marketing/Strategic Initiatives; David Schoner, Assistant Director; Joseph Marra, MP/TV Officer; Rachel Hudec, Film/Marketing Assistant; Caitlin Berg (via conference call), Senior Advisor, Marketing and Business Development; and Anthony Orlando, Project Assistant.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Jamera Sirmans, Associate Counsel; Christopher Kay, Deputy Attorney General; NJEDA staff: Kathleen Coviello, Matt Sestrich, Danielle Esser, Hector Serrano, and Muneerah Sanders.

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Uslan called the meeting to order at 10:30am and read the Open Public Meetings announcement. Ms. Sanders took the roll call.

PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES:

The next item of business was the approval of the March 13, 2024, meeting minutes. A motion was made to approve the minutes by Mayor Kovach, seconded by Mr. Sullivan, and approved by the ten (10) board members present.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Uslan remarked that both Executive Director Jon Crowley and Vice Chairman David Smith are absent due to their attendance at the Cannes Film Festival, where they are working to help New Jersey create new connections and begin new Film projects.

Chairman Uslan acknowledged that the television industry has been slow, and that this is occurring nationwide, not just in New Jersey. He provided the Board with statistics and reasoning for the issue, explaining that the industry is still awaiting the outcome of labor negotiations. He stated that once the two remaining unions have reached an agreement, television production will increase significantly.

Chairman Uslan talked about the clutter of productions since the COVID-19 pandemic and how this led to an overall cutback on production. He talked about production companies merging and

making huge cuts but reaffirmed that New Jersey will still be the home for opportunity even if the creation of content decreases. Chairman Ulsan described why New Jersey will continue to grow in the film industry, including: tax incentives, crew availability, location, equipment, studio and sound space.

Chairman Ulsan ended his remarks with predictions for the summer and the upcoming year in the box office. He explained that expectations for the box office numbers this summer are not as high as last summer, but suggested the film *Joker Foley*, filmed in New Jersey will be released in October. The Chairman also thanked Steve Gorelick for his many years of service to the Film Commission and congratulated him for his upcoming retirement.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Executive Director's report was given by NJEDA CEO Tim Sullivan. Mr. Sullivan spoke about the NJMPTVC being on the road. Mr. Sullivan spoke about a recent trip that the Governor and the First Lady led to California. Mr. Sullivan spoke about meeting with large film companies and experiencing their work environments first-hand, as well as conversations about the future of film in New Jersey.

Mr. Sullivan spoke about the future of business development in the film industry within New Jersey, emphasizing the Chairman's remarks. He also provided an update on the newsletter, stating that it was crafted to be more readable, and he highlighted statistics that were included in the most recent newsletter. Mr. Sullivan shared information about the Sundance RFI, acknowledging that New Jersey did not win, but submitted a competitive application. Mr. Sullivan spoke about various film set visits, focusing on an April visit with the First Lady to the set of *Miller by Marriage* in Morristown.

Lastly, Mr. Sullivan thanked Steve Gorelick for his service, and read a proclamation from the Governor thanking him for his years of service to the New Jersey Film Commission. Mr. Gorelick thanked the Commissioners and staff in the room, and on the conference call for working alongside him for 40+ years.

MARKETING UPDATE

Ms. Elizabeth Parchment provided an update on marketing initiatives. She stated that the Film Ready program is going strong. She briefed the Commission on the current state of the program and stated that it will well exceed its goal of certifying 75 communities by the end of the year. 150 towns have participated in the previous 5 workshops, and 22 communities are currently certified. Ms. Parchment also showed graphics from the most recent workshop and revealed the new NJMPTVC logo.

WEBSITE UPDATE

Mr. Charles Riccardi stated that there will be upcoming improvements to the website, including a focus on graphics, concise wording, and easy site navigation. He also spoke about a recent meeting with NJOIT, the office now responsible for changing and updating the website. Mr. Riccardi commended their staff for their work and said the website will continue to improve with their guidance.

PRODUCTION REPORT

Mr. David Schoner spoke about current pre-production projects, focusing on the interest that Netflix has taken in New Jersey and listed three of their pre-production projects: *Happy Gilmore*, *The Beast and Me*, and the untitled Katherine Bigelow project. Mr. Schoner also listed current projects being filmed in the State and films that recently wrapped, emphasizing that New Jersey continues to stay active in the industry even though the nation overall may not.

EDA UPDATE

The EDA update was provided by the EDA Chief Economic Transformation Officer, Kathleen Coviello. Ms. Coviello emphasized the importance of incentives programs and the economic impact that the film industry is bringing to the State of New Jersey. She also announced various updates on the Film Tax Credit Program by listing two award approvals that occurred at the May NJEDA Board Meeting:

- Studio Partner: Netflix - twelve (12) sound stages will be built at Netflix in Monmouth County
- New Film Lease Partner: Togus Urban Renewal (1888 Studios)

Ms. Coviello also spoke about the role of EDA Real Estate staff via the Aspire Tax credit program which provides tax credits to support the funding gap for various real estate projects including film studios.

Ms. Coviello shared the following updates that were included in the recent EDA newsletter:

- Film Studio Partner award for Lionsgate; originally approved in December 2022
- Improved turn times for the review of Film Tax Credit Applications

Lastly, Ms. Coviello informed the Commission on a recent release of a RFI around workforce training in the film industry. After securing input on what training should look like, Ms. Coviello shared that the EDA will launch training initiatives with \$5 million dollars in funding from the state budget in hopes of creating a portfolio approach to training in the industry.

NEW BUSINESS/OPEN FLOOR

Commissioner Kovach announced that at next year's Variety Tower of Women luncheon she volunteered the NJMPTVC to contribute 450 T-shirts with the new NJMPTVC on them in bags for the guests. Commissioner Sullivan supported the idea.

Commissioner Kovach also recalled speaking to attorneys during a presentation for the New York City Bar Committee, in which they applauded the quick turnaround New Jersey has had in the Film Tax Credit Program in comparison to the State of New York.

Commissioner Daniel Bryan spoke about a set visit to the filming of *A Complete Unknown* in Cape May, New Jersey, stating that it was very enjoyable and educational. He commended David Smith for his part in putting the filming together. He mentioned that the broad consensus from people

on the set was that New Jersey is a great place to film, specifically praising the Film Ready program.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Myles Pressey from the Business Action Center thanked Mr. Gorelick for his leadership and dedication to the Commission, during that time they spent working together.

Steve praised Myles for his work and thanked him for his comment.

Chairman Uslan called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

On a motion by Commissioner Janice Kovach, and seconded by Commissioner Tom Bernard, the meeting was adjourned at 11:28am.