

**NJ MOTION PICTURE AND TELEVISION COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Thursday, September 19, 2024**

**COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Chairman Michael Uslan; Vice Chairman David Smith; Commissioner Tom Bernard; Emma Corrado representing Commissioner Tim Sullivan; Mayor Janice Kovach; Kevin O'Brien representing Commissioner Felicia Grant; and Commissioner Michael Vezza.

**COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE VIA CONFERENCE CALL:** Commissioner Shelley Adler, Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo; Commissioner Daniel Bryan; Dr. Thomas Haveron; Commissioner Karen Kessler; and Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Tahesha Way.

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** Commissioner Carol Cuddy.

**COMMISSION STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:** Jon Crowley, Executive Director; Charles Ricciardi, Senior Project Officer; Elizabeth Parchment, Team Lead, Marketing/Strategic Initiatives (via conference call); David Schoner, Assistant Director; Joseph Marra, MP/TV Officer; and Rachel Hudec, Film/Marketing Assistant.

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Jamera Sirmans, Associate Counsel; NJEDA staff: Kathleen Coviello (via conference call), Paul Ceppi, Danielle Esser, Hector Serrano, Fabiola Saturne, and Muneerah Sanders.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

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

**PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES:**

The next item of business was the approval of the May 22, 2024 meeting minutes. A motion was made to approve the minutes by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Vezza, and approved by the twelve (12) board members present.

Commissioner Adler abstained from voting on the minutes because she did not attend the previous meeting.

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Chairman Uslan stated that the year started off slowly with threatened work stoppages, but; in spite of that, 2024 is evolving into another enormous year for New Jersey, possibly leading to a \$600 million year.

Chairman remarked that to put it in perspective, the industry in Los Angeles is in a state of depression, and a common slogan there is "Survive until 25", figuring that it might not be until the middle of 2025 before there's an uptick out there.

Chairman Uslan noted that, if you end the year with the accelerated marketing campaign under the auspices of the Film Commission and the EDA, the magnificent special edition of Variety magazine, the Commission's presence at the Cannes Film Festival, and the Toronto Film Festival, we have truly upped our game. He noted that New Jersey is having as many new productions starting in Q4 as any other state in the union.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Diversity & Workforce Committee:** Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Tahesha L. Way and Carol Cuddy, Co-Chairs

Lt. Governor Way advised that the committee met on September 5, 2024, to discuss and review a draft mission statement to guide the committee's work going forward.

She advised that staff provided the committee with an update regarding the RFI that was issued to address Film, Television and Workforce needs; and the committee also discussed action items to address workforce training and development needs and potential industry partnerships.

Mr. Crowley added that as part of the action items, Jen Becker, and David Ramsay, of the EDA's Workforce Innovation Partnerships division have been exploring potential partnerships with our colleges and universities here in the state.

He added that Elizabeth Parchment, David Schoner, and he have been reaching out to all of the productions that are currently in state or coming into state and looking at internships, and apprenticeships for those productions.

Mr. Crowley also noted that staff is working with our Stage Alliance Group, which is a consortium of a lot of different vendors and providers, and looking at internships, which could give people a broad exposure to every aspect of the industry.

**Production Committee:** Tom Bernard and Janice L. Kovach, Co-Chairs

Mayor Kovach stated that the Committee met on June 24, 2024 to discuss and review a proposed mission statement to guide and support the committee's work. The committee brainstormed ideas for increasing production in New Jersey and identified action steps to pursue.

She stated that one suggestion was meeting with location managers. We had done one previously, where we brought location managers out on a tour to give them a sense of what New Jersey had to offer

She added that Commissioner Bernard recommended that the Incentives staff go out and visit some of the production sites, to see what's actually happening on a film set. Commissioner Bernard reiterated that it's so important for everybody in the EDA who's working on film to have gone to a film set.

Commission Kovach asked Mr. Schoner if he had additional comments.

Mr. Schoner stated that staff is working on identifying more strengths that we can add to New Jersey. There are businesses that we want to bring to the State so there will be more choices.

Mr. Crowley stated that the Commission fully agrees with Commissioners Kovach and Bernard regarding exposure to production sites, and that interested staff should work through the Commission regarding arrangements to get on set.

**Marketing Committee:** Daniel Bryan and Karen Kessler, Co-Chairs

Commissioner Bryan stated that the committee met and outlined the work that's ahead of us. He added that we have a lot of work to do to determine who our audiences are, and how to communicate with them both through organic social media, and then through paid efforts as well.

He mentioned several efforts, including ensuring that everyone within the industry knows about the tax incentives and the progress that the industry is making to get them to come to New Jersey; and then ensuring that the public knows how effective these measures are; And not only their tax dollars are being put to good use, but; that this is an industry they should be supporting.

Chairman Usler asked Mr. Riccardi if he had comments to add to the report.

Mr. Riccardi remarked that the commissioners have really great suggestions in terms of focusing in on our audience and, that staff shared with the committee everything we do with social media, work on our websites, and every other aspect of advertising.

He added that September was really a fantastic month in terms of getting into the trades. There was an article in Varieties magazine, and also a full-page ad for My Land Studios here in Kearny.

He also noted that there was a full-page advertisement for filming in New Jersey in the back of the Varieties magazine, and that the Commission also had a presence in the Hollywood Reporter on screen.

He added that he was informed of a mobile billboard that drove around the streets of Toronto at the Film Festival really.

Mr. Crowley added that the Commission didn't have a big presence online with social media, but now we now have a calendar, thanks to Mr. Ricciardi's efforts.

**EDA UPDATE**

Ms. Coviello stated that the Film Tax and Digital Media Tax Credit program, administered by the EDA was audited by the Office of Legislative Services in 2024. The EDA received a written copy of the audit which covers the period from July 1, 2020 to December 31, 2023, and over that time, there was 151 projects awarded tax credits for approximately \$705 million.

Ms. Coviello noted that the program was brought back into being under the Film and Digital Media JOBS Act in 2018, and this was the first audit of the EDA's administration of the program since it came back into being. The good news is we received very high praise from the Office of Legislative Services on the rigor and administration in carrying out our fiduciary responsibility.

Ms. Coviello thanked and acknowledged EDA staff who administer the tax credit programs, including Matthew Sestrich, Matthew Abraham, and Chris Del Vecchio, a former member of the Film Commission.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Mr. Crowley stated that he wanted to start off with more good news. He stated that New Jersey has 12 productions starting in September and October. More productions than New York, Los Angeles, Louisiana, and Georgia.

Mr. Crowley also provided updates on the following topics:

- Film Festivals: Cannes, Toronto, Sundance, and Read Sea Film Festivals
- Outreach to west coast studios and networks, ChooseNJ
- Conventions: Association of Film Commissioners International, August; Cine Gear Expo - Atlanta, October; and American Film Market, November
- Reality and Post Incentives: Disney Talker, Sony & ITV Post Productions
- Vendor Outreach

### **APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL REPORT:**

**Item:** New Jersey Motion Picture And Television Commission 2023 Annual Report

**Request:** The Members of the Commission are requested to approve the New Jersey Motion Picture and Television Commission's Annual Report for 2023.

**MOTION TO APPROVE:** Comm. Vezza **SECOND:** Comm. Kovach **AYES:** 13

### **APPROVAL OF AMENDED BYLAWS:**

**Item:** Recommendation to Approve Amended Bylaws

**Request:** Members of the Commission are asked to approve amendments to the Commission's existing bylaws to reflect current statutory obligations and best governance practices.

**MOTION TO APPROVE:** Comm. Smith **SECOND:** Comm. Kovach **AYES:** 13

### **FILM READY UPDATE:**

Ms. Elizabeth Parchment briefed the commission on the Film Ready Program and advised that new program requirements are due to be finalized by year-end. Staff continue to review applications in queue and will assist localities on meeting new requirements.

Ms. Parchment also briefed the commission on the Film Ready Central Jersey workshop held recently:

- September 12th at the Social Profit at Mill One in Hamilton Twp.
- Opening remarks by Assemblywoman Tennille McCoy, District 14; Fred Dumont, Director, Hamilton Twp., and EDA Board Member; Tim Sullivan, CEO, NJEDA
- 28 localities (27 towns and 1 county) attended.

### **PRODUCTION REPORT:**

Mr. David Schoner provided a Production Report, including projects that are wrapped, in production and pre-production. He reiterated that New Jersey is leading the pack with nine productions that are in pre-production mode and will start filming in the fall, including Netflix.

He noted that there are three Netflix productions that are filming now, including Aurora, which will be filmed in Trenton. He advised that staff continues to have conversations and expect more productions in the first and second quarter, first quarter of 2025.

### **NEW BUSINESS/OPEN FLOOR**

Mr. Usan thanked the unions and the union membership for their partnership. He also thanked Jon Crowley and the Film staff for all of their work.

Mr. Crowley thanked Commissioner Sullivan, Ms. Coviello, and Ms. Corrado for their mentorship, as well as the Commissioners for their support and mentorship. He also thanked the Film staff for their work and support and stated that it's been a pleasure getting to know all of you.

Commissioner Bernard stated that there are a lot of the high-quality films being made in New Jersey, and it's important to keep track and ensure that they are spotlight throughout the State, so folks are aware of these movies that are qualifying for a lot of the awards that are coming up in the next four or five months.


Mr. Crowley noted that the Commission now has a calendar that lists the premier of every movie that filmed in New Jersey, and that a spotlight is done on those premieres.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. William “Dusty” Klatt, President, Local 52, New York, congratulated the Film Commission on the outcome of the recent audit conducted by the Office of Legislative Services.

Chairman Uslan called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

On a motion by Commissioner Janice Kovach, and seconded by Commissioner David Smith, the meeting was adjourned at 11:25am.

  
Jon Crowley, December 4, 2024

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Jon Crowley, Executive Director, NJ MPTVC