

**NJ MOTION PICTURE AND TELEVISION COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, December 11, 2024**

**COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Chairman Michael Uslan; Vice Chairman David Smith; Shelley Adler, Secretary; Commissioner Tom Bernard; Emma Corrado representing Commissioner Tim Sullivan; Commissioner Carol Cuddy; and Commissioner Michael Vezza.

**COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE VIA CONFERENCE CALL:** Commissioner Felicia Grant; Joseph Petrecca for Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo; Dr. Thomas Haveron; Commissioner Karen Kessler; and Mayor Janice Kovach.

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:**  
Commissioner Daniel Bryan; and Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Tahesha Way.

**COMMISSION STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:** Jon Crowley, Executive Director; Charles Ricciardi, Team Lead; Elizabeth Parchment, Team Lead; David Schoner, Senior Advisor; and Joseph Marra, NJMPTV Officer.

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Jamera Sirmans, Associate Counsel; Christopher Kay, Deputy Attorney General; Kathleen Coviello, Chief Economic Transformation Officer, NJEDA, and other NJEDA Staff: David Ramsey, 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 September 19, 2024 meeting minutes. A motion was made to approve the minutes by Mr. Vezza, seconded by Mr. Smith, and approved by the twelve (12) board members present.

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Chairman Ulsan stated that his producing partner who happens to be his son, is at the Red Sea Film Festival in Saudi Arabia, which they attend every year. He stated that one thing they've learned from being so international is that cinema is not just simply about Hollywood, it's international, and growing in leaps and bounds. He stated that many countries are westernizing at a very fast pace at the moment, and that their dealings with India, are getting more extensive.

He added that there is a need for the Commission's marketing and promotional efforts to be geared just not to Hollywood, but toward film makers around the world, so that companies know and understand the film and tax benefits of New Jersey.

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

Mr. Crowley started his report saying that there have been five set visits with the First Lady, and some visits have included some of our backroom tax folks.

He added that several Commissioners have been out, and that he'll keep extending the invite to all to get out to see the sets and meet some of the staff.

He thanked David Schoner for all of his hard work in curating the visits which have included meeting the directors, and some of the cast.

He stated that there are site visits coming up in January would include the Beast of Me and also with the Springsteen biopic.

Mr. Crowley also provided updates on the following topics:

- Jersey films that received Golden Globe nominations: A Complete Unknown, Anora, and A Real Pain.
- Q4, '24 Production Status: In September and October, New Jersey was number one, leading LA and New York in the number of major productions, before slipping to fourth place, due to productions being pushed to Q1, '25
- Qualified Spend:  
Mr. Crowley stated that the Commission works hard to provide an accurate number on our qualified spend. He noted that of the \$592 million reported last year, that represents only about 6% of the projects that we know that were filmed in the state. That's about \$534 million that comes through the tax incentive program.  
He noted that Joe Marra reaches out to all the towns that have film permits, and gathers information on number of shooting days, crew employments figures, and total spend? He then reaches out to the production companies to verify information given to us from our municipalities. He noted that California and other states do not do this.
- Los Angeles Site Visits:  
Film Commission staff met with 17 studios and networks over four days in Los Angeles. This included over 30 C-Suite level executives and heads of production. He noted that the Governor Murphy and the First Lady were there for two days. He remarked that the buzz is very positive.

## **APPROVAL OF AMENDED ANNUAL CALENDAR**

**Item:** Recommendation to Amend Annual Calendar of Meetings through July 2025

**Request:** The Members are requested to amend of the Annual Calendar of Meetings through July 2025.

**MOTION TO APPROVE:** Comm. Adler   **SECOND:** Comm. Cuddy   **AYES:** 12

## **DESIGNATION OF OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER**

**Item:** Designation of Official Newspaper

**Request:** The Members of the Commission are requested to approve the designations of The Record as the official newspaper of the New Jersey Motion Picture and Television Commission.

**MOTION TO APPROVE:** Comm. Kessler   **SECOND:** Comm. Bernard   **AYES:** 12

## **PROPOSED FILM READY PROGRAM – NEW REQUIREMENTS**

Prior to the presentation of this item, the Chairman noted that the Board would not be voting on this item at this meeting, but that a special meeting would be scheduled on a future date, hopefully in January, to ensure that the staff and the Commissioners had enough time to review all comments received on the proposed Film Ready Requirements.

Ms. Elizabeth Parchment then provided a background on the Film Ready New Jersey Program, and briefed the Commission on the proposed new requirements which were in substantially final form.

Ms. Parchment advised that proposed requirements are designed to bring greater consistency to the Program and enhance New Jersey's appeal as a premier destination for film production.

Commissioner Cuddy asked if a filmmaker does not want to use a municipality that is certified as a Film Ready Community, are they then able to circumvent the program guidelines and fees since they will negotiate privately? Ms. Parchment stated that a municipality can have their own fees. They can have their own standardized guidelines, but if it doesn't align with the Film Ready Program, they will not have that Film Ready Designation. She said film productions are not precluded from filming in a municipality with their already established guidelines.

Commissioner Cuddy asked if the Commission was going to be promoting only communities that are certified as Film Ready? Mr. Parchment stated that the Commission will promote all locations. Currently on the Commission's website is a major marketing tool, our Reel-Scout database, a location library, which is comprised of all localities throughout the State. So, whether you're Film Ready certified or not, the Commission will continue to promote all locations throughout the State of New Jersey, because the idea here is to bring productions to New Jersey.

Mr. Bernard added that one of the big benefits of the Film Ready Program is that it helps the local fire department, police and various municipal organizations know how to handle a movie when it comes to town. So, when a studio is looking for places, they see that, this is a place knows how productions work and, and they know what to do.

Commissioner Adler asked is there a way for a town that's approached by a production company and wants to become Film Ready, how can a municipality receive an "expedited training" to attain certification and market itself? Ms. Parchment stated that a town can essentially fulfill a lot of the steps of the Film Ready Program, including marketing their location, setting up guidelines within their community, and designating a Film Ready Liaison with the Film Commission. The last step would be attending a workshop where the Commission educates municipalities on standards and best practices and how to create an effective ordinance as well as how to market their location.

Mr. Crowley added that the best way for a town to market itself is to have photos of locations posted on Reel-Scout so that location managers and scouts can immediately see what assets are available throughout the state. Film Commission staff can assist towns with this as needed.

Vice Chair Smith suggested that once the Film Ready requirements are officially approved, that the Commission should make a sample ordinance available as a resource for towns that have not gone through that process yet. The ordinance could reference that a town has gone through the Film Ready process. In addition, but if a town passes such an ordinance dealing with permitting and other provisions, it would give some comfort to the production companies that all the municipality is acting in good faith as it pertains to fees and other key provisions.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

#### **MARKETING COMMITTEE:** Daniel Bryan and Karen Kessler, Co-Chairs

Ms. Kessler stated that the Committee met on Monday, December 2, 2024 and is very focused on social media outreach. The Committee discussed being strategic with regard to incoming traffic, how to expand outgoing traffic, how to increase followers, and evaluating the analytics involved. Right now, we have about 2,200 followers on Instagram, and given what a visual medium we are, we believe there's an incredible opportunity for growth.

#### **Website And Social Media Updates:** Charles Ricciardi, Sr. Project Officer

##### **Reel-Scout**

Mr. Ricciardi stated that as discussed at our last meeting, Reel-Scout is the software the Commission uses to process production numbers, production details and locations. We're now going to be using that software for our production services directory. This will have a lot of enhancements, which means more availability of links, posting of photographs, and advertisements for our vendors. We have a GPS mapping software so film companies can find exactly where these businesses are, and this service will be free of charge for all.

## Garden State Newsletter

The Garden Slate newsletter is getting ready for another release.

We're getting a bit of a makeover, so we have a new look coming through the EDA and Constant Contact. We send this newsletter out to about 3,000 curated contacts, including heads of production media, legislators, union heads, and our local production community.

The newsletter shares stories about local businesses, and reinforces what we do as a Film Commission and our role in the film industry.

## Commissioner's Newsletter:

The monthly Commissioner's newsletter is a curated gathering of in state and national news stories about the film industry related to Jersey projects and businesses. We sift through the many stories that come through each month to create this newsletter. In the header of the newsletter, there are numbers that relate to the number of productions, the dollars spent, and the number of production requests.

## Social Media:

We are coordinating with our Executive Director, Jon Crowley, and also with our Communications Team, to go through a process of corralling different types of stories and graphics and design and putting these on Facebook, X and Instagram. We cover everything from job opportunities, location highlights, vendor spotlights, and probably the most importantly, we want to share accurate spend numbers in New Jersey. When a production wraps or has shared numbers with us, we want the public to know what the spend is for those projects.

Commissioner Bernard asked if the newsletter is sent to all New Jersey legislators. Mr. Riccardi confirmed that they all receive the newsletter.

**DIVERSITY & WORKFORCE COMMITTEE:** Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Tahesha L. Way, and Carol Cuddy

Commissioner Cuddy stated that the Committee met on November 20, 2024, and that a lot was explained. The Committee received answers back from the RFI and put all that information together about certain areas they think would be best to spend. There's potentially \$5,000,000 to put towards training. The goal is diversity and training that actually puts people into jobs, not just gives them training.

One of the training opportunities is workforce grants to work with different organizations. The priority is on using instructors with real world experience, meaning people who are from the unions who have hands on training, who might be working at the time and are teaching at night.

Another training option is through Montclair State University, a program called Mixed Media. This is a virtual reality program.

Lastly, Brookdale Community College has a program that they've purchased from the Georgia Film Academy. Diane Raver, from the Georgia Film Academy spoke with us during the meeting. The Brookdale curriculum, according to its website, includes an introductory course that you have to pay for which gives you an overall idea of what the film industry is about, and from that, you choose different areas you want to study.

Commissioner Cuddy stated that Jon Crowley has talked to Ms. Raver, and all of the aforementioned interested organizations, and met with the IATC locals, including wardrobe and hair and the Directors Guild and asked how to provide the best training. There's a lot of potential.

Mr. Crowley added that he and other staff will be having further conversations on improving outreach to folks from underserved communities with several groups, including Ryan Reynolds' group, Effort Initiative, and also Roybal, which is a school supported by George Clooney to increase diversity in the industry.

Commissioner Bernard said that the ground floor to enter the film industry is the production assistant. Adding that anybody who was interested in getting into the movie industry has a great shot to get that job and succeed. Commissioner Bernard suggested that the Commission put together a film that shows what a production assistant does in the various departments throughout each film. You could have experienced directors like Spike Lee explain what a PA does if they're working on the set or as a second AD or as a lighting guy or in the accounting department. He also suggested putting up something on the website that can be accessed by everyone to find out what the job entails. Commissioner Cuddy agreed and advised that Mr. Crowley has been working on that.

**PRODUCTION COMMITTEE:** Tom Bernard and Janice L. Kovach, Co-Chairs

Commissioner Bernard stated that the Committee met on December 2, 2024, and both Co-Chairs were in attendance, as well as Vice Chair Smith. Commissioner Bernard added that in addition to motion picture cameras now being available in the State, there's two lumber facilities that specialize in entertainment set construction material. There's a new payroll service available in the state, and we're also courting several wardrobe rental companies to set up pop up stores in the state.

Commissioner Bernard asked Mr. Schoner to add any thoughts.

Mr. Schoner reiterated that there are there are now two lumber facilities, and that PRG has a camera depot in the State. He added that wardrobe is something the Commission is aggressively going after.

**Production Report:** David Schoner, Senior Advisor

One of the things that we are monitoring is the volume of production in the State compared to every place else in the country. The concentration seems to be really in the end of Q1, and in the beginning of Q2. Mr. Schoner stated that there were 21 projects in Pre-Production, two (2) projects in production, and seven (7) projects that have already wrapped.

Mr. Schoner noted that the Commission works very hard with productions to ensure that the entire state is benefiting from the production that is going on, and that it's not all concentrated in one area.

Mr. Schoner remarked that Commission gives a concierge level of service. Filmmakers know that if there's an issue or a concern or a question, they can call us, and we will be responsive.

We also work very closely with our partners in the State Department of Transportation, Department of Community Affairs, New Jersey Transit, and all of the public utilities.

#### **EDA UPDATE:** Kathleen Coviello, Chief Economic Transformation Officer

Ms. Coviello stated that at the last meeting she shared that the Film Tax and Digital Media Tax Credit program came out of our legislative audit with flying colors. Since there will be a change in administration soon, being well positioned for that change is critical. In order to help us prepare for that, we've gone outside to a third party to do an impact analysis and study. HR&A is the consultant. We've gotten a first draft of the report, and our consultant is helping us analyze that report and to get it in good condition.

Ms. Coviello also shared that so far, our EDA team has approved 30 tax credit projects this year, which is significantly more than last year.

Cumulatively, these awards equal \$104 million this year versus \$142 million last year. If everything in the queue comes through, we'll be in at \$242 million approved. So just under a quarter billion of spend in New Jersey on the film industry in fiscal '25.

Ms. Coviello also and shared that she's particularly proud of our turn times on applications, and that the team just hit the 100-day turnover mark. She added that industry feedback on that has been very, very positive.

Ms. Coviello thanked and acknowledged EDA staff who administer the tax credit programs, including Matthew Sestrich, Mathew Abraham, and Chris Del Vecchio.

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

Commissioner Bernard reiterated his suggestion of producing a film which describes the requirements of Production Assistant. Chairman Uslan offered his services to help to create a film. Chairman Uslan asked Ms. Esser about the criteria to create a committee to discuss producing a film. Ms. Coviello stated that it could probably be done with an existing committee. Ms. Esser agreed.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. Karen Holloway, Gloucester County resident, and Rowan University employee, addressed the Commission about the need for more Film Ready workshops in the southern part of the State.

Ms. Holloway also advised that she may may have some folks who would be interested in helping training efforts that were discussed during the meeting.

Mr. Crowley advised that once the new Film Ready Requirements were ready, that the Commission would arrange for another Film Ready workshop in South Jersey. He also suggested that she write to the Commission as a “Friend of the Commission”.

On a motion by Vice Chair David Smith, and seconded by Commissioner Michael Vezza, the meeting was adjourned at 11:25am.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon Crowley".

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Jon Crowley, Executive Director, NJ MPTVC