

# MICHIGAN FILM OFFICE ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES

February 17, 2016

MEDC Building – 300 N. Washington Square  
Lansing, Michigan

## 1. Call to Order/Welcome from the Chairman

The meeting of the Michigan Film Office Advisory Council was called to order by Chair Bill Ludwig at 1:40 p.m. A quorum was present with the following members: Bill Ludwig, Hopwood DePree (on phone), Calvin Hazelbaker, Marcia Fishman, J.D. Loeks, Tim Pietryga (on phone), Rick Hert, Michael Mittelstaedt, Terry Terry, Joseph Voss, Brian Winn, and Jenell Leonard (ex-officio, non-voting member). Members excused were Jennifer Fischer, Sanford Nelson, and Ted Serbinski.

Council and staff introduced themselves to the audience, and the audience was also asked to introduce themselves. Mr. Ludwig recognized Ms. Janet Lockwood, former Michigan Film Commissioner, who was in attendance.

Mr. Ludwig gave a brief introduction/overview about the transition of the MFDMO in the past year, which included a branding change (new logo) and the demographic of the creative community, which includes approximately 270,000 people in the digital media industry alone with an average salary around \$90,000.

## 2. Adoption of the Agenda

There was a motion by Marcia Fishman to approve the Agenda; seconded by Cal Hazelbaker; motion passed unanimously.

## 3. Adoption of the Minutes from September 25, 2015 meeting

There was a motion by J.D. Loeks to approve the minutes of the September 25, 2015 MFOAC meeting; seconded by Joe Voss; motion passed unanimously.

## 4. Director's Report – Jenell Leonard

Ms. Leonard welcomed Michael Mittelstaedt from Traverse City, the Council's newest appointee, and again recognized Ms. Lockwood.

FY 2015 Film Promotion Fund Budget Update. Since the legislation prohibiting new incentive funding was passed in July, and since the last Council meeting (September 2015), no new applications have been received by the Film Office. There are \$25M in unannounced projects on the books, which she anticipates will become more visible this spring and summer. On another note, the MFDMO is not in the most recent budget announced by Governor Snyder, but we have secured funding for the new few years. There was a question about the \$25M in unannounced projects and the timing of announcements and production completion; Commissioner Leonard explained that once an agreement was signed, a production company had 3-5 years (depending on which incentive program year) to complete their film and submit their Certificate of Completion Review application for payment. Announcements are always contingent upon the production company's approval to release that information.

Legislative Update. Referring to the 1st Quarter legislative report, she pointed out that our auditing system has been streamlined and our most recent production payout was completed in 40 business days.

In addition, as part of our effort to be transparent with the legislature, we provide a progress report on the MFDMO Strategic Plan.

2015 Strategic Plan Progress Update. Since early last fall, the MFDMO has been part of a proactive public-private partnership with the City of Detroit to bring new film production to Detroit. The result of this partnership is the successful recruitment of Comedy Central's "Detroiters." There was a question about whether or not the "Detroiters" agreement with the City of Detroit is available publicly; Ms. Leonard responded that she would share that information more specifically with Council members once the details are solidified since Comedy Central's budget and production schedule are not confirmed. The goal is to use the process, and success, of this project as a template for other cities in Michigan to use in the future.

As part of the Strategic Plan's goal to promote film tourism, the MFDMO is developing a mobile application that highlights locations used in the 'Batman versus Superman' movie (premiering in March of 2016.)

Other ongoing MFDMO activities include participation in the recent Sundance Film Festival, and the upcoming South-by-Southwest Music/Film Interactive (SXSW) in March. A local upcoming event is the Ann Arbor Film Festival (March 15-20, 2016).

Finally, the Commissioner announced that the MFDMO was recently nominated and selected to receive a digital excellence award from Crain's/Corps! Magazine, largely as a result of the

Google CS First partnership and promotion.

Google Partnership Presentation. In fall of 2015, the MFDMO and Google began conversations about partnering to offer Google's "CS First," a free, online computer science education program for 4th-8th grade students. The result is that Michigan is now the first in the nation to partner with Google on a statewide level to offer this program. Schools can sign up for the program online through the MFDMO's website, and at this time there are 61 participating schools (since the November 2015 soft launch of the program.) In January of this year, we had a statewide launch that welcomed 400 students and teachers to a hands-on demonstration of many digital tools and programs, and brought our 10 supporting organizations also on board to meet the students and teachers. The MFDMO is also working with the Michigan Department of Education to provide digital badges that will travel with that student throughout their educational career to document their learned skills. Some potential next phases of this program are to involve upper level students (high school and college) in the program, and creating an adult certification program. Commissioner Leonard showed a PowerPoint presentation about the CS First program.

**5. Subcommittee Updates.**

Talent Development/Networking Subcommittee: Hopwood DePree

The Talent Development/Networking Subcommittee is currently focusing on four different areas: 1) creating a directory of all known film and digital media organizations and stakeholders; 2) next steps for development workshops to directly engage the filmmaking and digital media community to connect them with opportunities; 3) growing commercial work in the state; and 4) enhancing the MFDMO website to connect the entire creative community.

Promotional/Marketing Subcommittee: Bill Ludwig

Mr. Ludwig reported that the committee's thought (and goal) is to change and elevate public perception of the film and digital media arts communities to 'champion the cause.' The committee's goals include targeting and promoting 'creators of content.' To that end, the committee has subdivided into two task forces (refined positioning and media) as well as developing a media plan as part of a long-term effort.

Measures and Metrics Subcommittee: Tim Pietryga

Tim Pietryga reported that the committee wanted to have the Anderson Economic Group and Creative Many economic studies on hand to frame the committee's conversations, but unfortunately, neither study has not been released yet. It makes sense to wait on making recommendations until we have these on hand so as not to duplicate efforts.

Digital Media Subcommittee: Brian Winn

Brian Winn said that the committee is discussing and honing in on: 1) fostering the digital media community and its culture of creation, 2) retaining and connecting with the existing students of digital media, 3) fostering business development within Michigan, 4) highlighting the success of digital media industry in Michigan.

Finance Subcommittee: Joseph Voss

Mr. Voss said that one of the committee's recommendations in terms of the Strategic Plan was to leverage Film Office dollars to support events like film festivals that included training or community components in their offerings, such as workshops for aspiring filmmakers and digital media artists; this recommendation has been enacted inasmuch as the new MFDMO sponsorship application includes that component. The committee has also suggested that the MFDMO explore a collaboration with Patronicity, a crowdfunding platform for municipal projects, as well as create a repository of resources already available to Michigan producers (i.e., state-based production).

**6. Capital City Film Festival Presentation – Camron Gnass/Payal Ravani**

The CCFF is entering its sixth year in 2016 (April 6-10, 2016) with an anticipated 8,000 in attendance, and the Fortnight Film Contest, which offers \$10,000 in prize money. The mission is to celebrate independent artists from around the world by curating multi-media entries, all while working with the challenge of no dedicated 'art house' spaces in the Capitol region. Mr. Gnass and Ms. Ravani shared a PowerPoint presentation with some highlights of past festivals.

**7. Career Center Education Network Presentation – Niki Adams & students**

The Capital Area Career Center in Mason, Michigan offers the "New Media" course, a two-year program for high school juniors and seniors that includes instruction in digital and sound design, digital film and photography, digital effects, and mixing and recording live music. Students can earn 3 credits at Ferris State University by completing the program. Several current students in the program presented their work to the Council.

**8. Public Comments**

The Council heard from Ms. Rola Nashef (Detroit Film Labs) about her effort to develop and fund first-time filmmakers workshops.

**9. Old Business**

There were no items discussed under Old Business.

**10. New Business**

The next meeting of MFOAC will be on Friday, June 3, 2016 in Detroit in conjunction with the Cinetopia International Film Festival. The final 2016 meeting of the MFOAC will be on Friday, September 23 in Grand Rapids, in conjunction with the Waterfront Film Festival screening at ArtPrize.

There were no other items discussed under New Business.

**11. Adjournment**

There being no further business, there was a motion by Mr. Hazelbaker to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Loeks; motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.