

PROPOSED MICHIGAN FILM OFFICE ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES
September 25, 2015
Ladies Literary Society
Grand Rapids, 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 1:05 p.m. A quorum was present with the following members: Bill Ludwig, Hopwood DePree, Calvin Hazelbaker, Marcia Fishman, J.D. Loeks, Tim Pietryga, Terry Terry, Joseph Voss, Brian Winn, and Jenell Leonard (ex-officio, non-voting member). Members excused were Jennifer Fischer, Sanford Nelson, Ted Serbinski, Rick Hert and Amy Weber.

Mr. Ludwig welcomed everyone to the meeting and commended ArtPrize on the diversity of art, how the artists have expressed themselves in so many ways, and how it correlates with the new direction of the Michigan Film & Digital Media Office (formerly the Michigan Film Office.) He also recognized Compass College and Ferris State University staff and students in the audience.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

There was a motion by Terry Terry to approve the Agenda; seconded by Brian Winn; motion passed unanimously.

3. Adoption of the Minutes from July 28, 2015 meeting

There was a motion by Tim Pietryga to approve the minutes of the July 28, 2015 MFOAC meeting; seconded by Mr. Terry; motion passed unanimously.

4. Public Comments

Q: Why did the Film Office stop the Film Incentive Program?

A: Mr. Ludwig responded that neither the Film Office nor the Advisory Council stopped the Film Incentive Program; neither is a regulatory body with the power to control the law or establish the budget for the Office. Since the termination of the Incentive Program, the Council has developed working subcommittees to focus on more ways to support the film industry beyond incentives, and to develop and help implement the Office's Strategic Plan.

Q: What are the Council's roles, and experience?

A: Council members and the Film Commissioner introduced themselves, and talked about their individual occupations, and their appointments to the Council.

Q: For future filmmakers, what is the best way to connect with the Michigan Film & Digital Media Office and utilize what it has to offer?

A: Commissioner Leonard responded that anyone is welcome to contact any of the staff while here at the meeting, or any other time. Depending on the request, staff would also be happy to facilitate communication with Council members as well.

Q: How has filmmaking and the digital media changed in the past year(s)?

A: Mr. Ludwig responded that between 2005 and 2010, there was an overall decline in the Michigan film industry, but it declined globally as well. The first year of the Film Incentive Program (2008), Michigan lost 22% of the film industry, and it continued to decline after that. The Michigan film community had thrived because of the large amount of industry-related work (manufacturing and automotive training and commercial work.) The collapse of the industry may or may not have been slowed by an ongoing incentive program. There are a lot of startups now in digital media arts, either content development or management of that content. The renaming of the MFDMO is timely for that reason, and this is a time of many new possibilities. Those new to the industry should reach out to political representatives and the business and marketing community who are making their decisions where to produce their work.

Q: What are the Council's topics of discussion today?

A: Commissioner Leonard stated that in the past, the Council members have not been asked to do much to further the work of the Office, or to advance the industry. Since she was appointed, she has engaged the Council to form committees, which are: Promotion/Marketing, Digital Media, Measures & Metrics, Finance and Talent Development. Today, each of the chairs of those committees will give an update on their action plans to encourage and sustain the growth of the creative industries in Michigan.

5. Director's Report – Jenell Leonard

As mentioned previously, the Michigan Film Office is now the Michigan Film & Digital Media Office. By statute, the Office is still charged with promoting film in Michigan, but today there is a growing digital media presence in the state as well as the country, so we want to recognize that.

This week alone, the MFDMO has participated in three major events that are film or digital media related:

- the 2015 Digital Summit Detroit; a total of 30 people, including 5 students from Michigan colleges and universities, attended the Summit as ambassadors for our Office;
- Creative Many's Creative Economy Summit, the purpose of which was to investigate and discuss quantifying the business of the creative industries; and
- ArtPrize, Waterfront Film Festival and Michigan House

FY 2015 Film Promotion Fund Budget Update. Since the last Council meeting 10 projects approved prior to the termination of the Incentive Program have been announced. There are still 10 projects that have not been announced, including two large studio projects. They will be announced over the next six to eight months, pending their production schedules. Approved (encumbered) projects for the fiscal year are approximately \$39M; the fund balance is approximately \$11M. FY16 starts on October 1; the MFDMO will be budgeted at \$2.5M, which includes supporting Advisory Council initiatives, festival and event sponsorships and the administrative costs of the Office. There may be additional funding, but that is contingent upon the legal and political climate in the upcoming year.

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), of which the MFDMO is a part, has weathered some significant economic upheavals recently, including 65 staff layoffs. One MFDMO staff member was laid off, however, she has contracted with the MFDMO to be our independent auditor (of the incented film projects.)

Legislative Update. The MFDMO next quarterly report is due to the Legislature by the end of October. Council members will be provided a copy of that report.

2015 Strategic Plan Progress Update. No specific report, except to again acknowledge our support of the Waterfront Film Festival and ArtPrize, as well as the YPSI24-Hour Film Shootout. Other updates to be provided in the Quarterly Report.

6. Subcommittee Updates.

Talent Development/Networking Subcommittee: Hopwood DePree

Mr. DePree said that the committee has been discussing how best to support the MFDMO and to grow and sustain the industry. Key points are listed below:

- Our recommended strategy is to first retain and then grow film and digital media opportunities by developing talent and networking strategies
- Through our research we found the common areas where improvement is needed are to:
 - Address the concerns of film talent who have lost a substantial share of their work
 - Find a solution for digital media talent who have to see Michigan as a place where they can build their portfolios
 - Entice commercial work and jobs back to Michigan
- First Steps Initiatives
 - Create a directory of all known film and digital media organizations and stake holders to organize network
 - Host professional development workshops – including mentorship programs
 - Campaign to grow commercial work with the private sector
 - Website enhancement to include outreach, networking and awareness of new job opportunities

Promotional/Marketing Subcommittee: Bill Ludwig

Mr. Ludwig said he is excited that we can now start marketing Michigan as a place that fosters more than just film. He believes that Michigan can be the next mecca for digital media, arts, and creative/content development. The Council will be looking at the Measures & Metrics committee findings as they emerge to determine which market(s) to focus on and the best ways to do so. He recognized several non-Council members who have joined the committee (Tamaryn Tobian, Eric Szczepanski, and Sarah Triplett). He also hopes to find a strategic planner to join the team as well.

Measures and Metrics Subcommittee: Tim Pietryga

Mr. Pietryga said that the challenges of how to grow the digital media sector in Michigan and how to grow and retain production work are two major challenges, and finding the data to answer those ‘how’ questions is the first goal of the committee. Key points are listed below:

- Asking the right questions
 - Where are we now/Allocation of resources?
 - Successful Pioneers – where are they – who has done this?
 - What does success look like?
 - What data is out there – what do we need?
- Who are our audiences and what language do they speak?
 - Legislature (jobs, ROI)
 - Michigan Economic Development Corporation (film, digital media, commercial, film festivals)

- General public
- Other
- What are we measuring?
- What is the creative industry/economy?
- Who are the members of the creative industry?
- Agreed upon terms and definitions
- Other
 - Do we have adequate resources – do we need a partner/consultant?

Digital Media Subcommittee: Brian Winn

Mr. Winn mentioned some interesting statistics about digital media:

- 270,000 people in digital media industries
- Ranks #2 in terms of employment within these industries
- 10.5% growth rate across these industries
- \$89,000 year average income
- Oakland County ranks #2 across state from these statistics

Action Plans Generated at Meeting:

- Define what we mean by “digital media”
- Identify stakeholders and what we can do to address needs of each
- Advocacy and Promotion of Digital Media
- Develop a 12-month strategy/campaign to achieve our goals.
- Plan to continue to brainstorm and meet up again in ~3 weeks to discuss:
 - What it would take to declare Michigan as the Midwest hub for digital media
 - What Michigan currently has to offer
 - How we can grow the industry here
 - Barriers
 - Measuring the current state of the industry in Michigan vs. others
 - Cultivating public/private partnerships to foster economic growth in digital media space

The committee hopes to add one or two additional members.

Finance Subcommittee: Joseph Voss

Mr. Voss said that the committee understands that since incentives are gone, production companies need help not just with financing, but with other resources as well, so the committee is going to look at how to help people get their project’s needs fulfilled in a multitude of ways. The first recommendation to the MFDMO is to work with partners, like festivals, to encourage them to create media or other opportunities for filmmakers. Additionally, we realized that there is no known central repository of resources (none that is fully developed) that aggregates resources, whether it be equipment, infrastructure, financing or whatever, so there will be a focus on how to build that repository. There is also a void in the production of media assets for public institutions. Finally, there is a difference between film business and film culture, and we hope to be able to cultivate the film culture here in Michigan.

Commissioner Leonard thanked the committee chairs for their work. She added that Michigan is not unique in the challenge of dwindling or vanishing film incentive programs; it is a national trend. She

sees it as an opportunity for Michigan to be a model of best practice to the rest of the country in life after incentives.

7. Waterfront Film Festival/ArtPrize on Screen Presentation – Hopwood DePree, Waterfront FF Co-founder

Mr. DePree said that the Waterfront FF started in 1999 by a handful of filmmakers; this year's festival has been woven into the larger ArtPrize event, and called "ArtPrize on Screen." He mentioned some of the planned activities, including a free concert by Tony Ferrari of Los Angeles, screening of "T-Rex," a film about Michigan native Claressa Shields, Olympic gold medal boxer; free admission to students in open seating venues, and cash prizes for Best Feature Film, Best Documentary Film and Best Short Film.

8. Ferris State University Presentation – David Baker, Program Coordinator & Students

Mr. Baker of Ferris State University introduced two students who were attendees of the 2015 Game Developers Conference, which was sponsored by the MFDMO. The students offered their thoughts on attending the conference, as well as success/career pointers for students entering their careers.

9. Old Business

There were no items discussed under Old Business.

10. New Business

The next meeting of MFOAC will be in January 2016 (date and location TBD).

There were no other items added under New Business.

11. Adjournment

There being no further business, there was a motion by Mr. Voss to adjourn the meeting, seconded by J.D. Loeks; motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 2:34 p.m.