

# APPROVED MICHIGAN FILM OFFICE ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES

October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Imagine Theatre

Royal Oak, MI

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

The meeting of the Michigan Film Office Advisory Council (MFOAC) was called to order at 2:06 p.m. by Council chairman Bill Ludwig. A quorum was present with the following Council members in attendance: Bill Ludwig, Dori DePree, Niki Adams, Rick Hert, Terry Terry (on phone), Tim Pietryga, and Skot Welch. Members excused: Dan Lemieux, Eric Kuiper, Andriy Pereklita, Joe Voss, Brian Winn, Michael Mittelstaedt

Mr. Ludwig welcomed everyone and said that it was a pleasure to be at the Royal Starr Film Festival and complemented the Imagine Theatre. He asked everyone to introduce themselves, including the public in attendance, beginning with members of the council.

## 2. Adopt Agenda

There was a motion by Mr. Hert to approve the Agenda; seconded by Mr. Pereklita; motion passed unanimously.

## 3. Approval of Minutes from July 31, 2018 meeting

There was a motion by Mr. Pereklita to approve the minutes of the July 31, 2018 MFOAC meeting; seconded by Mr. Welch; motion passed unanimously.

## 4. Director's Report – Selam Ghirmai

Ms. Ghirmai extended thanks to Mr. Ludwig and the Royal Starr Film Festival for hosting the MFOAC meeting. She noted that the MFDMO's current strategy with the MFOAC meetings is to attach meeting locations to sponsorships to film festivals across the state. She stated that this provides a great vehicle to spread the word about what the office does to local communities and network with council members who can provide recommendations to better the MFDMO's work. She also noted that the MFOAC meeting was being broadcast through 89.1 WPHS. Her report was an update following the report at the July MFOAC meeting in Traverse City. There was a brief presentation of promotional videos from Royal Starr Film Festival, Michigan Film and Digital Media Office, Imagine Theatre, and Oakland Community College. She thanked the Royal Starr Film Festival for hosting the MFOAC meeting.

Incentives - \$1,625,799 in total incentives are approved with executed agreements, but pending announcement for two projects (deferring to the production companies). An approved incentive for Street Cred in the amount of \$85,943 is set to expire in June of 2019. It has been shot and is a one-hour pilot that is in a freeze at PBS. While on freeze, they continued to shoot footage and received a grant to be shot with VR film. Goal to premier the whole, the film component and VR component, at South-by-Southwest or Tribeca film festivals. Hope to have more updates soon.

Newsletter – Part of the office's effort for Seamless Operations and Shameless Promotion. Have profiled two council members in the monthly newsletter so far, Mr. Welch and Mr. Kuiper. Council can anticipate requests for future profiles.

Creative Chamber Pilot Program – Ms. Ghirmai explained to those unfamiliar that the Creative Chamber Program was launched last May and is a \$1.5 million dollar program established in five partner communities, with the grant administrators being the local Chambers of Commerce and, in the case of Detroit, the Downtown Detroit Partnership. These communities are charged with engaging local creatives to create a better business climate and to continue to make the case that Michigan is a great place to “Live, Work, Play.” The communities are in Marquette, Traverse City, Grand Rapids, Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti, and Detroit.

There is an upcoming, internal meeting with MFDMO, Creative Chambers liaisons, and MEDC on December 14<sup>th</sup> to share opportunities, tools, issues, and best practices.

Sponsorships: MFDMO has approved and funded several film festivals in Michigan since the last MFOAC meeting in July. This included sponsoring Art Prize in Grand Rapids. With that sponsorship, the MFDMO was able to host an Art Prize reception to which business community leaders and creatives were invited.

In July meeting, Ms. Ghirmai had said the MFDMO was transitioning to an electronic sponsorship application. That transition has been completed, and the sponsorship form is now readily available online (prior version had to be requested).

Ms. Ghirmai introduced Ms. McNamara (MFDMO), who has been spearheading changes in the sponsorship process.

Ms. McNamara: She explained she is responsible for Creative Chamber program, sponsorships, and COCR for outstanding incentives at the MFDMO. As to the sponsorships, she explained the evolution of the sponsorship applications. She explained where to find the application on the website (<https://www.michiganbusiness.org/industries/mfdmo/>) and what questions were on the application.

MFDMO averages 25 sponsorships a year. The application deadline has been changed from 60 days prior to the event to 90 days prior to the event. This was done because the payment process can a long time, and with this change the hope is that sponsor recipients will not have any issues receiving funding prior to their event.

There were some new sponsor recipients this year: Livelylands Music Festival and Earthwork Harvest Gathering. She said the office was looking forward to more new and diverse festivals applying for sponsorship in the future.

Ms. McNamara explained how the MFDMO was able to connect Mr. Welch’s Mosaic Mobile Video Festival and Ms. Adam’s New Media students at Ingham County School District. The MFDMO is donating passes received as a sponsor to Ms. Adam’s students to afford them the opportunity to learn more about careers in digital media and film making. Ms. McNamara explained the office hopes to foster more opportunities like this.

Ms. Ghirmai thanked Ms. McNamara for her report and update. Ms. Ghirmai then said that the MFDMO is looking for more ways to support the filmmaking and creative community beyond the film festival community and sponsorships. The office is focused on fostering and attracting talent. To do that, she said they need to know there is business support, entrepreneurship support, and community support for their work. She stated amazing strides had been made in the business community with the Creative Chamber

program. She hoped to expand opportunities through film festivals, and the MFDMO is hoping to host a film festival convergence in 2019 to explore how to use festivals to expose filmmakers to investment and distribution opportunities. The MFDMO will engage with council members to continue developing that.

Final update: 2019 MFOAC dates have not yet been set, but council will be apprised of any developments for the three 2019 MFOAC meetings.

At the close of her report, Ms. Ghirmai received several questions:

Q. Where can the MFDMO promotional video be found?

A. Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eC7awba41W4>

Q. When will the public know what remaining incentive projects are?

A. Pending information from the producers. Incentive recipients not required to make information public until they come forward to claim the incentive dollars.

Q. Have those been filmed?

A. She believed some filming had occurred, but could not specify

Q. Can the public attend the Creative Chambers meeting on Dec 14?

A. Ms. Ghirmai stated at this time, the meeting is internal. The council will receive an aggregated report.

Q. What is the funding range for a film festival sponsorship?

A. Can be customized depending on the size of the event, but in general the range is \$5,000 to \$500.

## **5. Royal Starr Film Festival Presentation – Luke Cast, RSFF President**

Mr. Castle thanked everyone for attending. The RSFF reviewed over 400 films in a screening room upstairs. The entire community was welcomed to participate in these screenings. The RSFF has been heading community mixers with filmmakers and will continue this successful venture beginning January of 2019. The RSFF holds workshops, which begins 10/14. The festival is only in its third year, but has grown greatly in that short time.

## **6. Emagine Entertainment Presentation – Billy Whitehouse, RSFF Secretary/Treasurer**

Emagine is a Pure Michigan success story. Paul Glantz, Chairman of Emagine Entertainment, was in finance, and as a back-up plan purchased a small theater. Has become a huge success and there are now Emagine Theatres in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The theatre boasts large, comfy seats, huge I-Max screens, and gourmet food to lure people from their homes and back to the movie theatre. Emagine is working on a program called Reflections, which encourages students to develop film projects, and hopefully begin an interest in a career in entertainment. They hope to encourage the film industry to grow in Michigan.

## **7. Public Comments**

Q. How can Royal Oak become a Creative Chamber?

A. (Ms. Ghirmai) The Creative Chamber has an intake survey, with the closest Creative Chamber being Detroit. Can register with that community online through MFDMO website. Currently, the program is in its pilot phase and Royal Oak could not be a Creative Chamber itself at this time.

Q. Interest in the International Academic Conference on Meaningful Play and what that is.

A. (Mr. Garcia) Meaningful Play is an international academic game-developer conference held at Michigan State University. It lasts two-three days and focuses on game development, research, best practices for academia.

Q. Is there anything on the horizon for future incentives?

A. (Ms. Ghirmai) The MFDMO cannot speculate. Regardless of whether incentives come back, the MFDMO is focused on creating a sustainable environment for the filmmaking community through the business community. Also hoping to unlock all of the resources communities have through film festivals. The office is a part of the executive branch and uses the resources, budget, and tools they have.

Q. Has a mid-size studio space. How to make available/known to the community?

A. (Ms. Ghirmai) MFDMO has a Production Directory database for crew and service providers. They can register and make their information available to the filmmaking community. Pointed out Ms. Murdey as the person to get more information from about the directory.

Q. Has anyone asked the gubernatorial candidates what their position on film incentives were?

A. (Ms. Ghirmai) The MFDMO does not know. Mr. Ludwig clarified that the council and the MFDMO do not pass legislation and have no impact on this area; encouraged citizens to make their opinions known to their legislators to ask these questions of the candidates.

Comment: State Representative Leslie Love of the 10<sup>th</sup> District said she would be an advocate for the film community

Comment: State Senator Steven Bieda of the 9<sup>th</sup> District expressed an interest in the incentive issue and said that discussion would be brought up. Stated might need to rethink how an incentive program would run to create a more stable program.

Comment: Need to think about how can we create businesses in Michigan that create intellectual property [e.g. films] here and keep the business here and keep/bring dollars here? Brought up example of Groupon that was created in Michigan but moved headquarters to Illinois. Suggested a lot going on in Detroit in this direction. Thanked everyone for continuing to support Michigan Filmmaking.

Q. How does one become part of the Michigan Film Office Advisory Council?

A. (Ms. Ghirmai) Fourteen members, appointed by the Governor's Office. There is an application online for office-appointments that a member of the public can submit to be considered later.

Mr. Ludwig thanked the public for a robust discussion.

## 8. Old Business

There were no items discussed under Old Business.

**9. New Business**

There were no items discussed under New Business.

**10. Adjournment**

There being no further business, there was a motion by Mr. Pietryga to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Welch; motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 3:08p.m.