

# MICHIGAN FILM OFFICE ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES

July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019

West Bay Beach Resort

Traverse City, MI

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

The meeting of the Michigan Film Office Advisory Council (MFOAC) was called to order at 1:02 p.m. by Council chairman Bill Ludwig. A quorum was present with the following Council members in attendance: Bill Ludwig, Niki Adams, Rick Hert, Dori DePree, Terry Terry, Tim Pietryga, Dan Lemieux (phone), Eric Kuiper, Joe Voss, Brian Winn, Michael Mittelstaedt, Larry Fouts, and Skot Welch. Members excused: Andriy Pereklita.

Mr. Ludwig welcomed everyone and said that it was a pleasure to be in Traverse City, and that it is the favorite meeting of the year. He asked everyone to introduce themselves, including the public in attendance, ending with members of the council.

## 2. Adopt Agenda

There was a motion by Mr. Terry to approve the Agenda; seconded by Mr. Kuiper; motion passed unanimously.

## 3. Approval of Minutes from April 12, 2019 meeting

There was a motion by Mr. Winn to approve the minutes of the April 12, 2019 MFOAC meeting; seconded by Mr. Terry; motion passed unanimously.

## 4. Director's Report – Selam Ghirmai

Ms. Ghirmai thanked Traverse City Film Festival for hosting the Council meeting. She said a lot of her report was an update of items discussed in April. First, she summarized the festivals that the MFDMO is or has sponsored since the last Council meeting. They are as follows:

Name of Event	Location	Event Start Date	Event End Date
<b>Detroit Can Film Festival</b>	Detroit	6/1/2019	6/1/2019
<b>Vidlings &amp; Tapeheads Film Festival</b>	Hamtramck	6/28/2019	6/30/2019
<b>Earthwork Detroit Music Festival</b>	Detroit	7/10/2019	7/10/2019
<b>Nevertheless Film Festival</b>	Ann Arbor	7/11/2019	7/14/2019
<b>Farm Block Fest and Reunion</b>	Allouez	7/26/2019	7/28/2019
<b>Traverse City Film Festival</b>	Traverse City	7/30/2019	8/4/2019
<b>Excellency Music Festival</b>	Bay City	8/9/2019	8/9/2019
<b>Trinity International Film Festival</b>	Detroit	8/14/2019	8/18/2019
<b>I See You Awards (3rd Annual)</b>	Royal Oak	8/22/2019	8/25/2019
<b>Idlewild International Film Festival</b>	Idlewild	8/23/2019	8/25/2019
<b>LivelyLands Music Festival</b>	Empire	8/23/2019	3/24/2019
<b>Detroit SheTown Film Festival 2019</b>	Detroit	9/12/2019	9/15/2019
<b>Royal Starr Film Festival</b>	Royal Oak	9/13/2019	9/22/2019
<b>Digital Summit Detroit</b>	Detroit	9/25/2019	9/26/2019

<b>Trans Stellar Film Festival 2019</b>	Detroit	9/27/2019	9/28/2019
<b>Thriller! Chiller! Film Festival</b>	Grand Rapids	10/8/2019	10/12/2019
<b>Mosaic Video Experience</b>	Grand Rapids	11/6/2019	11/7/2019
<b>Revolve Creative Collaboration Conference</b>	Marquette	11/9/2019	11/9/2019

Some of the festivals are long-running, and some are brand-new. She said the MFDMO also supports film festivals by offering promotional support and leveraging the office’s social media presence to highlight the festivals.

**Google Computer Science First partnership (4th year)**

Ms. Ghirmai stated that the office is working to build upon existing partnerships. She explained that the MFDMO partnered with Google after rebranding from the Michigan Film Office to the Michigan Film & Digital Media Office. They were the first state agency to partner with Google. In this partnership, they bring attention to a free program Google offers called CS First that teaches coding to children. She highlighted the importance of this program and this partnership, as jobs for digital media are growing at three times the rate of the talent to fill them. Since beginning this partnership, 448 schools, clubs or organizations have enrolled and 14,978 Michigan students have been impacted by CS First. On May 10<sup>th</sup> of this year, the MFDMO hosted its fourth annual event to celebrate and encourage youth enrollment in Google’s Computer Science (CS) First clubs at the Gerald R. Ford Fieldhouse at the Grand Rapids Community College campus. She stated that there are different clubs involved with CS First that have intersections with film, such as those focused on storytelling.

**Michigan Film Festival Forum**

The MFDMO is trying to offer more to film festivals than the transactional relationship of sponsorships. That is why they are convening the Michigan Film Festival Forum in partnership with the Film Festival Alliance. The MFDMO joined FFA last year, becoming the first state agency to do so. The Forum will be held in conjunction with Hell’s Half Mile Film & Music Festival in Bay City on September 26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>. The MFDMO will be hosting workshops and networking opportunities for film festival organizers to learn about resources and best practices with peers. The MFDMO has extended an invitation to Council to attend part or all of forum, co-moderate workshop/discussion with FFA moderator or do a 5-10 minute presentation to offer information or resources specific to a pre-determined topic of workshop. Ms. Ghirmai stated that this was the last day for the Council members to commit to the event. She then provided a preview of the curriculum, with round-table titles such as “Making the Case for Cinema Culture,” “Michigan Film Festival Tourism,” “Building Community Support,” and “Festivals as a Critical Part of Business Infrastructure for Filmmakers.” She also provided a copy of the pre-event survey to Council.

**Strategic Planning**

Ms. Ghirmai said the last Strategic Plan was launched in 2015 and the time had come to revise it. She said the first step the MFDMO was working on is research. The MFDMO has engaged MEDC Corporate Research to conduct customer experience that it does for all other industries served by

MEDC. The MFDMO will share that research with Council once complete and discuss next steps in Strategic Planning as well as engagement of Council in that process. She introduced Kate Ahlers, Senior Customer Experience Analyst at MEDC, who would later present on the process and progress to date.

### **2019 Meetings:**

The MFDMO has been committed to holding Council meetings in conjunction with a Michigan film festival in order to make the Council meetings accessible to different parts of the state and experience these festivals. The initial fall Council meeting was scheduled for November first in Lansing. However, the MFDMO learned of an event that is different from the usual festival hosts but will doubtless be an invaluable experience for the Council. The meeting will be held on November 12 in Royal Oak at the Royal Starr Arts Institute's monthly filmmaker mixer. The mixers are held on the second Tuesday of every month at Hamlin Corner in Royal Oak from 7-10pm. The Filmmaker Community Mixers are free to attend and are open to the entire film community. Each month they have 100 – 150 attendees who run the gamut from industry professionals to people just trying to get their start. It's a chance to meet and talk with filmmakers, film festival organizers, production companies, screenwriters, crew, actors, and more. These mixers present an opportunity for people engaged in all areas of film at all levels of their career to network and learn from each other, and are a great way learn about the filmmaking scene in Michigan. To have the MFOAC take part at the Filmmaker Community Mixer in November, the MFDMO is rescheduling the fall MFOAC meeting to Tuesday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, from 6-8pm in Royal Oak, just prior to the event. More details to follow.

### **MEDC Corporate Research Presentation – Kate Ahlers, Senior Customer Experience Analyst**

Ms. Ahlers has been working with the MFDMO on research to help guide their strategic planning. She said that in the initial phase, she is focused on key research questions: What is the state of customer attitudes/experiences today? What services can the MFDMO do to better support customers? and What services will customers use? She discussed the pros and cons of using surveys versus interviews, and how each particular method can be used to inform the needs of MFDMO customers. While surveys help confirm things in a statistically valid way, they are dependent on things that have already been thought of. Interviews can bring new, non-preconceived ideas to light, but those ideas might not be the most popular. Therefore, pursuing both methods should allow the MFDMO to get the most information to guide their strategic planning. She described how she would use which method to answer her initial research questions. She was asked to elaborate on what kind of products/results would come out of the research. From the interviews, she described the customer journey maps that can show the process a customer goes through from start to finish of a project, the persona study that can break a large group into subgroups (who each have their own specific needs), and empathy maps that help show a customer's feelings and behaviors at different stages of a project. She provided the example of an MEDC study of entrepreneurs.

### **Traverse City Film Festival Presentation – Susan Fisher, Festival Business Manager**

Ms. Fisher said this is the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary Traverse City Film Festival, and they have chosen a vibrant color scheme to celebrate. The TCFE has grown substantially from the first festival. She provided information about where the festival started in terms of attendance, length, etc. She provided data from the 2018 Film Festival to talk about where the festival is now. More attendees are non-local. She explained that the festival brings an economic boost to the region, and that last year there was \$11.2 million in direct spending.

The festival is run by volunteers, which brings additional, intangible value in terms of community engagement. She stated that one of the statistics she is most proud of from the post-festival survey is the fact that 75% of survey respondents state they TCFE “inspires me to take action in my community.” She said the festival is proud of its growth, and remains a grassroots effort, and that while they like the growth they are conscious of not growing so large as to negatively impact the city. Mr. Welch followed up on his question about ethnic diversity of attendance from last year and asked what has changed. Ms. Fisher stated the festival has continued its goal of increasing diversity in the festival. They have tried to bring diverse topics and diverse filmmakers to the festival. They have also tried to engage students from colleges and universities in the festival to bring more diversity into the TCFE. These efforts are improving the diversity of the festival, but they are somewhat limited by the diversity of the region. As the region itself grows more diverse, the festival will as well (in addition to their other efforts in this area).

**Project Cinema MI Presentation: *Sheets of Sand* – Richard Brauer, President/Founder of Brauer Productions, Inc and Diane Murray, Managing Partner**

Mr. Brauer talked about the vacuum that exists between graduating and getting a career in film. They decided to do a community film project to help fill the gap. Northern Michigan University helped fund the effort. They selected a winning script from several submissions about a young woman with cerebral palsy and her emerging self-confidence. The winner was a woman who graduated from University of Michigan film and has multiple sclerosis. They got the community involved in making the film and solicited donations from local people and businesses. They also brought on student interns who were mentored on set as the film was being made. He talked about how great and lifechanging the film ended up being for all involved, from those making the production to those watching it. He also mentioned the issues with the Creative Chamber program in Traverse City. Ms. Ghirmai gave a “behind the veil” explanation and said that the Traverse City Chamber of Commerce had submitted a project idea for offering loans to creatives, but, after legal review, it was determined that MFDMO is not authorized to administer the program as proposed. Mr. Garcia asked how the MFDMO can help filmmakers aside from incentives. Mr. Brauer stated that money was the biggest issue, as the talent, people, skills, etc. were already present in the state. Another big issue for filmmakers is piracy. It makes investors leery when a production can be easily made available for free online, and when that does happen it is a huge blow to a film.

**5. Public Comments**

There was a public comment introducing students who at the festival as part of the TCFE student voucher program and their achievements.

Mr. Voss asked about the status of the Creative Chamber program. Ms. Ghirmai stated the money was encumbered until December 2020. Some of the Chamber communities have tapped out their funding and are working on their projects. Some have not.

**6. Old Business**

There were no items discussed under Old Business.

**7. New Business**

There were no items discussed under New Business.

**8. Adjournment**

There being no further business, there was a motion by Mr. Terry to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Voss; motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 2:09 p.m.