

# **APPROVED MICHIGAN FILM OFFICE ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES**

**March 31, 2017**

**Detroit Institute of Arts**

**Detroit, MI**

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

The meeting of the Michigan Film Office Advisory Council (MFOAC) was called to order at 1:08 p.m. by Council member Joe Voss, sitting in for Chairman Bill Ludwig. A quorum was present with the following Council members in attendance: Joe Voss, Michael Mittelstaedt, Rick Hert, Hopwood DePree, Terry Terry, Andriy Pereklita, Brian Winn (on phone), Niki Adams (on phone), and Dan Lemeux (on phone). Members excused: Bill Ludwig, J. D. Loeks, Tim Pietryga, Sanford Nelson, and Jennifer Fischer.

Mr. Voss called for an introduction of Council members. Commissioner Jenell Leonard introduced herself as well as Michigan Film & Digital Media Office (MFDMO) staff: Selam Ghirmai, Tony Garcia and Lynn McNamara.

## **2. Adoption of the Agenda**

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

## **3. Adoption of the Minutes from September 23, 2016 meeting**

There was a motion by Mr. Hert to approve the minutes of the September 2016 MFOAC meeting; seconded by Mr. Terry; motion passed unanimously.

## **4. Director's Report – Jenell Leonard**

Commissioner Leonard informed the Council that since the last meeting, she has been reappointed by Governor Snyder for an additional two-year term, through December of 2018.

As background information for the new Council members and the audience, she explained how the MFDMO took on a new strategic direction in late 2015 after the film incentive program was ended. Strategic planning by MFDMO staff and MFOAC members evolved into 38 published recommendations, 26 of which have been implemented to date. She called attention to the Strategic Plan Achievements and 2016 Annual Report documents in the Council's meeting packets. Programs and initiatives such as Google CS First and the 'Batman v. Superman' mobile application to promote film tourism are highlights of the new direction of the MFDMO beyond basic film production into the world of digital technology.

Ms. Leonard explained that programmatic and financial initiatives championed by the MFDMO must receive the approval of the Governor's office and/or the legislature, as well as internal approval and support of the department where the MFDMO is located: the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC).

To tie the history of the MFDMO, the purpose of the MEDC and Michigan's economy together, all of the creative industries that exist touch or interface in some way with Michigan's other industries and government, and are integral to the growth of Michigan's economy. All of this has brought the MFDMO to its next program investment: the Creative Chamber Pilot Program (CCPP), a talent attraction initiative that bolsters the economic development and the creative industries by engaging the local business and creative community. The pilot program will be launched in five Michigan communities in 2017: Detroit, Grand

Rapids, Traverse City, Marquette, and the Washtenaw County (Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti) area. The CCPP program will work directly with the business community to address industry segregation apparent across the state and within state government. The pilot program has received strong support and endorsement from Governor Snyder, MEDC leadership and the communities themselves. Approximately \$1.5M will be distributed across the five communities, over a three-year period. The first five pilot communities were chosen because of existing relationships with the MFDMO and their history of connecting with ‘creatives’; pending the results of the first round of grants, the program might be expanded to other communities later.

### Projects Update

There are two other incentive projects whose announcements are pending, representing \$1.6M in total incentives approved with executed agreements. Announcements are contingent upon authorization by the production companies.

The incentive audit process has been revamped, enlisting staff from the Michigan Department of Treasury as the new reviewers.

“Detroiters” (Comedy Central) has been picked up for a second season and anticipated to be filming this summer.

### Legislative Update

The FY16 Annual Legislative report was presented to Council in their meeting packets.

### Festivals

MFDMO staff attended Sundance Film Festival in January, and SXSW in March, where the MFDMO was a sponsor of the Michigan House, produced by Creative Many Michigan.

### **Presentation – Adrian Tonon, Director of Customer Service – City of Detroit Mayor’s Office**

Mr. Tonon explained that the function of his office is culture change and how the city serves not only its citizens, but also cultivates public/private partnerships. As an example, the “Detroiters” production had been announced by Comedy Central, but with the sidebar that the production company was location scouting in other cities besides Detroit. To entice Comedy Central to consider Detroit as the only viable location to film, the Detroit Film Initiative was born. Each department of the City of Detroit was charged with providing cost-saving services, but beyond that, private partners were asked to provide the same, as well as discounted products. Another component of the production was integrating Detroit youth into the production through the Grow Detroit’s Young Talent (GDYT) program. It took both public and private partners to pitch Detroit to Comedy Central, but ultimately it was a successful and worthwhile effort.

### **Presentation – Steve Byrne, Freep Film Festival**

Mr. Byrne explained that Freep FF is a documentary-focused film festival with Michigan themes, produced by the Detroit Free Press. 2017 is the festival’s 4<sup>th</sup> year. Most of the films are accompanied by a panel discussion. History: the Detroit Free Press was on the forefront of the new media landscape and saw a film festival as a way of getting its own videos ‘out there.’ It wanted to corral the wealth of other documentaries

being filmed at the time. It felt that journalism and documentaries were ‘kissing cousins.’ It wanted to be part of the community, not just cover the community news. The MFDMO is the primary sponsor this year, but the Ford Foundation and the Knight Foundation are also major sponsors. He also said that Freep FF is more of an invitational festival and many of the documentaries were forged out of some kind of relationship already in existence. He mentioned several of the panel discussions scheduled during the festival, including one directly following the MFDMO meeting which will focus on careers for filmmakers.

### **Public Comments**

Jennifer Goulet, President and CEO, Creative Many Michigan, said that Creative Many is excited about Gov. Snyder’s and the MFDMO’s support of the creative industries in Michigan, including the CCPP. She said that with Creative Many’s 20+ years experience with the creative industries in the state, they are ready to step in partnership with MFDMO and Gov. Snyder’s leadership in this program. She said, however, that Creative Many is concerned that the CCPP has been rolled out to date without engagement with the existing creative organizations throughout the state. While Creative Many appreciates the business connection, they think that without the early involvement of the creatives in the design of this program, the chambers of commerce may be unaware of the existing activities and programs already in place in their communities, thus being put in a position of not leveraging public dollars most efficiently to take advantage of work currently being done or already in place. She reiterated Creative Many’s sincere desire to collaborate with the MFDMO and the chambers of commerce on the CCPP to work together to strengthen the CCPP and maximize the opportunities for Michigan’s competitive advantage.

Deb Polich, Director of The Arts Alliance of Washtenaw County, and Director of ArtTrain explained how she became aware of the CCPP through the MFDMO, and initially believed that The Arts Alliance was going to be the designated agency to lead the program in Washtenaw County. Later the MFDMO told her that The Arts Alliance would be required to identify an economic partner agency, to serve as a fiduciary. Ms. Polich said that she then involved the Washtenaw County’s Office of Community and Economic Development as its partner. She said, however, that the MFDMO subsequently rejected the Office of Economic Development, and required instead the partnership of the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Chamber (A2Y) as fiduciary, with The Arts Alliance being relegated to ...’a 20% partner.’ Ms. Polich expressed concern that money allocated for the pilot would be spent to duplicate programs and activities already in place, but at a minimum, urged the MFDMO to strongly reconsider A2Y as sole applicant by instead allowing both the A2Y and The Arts Alliance to be co-applicants of this pilot program because of The Arts Alliance’s expertise, knowledge and involvement in the community.

Jason Schneider, Executive Director, Marquette Chamber of Commerce, commented that the relationship between the business and creative sectors in Marquette are predictably animated at times. However, upon hearing about the CCPP, it became clear to everyone that this was an opportunity to bring together both sectors to enliven the needs assessment already in place in Marquette. He commented on some of the goals of that needs assessment as well as some of the plans for the CCPP funds. He said Marquette is appreciative of the opportunity to be part of the CCPP and thankful to the MFDMO and the Council for supporting it.

Dori DePree, co-founder, Waterfront Film Festival organization: Ms. DePree announced that the Waterfront Film Festival organization received a capital grant from the Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs (MCACA) in 2016 which helped make it possible for WFF to renovate and convert an old auto repair shop in Holland into a 3,500 square foot, multi-use creative space with offices and a 200 seat

theater. The WFF would like to invite the Council to the Grand Opening of the facility, which is planned for late June 2017. They will be releasing more details over the next few weeks.

**Old Business**

There were no items discussed under Old Business; however, Mr. DePree asked about the role of the Council on recommendations or comments made about the CCPP. Ms. Leonard responded that Council members are welcome and encouraged to make recommendations to her at any time.

**New Business.**

There were no items discussed under New Business.

**Adjournment.**

There being no further business, there was a motion by Mr. Hert to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. DePree; motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 2:57 p.m.