



MINUTES OF THE MARCH 28, 2011 MEETING

1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
City Hall, Room 416
San Francisco, CA 94102

CALL TO ORDER

Commission President Saritzky called the meeting to order at 2:06pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present:

William Adams
Melanie Blum
Denise Bradley-Tyson
Peter Bratt
Debbie Brubaker
Don Canady
Marlene Sharon Saritzky
Villy Wang

Commissioners Absent:

Joan Chen
Robert Morales
Lorrae Rominger

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 28, 2011 MEETING (ACTION ITEM)

Commissioner Bratt made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 28, 2011 meeting. Commissioner Brubaker seconded the motion. Public comment was taken; the minutes were unanimously approved.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (DISCUSSION ONLY)

President Saritzky announced that there were three independent films coming to San Francisco. One, *Big Sur*, was set to begin filming in April, one is hoping to begin work in May and a third in June.

Public Comment was taken.

STAFF REPORT (DISCUSSION ONLY)

Executive Director Susannah Greason Robbins informed the Commission that currently 32 permits had been issued for 62 days in March. This compared to 2010 where 42 permits for 92 days were issued. The projects that have filmed in March include Good Morning America, Precinct 17 and Wheeler Dealer.





Executive Director Greason Robbins then outlined her accomplishments since the last meeting:

- Scouted warehouse space in order to find additional stage space for film productions.
- Toured additional City owned spaces that may work as office and/or storage spaces for the upcoming independent films.
- Met with Supervisors Farrell, Mar and Chu regarding her goals to bring more filming to SF and how she hopes to go about this. She reported that all three Supervisors seemed receptive.
- Spoke with the Northern California Production Council (NCPC) lunch to discuss establishing a discount with their members for productions working in San Francisco.
- Spoke at the Northern California Screenwriters Association educating their membership about what the Film Office does. She highlighted cost saving ideas for them to think about when writing their scripts.
- Went to Sacramento on March 21 to support Amy Lemisch from the California Film Office while she gave a presentation at the Joint Oversight Hearing of the Assembly Committee on Revenue & Taxation and Assembly Committee on Arts, Entertainment, Sports, Tourism, and Internet Media. The hearing was a review of California's Tax Credit program with testimony from labor, small businesses and local film offices. Executive Director Greason Robbins gave testimony during the public comment portion of the hearing.
- Spoke on a panel for the San Francisco Travel Association at their 6th Annual Northern California Visitor Industry Outlook and Marketing Conference about the Commission's efforts to "get creative" during this challenging economy.

Public comment was taken.

PROPOSAL FOR FILM "INCUBATOR" PROGRAM AT 134A GOLDEN GATE (ACTION ITEM)

Executive Director Greason Robbins introduced the Incubator as a way for the Commission to provide a collaborative space where filmmakers can work together. She noted that the graduates of the Commission and Film Society's FilmHouse Residencies program had stressed that the collaborative aspect of the program was the most beneficial aspect. Executive Director Greason Robbins told the Commission that she believes the proposal will not only benefit filmmakers but will also help to strengthen the local crew base and re-establish San Francisco as a destination for independent filmmakers. Finally, she pointed out that the building is located in the Mid-Market area which is currently undergoing a rebirth as a place for arts related businesses.

Executive Director Greason Robbins told the Commission that the Office was fortunate to have found a property owner who is an advocate for the arts and is willing to offer the space to the Commission at no cost for a one year trial basis. She said that because of this offer she believes that this is a perfect opportunity for the Commission implement the Incubator trial basis and evaluate the program's successes before being asked to put up any capital from the Office's budget.

President Saritzky introduced Craig Larsen, the building owner, to the Commission, thanked him for the generous proposal and asked him to come to the podium to assist in answering various questions the





Commissioners had. Mr. Larsen thanked her and told the Commission that he believes this is an exciting program and will help to energize the neighborhood.

President Saritzky asked Mr. Larsen when he had begun working with the Commission. He said discussions had begun in January.

President Saritzky asked if the rent would be negotiable for the tenants. Executive Director Greason Robbins replied that no rent had been established but that the Office is hoping to charge between \$1.00 and \$1.50 per square foot. She said that the rental rates for participants would be non negotiable.

Commissioner Wang thanked Mr. Larsen for bringing this opportunity to the Commission. She expressed concerns about the risks associated with being a landlord and asked the Office how they anticipated implementing and marketing the program and if they felt that they could keep the facility fully leased. Executive Director Greason Robbins acknowledged that the initial development and execution of leases would be time consuming but not any different than the work the office routinely does in assisting various productions when negotiating leases with other City departments. She also said that initial reaction has been positive and that she believes interest in the space will allow the office to keep the space full.

Commissioner Wang asked if the space was furnished. Executive Director Greason Robbins explained that tenants would be responsible for furnishing their offices but that the Film Office would be looking for donations to help furnish the common space.

Commissioner Wang said that with the excitement from the community that Executive Director Greason Robbins had noted she believes that more energy will be required from the office to develop additional programs and to expand the incubator beyond its current conceptual level. She asked what realistic steps the office would take to do this. Executive Director Greason Robbins said that the Film Office's role is limited to that of a landlord. The Office would be hesitant to provide services that would impact other local organizations that already specialize in doing so. Executive Director Greason Robbins stated that she expects Filming Coordinator Christine Munday to spend approximately two to three hours per week facilitating the incubator.

President Saritzky asked what the potential occupants' rental rates would be. Mr. Larsen said he was hoping to help the Commission keep the rates from \$450-\$700/space.

Commissioner Bratt expressed his support of the proposal and commended the Film Office for thinking outside of the box. He told the Commission that he currently rents an office at a similar space and finds it very beneficial. He sees pitfalls with one occupant staying in the space for years without completing any projects while others are unable to get into the space and hopes the regulations will address such potential pitfalls. Commissioner Bratt also said that it is important that the Commission develop a matrix upon which to develop the programs success as the Commission will be asked to consider continuing the project in the future.





Commissioner Adams told the Commission that he had the opportunity to tour the space on Friday and believes that Mr. Larsen is presenting the Film Office with a win-win situation that accepts the challenge given to the Commission by Mr. King to become more innovative and active in the local filming community.

Commissioner Brubaker compared the proposal to the very successful Film Center program in Oakland and expressed a belief that their success is a positive sign for the Film Office's ability to keep the space fully occupied.

Commissioner Blum said that the Presidio Film Centre has been fully leased with a waiting list for eleven years. She said that she sees pitfalls associated with the Commission acting as a landlord and has concerns around liability and insurance. Deputy City Attorney Varah told the Commission that the City Attorney would work with the Risk Manager to address the levels of required insurance and to identify affordable policies for the tenants to acquire.

Commissioner Blum added that while the space is wonderful she has concerns about security based on the neighborhood. She also noted a lack of parking. Commissioner Blum asked what the Office would do to ensure the safety of the tenants. She also expressed concerns about adding the common area as a load factor in the rent because she believes that \$1.50/sq foot exceeds most of the target tenant's budgets. She noted that when the Film Centre offered space at this rate they had trouble finding tenants. Finally, she questioned if the time allotted to facilitating this program would take away from the Commission's primary goal of increasing production days in the City and County. Executive Director Robbins told the Commissioners that there is currently a code required to get into the building and that the office is working with Mr. Larsen to investigate installing a camera and monitor. She also pointed out the portion of the proposal which discussed a partnership with the SFPD allowing them access to the restrooms and kitchen with the knowledge that this will increase their visibility in the building's vicinity.

Commissioner Canady stressed that safety is a concern in any urban area and he doesn't believe there are any exceptional concerns in this area.

Commissioner Bratt addressed Commissioner Blum's concerns about the Commission losing focus of its main goal. He suggested that the Commission develop a matrix to track how many staff hours the program is taking vs the production days it is creating to see if it is a success or distraction.

Commissioner Bradley-Tyson told the Commission that she liked the space when she visited it. She said that while she had liability concerns she is confident that they will be adequately addressed by the City Attorney. She expressed concern on the administrative load that would be added to the Filming Coordinators. She also asked what the selection process would be should the interest in leases exceed the spaces available and what the lengths of the terms would be. She stressed her concerns that all of these items be addressed before any tenants begin to occupy the space. She suggested that the Commission adopt a clear and transparent business model.





President Saritzky asked the Office about Section 4 which called for prioritization of projects with a “high likelihood of being brought to completion” and asked how this would be determined. She also asked if there would be a grievance process established. Executive Director Greason Robbins said she was looking for feedback on Section 4 and hopes the Commission has suggestions on how best to review and select tenants. Commissioner Wang referred back to her original comment asking about the development of a “program” by the Film Office because it would be unfair to develop selection and implementation processes independently of each other.

Commissioner Wang asked if the Commission could approve the proposal in “good faith” but reevaluate the process details.

Deputy City Attorney Varah outlined the options available to the Commission:

1. The Commission can authorize the Executive Director to negotiate the lease and establish the criteria for selection and implementation of the program.
2. The Commission can authorize the Executive Director to begin lease negotiations while reserving the right to establish criteria and an application process that could be a part of the sub leases.
3. The Commission could authorize the Executive Director to begin to negotiate the lease but require final approval by the Commission before the lease is fully executed.
4. The Commission could authorize the Executive Director to begin lease negotiation and assign a Commissioner to work with the office to establish selection and implementation criteria and then report back to the Commission.
5. The Commission could authorize the Executive Director to finalize the lease consistent with the proposal but reserve the right to amend and further flesh out other aspects of the proposal.

Public Comment

Lance Hoffman, Locations Professional, told the Commission that he believes this is a good idea that is long overdue. He reminded the Commission of Saul Zaenz’s incubator space that provided space to a number of projects that received Academy Awards. He sees this as a great way to continue to improve San Francisco’s image as a film friendly city.

Peter Quartaroli, Table 21 Films, introduced himself as a prospective tenant who lives in San Francisco. He told the Commission that he has had to leave San Francisco a number of times in order to make his films. On his last film he leased space in a similar space in Chicago and found it to be an immeasurable help. He assured the Commission that he didn’t believe the security concerns would be an issue. Mr. Quartaroli urged the Commission to approve the proposal and keep the local community working.

Amy Cohen, Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD), reminded the Commissioners that she had met many of them as part of OEWD’s effort to revitalize the Mid Market area round film television and the arts. She told the Commission that OEWD is thrilled that this could be one of the first projects in the area planting the seed for the burgeoning arts community. Ms. Cohen told the Commission that the Box Theatre





created a similar office space collaboration for theatre professionals and is having success in finding renters. She told the Commission that ACT, Burningman, the San Francisco Film Museum and BAVC are all looking at the area as well. She assured the Commission that the City has a multipronged approach to revitalizing the neighborhood that will ensure that the neighborhood gets even better.

Commissioner Canady left at 3:20pm

Sophia Rivera, San Francisco Resident and City College Graduate, expressed her support of the project and its potential to insure that she and her fellow graduates are able to continue to find work in San Francisco.

Paul Orgin, a Writer and Director, informed the Commission that he is currently developing a 3 million dollar film centered in the tenderloin and if passed would hope to participate in the Incubator Program. He said that he supports the proposal and sees no reason against adopting it.

Diane, a Filmmaker, expressed her support for the project. She told the Commission that she believed the additional incentive provided by this program would allow a number of projects interested in filming in San Francisco to do so.

Jeremy Shaefer, a Filmmaker, told the Commission that he works locally in post production, editing and sound. He told the Commission that the availability of an Incubator is very powerful and would be beneficial to individuals facing isolation at a traditional office. He pointed out that it would help filmmakers look legitimate when interviewing staff, holding castings etc.

Babette Hogan, a documentary Director and Producer, told the Commission that she is consistently looking for an office space in order to allow her to utilize interns etc. She expressed her support of the proposal and asked the Commission to adopt it, in turn making San Francisco the flagship location for such opportunities for filmmakers.

Tom King, Amending Angel President and Founder, expressed his surprise that such a collaborative space did not already exist. He told the Commission that while he supports the idea he has concerns about the lease. He said he felt the time frame was rushed and wants to ensure the Commission never puts itself in a situation where they would be responsible for unpaid rents. He agreed that the neighborhood was problematic due to safety concerns and suggested the Commission look for space in the Presidio instead.

JET Julia Ellis Tomiawa, SF Resident, told the Commission that the project was a “dream” and would be an incredible opportunity establishing San Francisco as the place of the future of filmmaking. She stated that there are a number of residents with the talent, tools and knowledge to be successful that just need the space and support of the community.





Executive Director Greason Robbins told the Commission that she had also received the support of Mayor Lee and Jennifer Matz, Director of the Office of Economic and Workforce Development.

Commissioner Bradley made a motion authorizing the Executive Director to move forward with lease negotiations in good faith and authorizing President Saritzky and Commissioners Blum and Wang to work with the Office to develop selection criteria. Commissioner Bratt seconded the motion. Public comment was taken. A roll call vote was taken

Commissioner Adams – Yes
Commissioner Blum – Excused
Commissioner Bradley-Tyson – Yes
Commissioner Bratt – Yes
Commissioner Brubaker – Yes
Commissioner Canady – Absent
Commissioner Chen – Absent
Commissioner Morales – Absent
Commissioner Rominger – Absent
Commissioner Saritzky – Yes
Commissioner Wang – Yes

The motion passed.

2011/2012 BUDGET (ACTION ITEM)

Executive Director Greason presented the budget to the Commissioners. She noted an increase in fringe expenses as required by employment costs and an increase in expected rent to provide space for the FilmHouse Residencies program noting that the Film Office anticipates additional costs to move the program to a new location.

President Saritzky noted that there was a large increase in promotions and travel costs. Executive Director Greason Robbins said that she would be attending more tradeshows.

Commissioner Wang asked how the office was accounting for the added office expenses at the Incubator space in the budget.

Commissioner Brubaker made a motion to approve the budget. Commissioner Blum seconded the motion.





Public Comment was taken.

Tom King, Amending Angel President and Founder, had the following comments:

- Believes salaries and fringes should be reduced
- Asked how permit revenue was calculated
- Questioned if support of the FilmHouse Residency program was necessary
- Noted there were no insurance costs listed
- Asked what would happen if we didn't make the expected revenue
- Asked for greater detail in the Promotions and Travel section of the budget
- Expressed concerns that travel costs aren't adequately funded and said that he believe the Executive Director and Commissioners should travel to Los Angeles on a monthly basis.
- Expressed concerns that office expenses are too low
- Asked if the copy machine was on a lease
- Expressed concerns that the costs for the digital photos files are too high

The motion passed unanimously.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT (DISCUSSION ONLY)

General public comment was taken.

ADJOURNMENT (ACTION ITEM)

Commissioner Bratt made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Brubaker seconded it. Public comment was taken. The Commission approved the motion unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:48pm.

