



## **MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 21, 2020 MEETING**

WebEx Virtual Meeting

### **CALL TO ORDER**

President Villy Wang called the meeting to order at 2:07pm.

### **ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present:

Villy Wang

Matt Stiker

Jon Rubin

Jim Beaumonte

Belle Taylor-McGhee

Claudine Cheng

Tony Delorio

Jack S. Song

Alix Rosenthal

Julie Veronese

Lynne Newhouse Segal

### **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 10, 2020 MEETING (ACTION ITEM)**

President Wang asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 10, 2020 meeting. Commissioner Cheng made the motion and Commissioner Stiker seconded the motion. President Wang asked for comments and none were given. Commissioner Veronese and Wang abstained from the vote. The minutes were approved.

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT (DISCUSSION ONLY)**

President Wang began by introducing and welcoming new Commissioners Tony Delorio and Julie Veronese – this was their first official Commission meeting. Vice President Stiker was also reappointed to the Film Commission.

She then updated everyone on her status – she is back from her sabbatical. She thanked the Commission for their continued work while she was away. Things have been delayed due to the pandemic and it's good to be back to restart again. She gave a special thanks for the Film SF Office for all their work during this hard time as they continue to support the City and the film community in San Francisco.

Commissioner Rosenthal, Stiker and Cheng welcomed back President Wang from her sabbatical. Commissioner Cheng asked if a new roster of the Commission can be sent to the Commissioners – Commission Secretary May Liang will send it along to the Commissioners.



President Wang asked for any more comments – none were given.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT (DISCUSSION ONLY)**

Executive Director Susannah Robbins began by talking about the transition of the office to telecommuting 100% and the status of the office currently – it has been a good transition.

Executive Director Robbins reported about the Community Education and Response Team (CERT) work film office staff did during the COVID-19 shut-down. At the onset of COVID-19, when San Francisco was shut down, my staff was called on to be Disaster Service Workers, something which all City Employees are expected to be ready for if any disaster hits the City. Film SF Manager Manijeh Fata, Film Coordinator/Commission Secretary May Liang and Senior Film Coordinator Janet Austin were deployed from their Film Office roles to work with CERT as Triage Coordinators. The CERT team is in charge of investigating and responding to complaints from the public related to COVID-19. The Film Office staff worked closely with field investigators and the City Attorneys to educate businesses regarding the regulations of the Health Order. They were deployed for three months and were greatly appreciated by CERT for their service in helping to minimize the impact of the pandemic.

Executive Director Robbins then reported on the different stages of filming guidelines which have been approved. As of May 17<sup>th</sup>, Film SF was technically allowed to issue film permits under the Order of the Health officer when they called out film production under media activities which were deemed essential services. However, because Governor Newsom didn't open up filming in California until June 12, the Film Office was hesitant to issue permits before then. Film SF did issue one permit beginning June 12, and since then have continued.

The first set of guidelines limited our ability to permit productions to:

- Crew, cast, and personnel on location is limited to the fewest number of people needed (up to a maximum of 12 people).
- All crew, cast, and personnel on location must comply with social distancing, face covering, and sanitation requirements as noted in the Order of the Health Officer.
- If filming outdoors, talent can remove face covering while filming but must remain 6 feet from other talent, crew, personnel, and the public at all times (see question below regarding May 28 order). **Note:** singing is not allowed outdoors unless the singer is at least 30 feet from all crew, cast, personnel, and public.
- If filming indoors, the location must be (and remain) closed to the public in addition to the applicable requirements noted above. **Note:** no one is allowed to remove face coverings for interior locations, including talent, under the current Order of the Health Officer and singing is not allowed indoors.
- Cast, crew, and personnel arriving to/from location must wear facial coverings and maintain 6 feet distance, to the extent possible, from each other while in transit. If traveling in a vehicle, windows should be left open whenever possible to increase ventilation.

These guidelines were largely created by Film SF Manager Fata and Executive Director Robbins - they tried to craft them to fall under the current health order at that time, for what was allowable in San Francisco and then submitted them to the Health Officer for approval.

Initially, it was very complicated to permit these productions – there's a need for a lot more information from productions regarding every single location as described in the new location questionnaire including:

- What is the scene and action at this location (include if talent is stationary or moving)?
- What are the crew positions and personnel roles?
- How will you transport cast, crew, and personnel to/from locations? Will they arrive together or separately? What will your protocol be?

Since the initial guidelines, they have been expanded to multiple groups of 12 people for a production. There have been some set visits of the permits that were approved in this time. The Office will continue to ask for expansions of the guidelines for filming.

The first production that was permitted was a Stella Artois campaign which took a lot of time and work with innovations on the part of the production to meet all health guidelines. She then went into details about how productions like this have been working here and in other places in the state (Los Angeles). She is still working with the Health Officer to push for requirements matching other cities that have more expanded guidelines for filming.

She then went into details about a project that is coming into San Francisco called “The Great Food Truck Race” that will be filming the whole season in the City.

Executive Director Robbins then reported about the number of productions since the March 2020. There were 64 projects, 123 shoot days and \$17,050 in permit fees. A year ago in the same time period, there were 319 projects 542 shoot days and \$83,080 in permit fees – numbers are down. Since starting to issue permits, there have been 51 projects, 102 shoot days – same time last year, there were 149 permits with 234 shoot days. It’s down 65% in projects and 56% in shoot days. This has highly impacted the production/film community in the Bay Area as well as the businesses that contribute to this work. The sooner the guidelines can be expanded, the better it will be for our community, including the union members. Williams Sonoma has done with most with 19 days in still photoshoots during this time.

Some upcoming productions include:

- *The Great Food Trucks Race* – filming through October 14<sup>th</sup>, new episode every 3 days
- Marvel Production – Mid-October for about 5 days of filming, sounds like they can follow guidelines, will be filming some stunt driving throughout the City
- *Goliath* – Would also like to be here in October or January for about 5 days, they will need a one-off approval from Health Officer
- Possible indie in February – they are beginning to scout for this project

Executive Director Robbins then gave an update of Vendor Discount Program status. During our slow time, Executive Director Robbins took a look at the Vendor Discount Program to see how it can be improved and make it more user friendly – there has been feedback from merchants about wanting more productions to shop locally. This feedback was received before COVID and now with the pandemic, we wanted a way to help local merchants. There is now a new logo and the program’s name has been changed to the Film SF Savings Program, in the hope that it will attract productions with the word SAVINGS. We just got the logo finalized and next steps are to revise our paperwork for merchants to apply, and send out emails/alerts via the merchant groups, chambers and our Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) partners to invite merchants to sign up.

Executive Director Robbins lastly reported about racial equity work in OEWD and Film SF. So much has happened since the Commission got together last – COVID-19, the fires, the deaths of Ahmud Aubery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and more. Last July in 2019, the Board of Supervisors passed legislation creating the Office of Racial Equity to tackle the city’s racial disparities and help city agencies and lawmakers analyze how their decisions — such as hiring practices and policy proposals — affect communities of color. This office must create a Racial Equity Framework outlining San Francisco’s “vision, goals and strategies to address racial equity and racial disparities in the city.” Each City Department must develop a Racial Equity plan.

OEWD has set up a Racial Equity Working group, which we are part of, that will address changes to departmental strategies, policies and programs moving forward. This Racial Equity Working group is working to create and finalize a draft racial equity action plan (due in December), and integrate tools and practices into the everyday work flow to ensure we are realizing every opportunity to proactively work for racial equity.

So far, each division of OEWD has had to look at what they’ve done towards racial equity in the past year -

we had to report on what each department. has done to work towards supporting people of color in San Francisco and other underrepresented communities. For the Film Office, we have done the following:

- Worked with CAAM and Frameline
- Worked to create paid internships on *Matrix 4* as well as entrance for those interns into Local 16 through the Mayor's Opportunities for All (OFA) program. The Office also worked to have paid production assistant positions through Opportunities for All on *Matrix 4*. The hope to do this again on the larger productions that shoot in San Francisco and have the budget to do so.
- Many of the interns who worked on Scene in SF Rebate program productions come from BAYCAT which works with young adults from Bayview/Hunter's Point area.
- We held an industry mixer at Old Skool Café to let more film production people know about potential hires through OFA, First Source and BAYCAT and to consider future production assistant and intern positions.
- Future possibilities include a filmmaking fund for under-served communities/people of color

Currently, Film SF Manager Fata and Film Coordinator Liang and Executive Director Robbins are working with the Policy Boards and Commissions sub-committee of OEWD's working group. This sub-committee will look at the policy boards and commissions and brainstorm ideas about how they can be looked at through a racial equity lens. This just came together, so there is not much to report about the subcommittee at this time.

President Wang thanked Executive Director Robbins for her report and thanked again the Film Office for their work with their normal duties along with serving on CERT. She asked if there was anything else Commissioners can do to help spread the news about current filming guidelines. Executive Director Robbins asked that Commissioners let their contacts know that San Francisco is opened for filming and if what they need are outside of the guidelines, the office is there to help make one-off opportunities if necessary.

Commissioner Taylor-McGhee stated that in terms of economic recovery of the film industry in San Francisco post-COVID, it's good to start thinking now about the economic losses and how to calculate/measure it. Commissioners can start thinking now strategically about how to address the issues in the community. Executive Director Robbins agreed.

Commissioner Rosenthal stated that the Office is walking a fine line between needs of the community and safety guidelines. She asked if Executive Director Robbins is worried if the restrictions in San Francisco are more strict than other cities so that film productions are going elsewhere and if she is actively comparing things to other cities. Executive Director Robbins answered that the Office has lost projects to other cities and have continued to keep pushing restrictions. One of the reasons why it's already been expanded is because in her argument, the union workers are hurting due to losing health benefits. Commissioner Rosenthal asked clarity around 12 total or groups of 12 for a production in San Francisco – Executive Director Robbins answered now it's groups of 12. Commissioner Beaumonte added that technicians need certain number of hours to maintain benefits. For productions coming back, they have been hiring less people. Productions are now circling around San Francisco to work in other Bay Area cities.

Commissioner Beaumonte followed up with comments regarding Project Ice Cream and Mayor's Office. They were able to hire 6 interns and they will stay on with Local 16. When they were going through the interview process, they were amazed at the pool of talent and it made it hard to choose the interns. Soon after that, COVID hit so 98% of union members were unemployed and losing benefits. A lot of the members are having to make hard choices and it doesn't look like they are returning soon, perhaps next year. The union will have to rebuild the labor pool so would love to go programs like OFA to rebuild. Executive Director Robbins stated that she knows that the interns had an amazing time working on Project Ice Cream and she would like to help create a more regular training program for new talent. Commissioner Beaumonte stated that he's heard from a few of the interns as they are still interested but it would be good to have something recurrent that will help the union grow back.

Vice President Stiker first thanked the Film Office for all the work they've done. He then asked a series of questions:

- Has the Office talked about SF Travel with the food trucks show?
  - Executive Director Robbins answered yes, they are connected and she also connected them to Mr. David Perry who is with the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, Union Square Business Improvement District, and the Hotel Council of San Francisco. They do need new places to do the show and have people show up – USBID has offered Union Square as a location.
- The Marvel film is exciting – is there an opportunity to market the fact that they are here in the City to other filmmakers?
  - Executive Director Robbins stated that this can happen after the filming happens here due to secrecy around the film.
- Has the Film Office experienced any budget changes due to COVID?
  - Executive Director Robbins was instructed to amend the budget but fortunately, it didn't change too much. She does need to re-balance the budget better with new decrease of permits but again is fortunate to have carryover money. Nothing was lost from the rebate program.
- Has OEWD issued any guidelines/timelines for the racial equity work?
  - Executive Director Robbins stated that the plan has to be completed by December and the Film Office is part of the working group for the departmental plan.
  - Vice President Stiker stated he would love to see the finished plan out of interest and hope to get updates on this.

Lastly, Vice President Stiker stated that he would like to work on the suggestion made by Commissioner Taylor-McGhee earlier to figure out how to tackle the data around the impact of the pandemic.

Commissioner Cheng thanked everyone in the Office for their work and was glad to hear uplifting news – she's happy the office is involved in the racial equity work. She was also glad to hear that CAAM is a part of this work and asked if Film SF participated in the CAAM virtual festival this year. Executive Director Robbins stated yes, she was able to talk to the audience through video and for October, there will be a slide with rebate information at the beginning of films. Film SF also participated in the opening of Frameline with Rebate Program information for *Shit and Champagne*, which received the rebate. The Office will also be participating in the Mill Valley Film Festival (MVFF) this year in similar ways – with all festivals, we are doing social media exchanges. MVFF starts October 8th.

Commissioner Cheng then asked a series of questions:

- Fort Mason is having a movie drive-in program – have you heard about this? Executive Director Robbins stated that the Office is not involved in these programs. been in talks with the food truck vendors who will have concessions in the drive-in theater there.
- Is this drive-in program a promotional opportunity for the Film Office? Executive Director Robbins states that the Office can try to reach out to Fort Mason and see but she's not sure if they are tied with a film festival and we want to show Rebate info to filmmakers. Not sure if this is the right audience for that information.
- Commissioner Cheng stated that she's very excited for the new logo/rebranding for the Vendors Discount Programs – she asked if it is targeted to small businesses or all businesses. Executive Director Robbins stated that it's for all businesses based in San Francisco and give a minimum of a 10% discount. She hopes to see more use of the program.
- Commissioner Cheng stated that the Chamber of Commerce can help to promote the program, is it ready yet? Executive Director Robbins stated that the new version of the program is not ready yet as the Office's time is being taking up on permits currently.

Commissioner Delorio asked if the logo is just for the Savings program or for the whole Film Office – Executive Director Robbins answered that it was just for program.

President Wang had some follow-ups with the other comments - she stated that Pier 70 is doing drive-in movies as well so we can follow up on that too. Many of the interns working on Project Ice Cream have personally given her feedback and it's so important - she hopes to keep this kind of work going. The racial equity work is great to hear about. She added that having worked on racial equity issues in the industry, she offers herself as a resource. It's not just the training programs that are important but also the networks created are also and want to continue pathways to these networks. There is also more support in black- and women-owned media companies – we can think about how to continue support these people and programs.

President Wang asked for any more comments – none were given.

**GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT (DISCUSSION ONLY)**

President Wang asked if there were any additional public comments and there were none.

Vice President Stiker thanked the Commission for working with his work schedule in not being able to attend the meetings for a while and expressed his welcome to Commissioners Delorio and Veronese.

Executive Director Robbins expressed gratitude for the Film SF staff and how hard they've worked and also thanked Vice President Stiker and President Wang for checking in as they are very helpful to stay on track and be sounding boards for thoughts and ideas.

**ADJOURNMENT (ACTION ITEM)**

President Wang asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting and the meeting was adjourned at 3:53 pm.