

**NJ MOTION PICTURE AND TELEVISION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, March 19, 2025**

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE: Chairman Michael Uslan; Vice Chairman David Smith; Commissioner Robert Angelo; Commissioner Tom Bernard; Emma Corrado representing Commissioner Tim Sullivan; Commissioner Carol Cuddy; Mayor Janice Kovach; Commissioner Michael Vezza, and Kevin O'Brien representing Commissioner Felicia Grant.

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE VIA CONFERENCE CALL: Shelley Adler, Secretary; Commissioner Daniel Bryan; Dr. Thomas Haveron, and Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Tahesha Way.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:
Commissioner Karen Kessler.

COMMISSION STAFF IN ATTENDANCE: Jon Crowley, Executive Director; John Baldasare, Director; Charles Ricciardi, Team Lead; Elizabeth Parchment, Team Lead; David Schoner, Senior Advisor; and Joseph Marra, NJMPTV Officer.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Jamera Sirmans, Senior Counsel; Christopher Kay, Deputy Attorney General; Kathleen Coviello, Chief Economic Transformation Officer, NJEDA, and other NJEDA Staff: Jen Becker, David Ramsay, Danielle Esser, Hector Serrano, Fabiola Saturne, and Muneerah Sanders.

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Uslan called the meeting to order at 10:30am and read the Open Public Meetings announcement. Commissioner Adler took the roll call.

PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES:

The next item of business was the approval of the December 11, 2024 meeting minutes. A motion was made to approve the minutes by Mayor Kovach, seconded by Commissioner Angelo, and approved by the thirteen (13) board members present.

The next item of business was the approval of the January 16, 2025 special meeting minutes. A motion was made to approve the minutes by Mayor Kovach, seconded by Mr. Smith, and approved by the thirteen (13) board members present.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Uslan's report touched upon the following topics:

- The state of the industry in Los Angeles vs New Jersey
- Governor's trip in May to the Middle East
- Enormous opportunities emerging internationally, in this region
- The Red Sea Film Festival, becoming more important
- The positive buzz from Steven Spielberg's return to New Jersey

Chairman Ulsan introduced the Film Commission's two new spring interns, Mr. Robbie Moore, and Ms. Lakeria Thompson, seniors at Kutztown University, and William Paterson University, respectively.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Mr. Crowley thanked the interns for their assistance and introduced the Film Commission's new Director, Mr. John Baldasare. Mr. Baldasare provided a brief background on himself.

Mr. Crowley remarked that the one year anniversary of his starting with the Film Commission was approaching.

Mr. Crowley went on to speak about the following topics:

- Q1 & Q2 2025
- 2025 Business Development – Marketing & Events
- 2025 SET VISITS
 - Housemaid
 - Husker
 - Beast in Me
 - Steven Spielberg Movie
 - Project Runway - coming soon
 - Distribution of Film Sets to nonprofit groups and educational institutions

FILM READY UPDATES: Ms. Elizabeth Parchment, Team Lead

Ms. Parchment briefed the commission on updates since new the program requirements were approved in January:

- 34 feedback letters have been sent to localities
- 4 new application approvals (26 total)
- Re-engaging with next 43 localities

She also advised that the following Film Ready Workshops were scheduled:

- March 26 - Carteret Performing Arts and Events Center, Carteret
- June – Salem County
- September – TBD: North Jersey
- November – NJ League of Municipalities in Atlantic City

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

MARKETING COMMITTEE: Daniel Bryan and Karen Kessler, Co-Chairs

Mr. Bryan stated that the Committee met on Wednesday, March 5, 2025 and was joined by Commissioner Kovach. They discussed social media and advertising; and potentially bringing on firms to market the incentives program to the film industry and to communicate the program out within New Jersey to make sure that taxpayers understand where their money is going and that the program is effective.

Production Assistant Film Agreement Update: Emma Corrado, Chief of Staff

Ms. Corrado stated that there was discussion about contracting a third party to develop video assets which specifically talk about careers in film as well as the benefits of the film program. The EDA sent out a request to multiple marketing firms that support the authority, and Violet PR responded. She advised that Violet PR is a trusted marketing firm for the EDA, who will create a series of four videos over the next couple months. The videos will focus on 1, careers in the film and television industry, how folks got into the industry, and what their day-to-day looks like; 2, how film is making an impact; 3, the Hollywood of the East, New Jersey as a premier filming destination; and 4, a direct to camera discussion with Tom Bernard, and any other member of the Commission, if time allows. Ms. Corrado added that Violet PR would then forward promote the videos, and that they have an excellent marketing track record.

Website And Social Media Updates: Charles Ricciardi, Team Lead

Mr. Ricciardi started his update saying that Commission developed its new social media presence, celebrating local production, highlighting businesses, locations, and job opportunities and the impressive local spend. With nearly 70 animated posts, which we put across all platforms in approximately six months, that more than doubled the amount of posts placed during the prior six months from us doing this internally. He added that the commission is now working with the EDA's communications team, who have created amazing posts, developed content, and is working to carefully develop and track all the performances of our posts.

Ms. Corrado shared statistics on recent social media engagement, adding that March 12th was the largest "view day" on Facebook, with over 12,000 views on our combination posts, including the Sopranos Anniversary, the New Jersey Women in film, and a Whispering casting call. We had a 66% increase in Facebook engagement, including likes and comments; on Instagram, 44% of views are coming from non-followers, which means our content is reaching folks not currently following the page, therefore driving uptake. She added that Facebook is performing the best for the commission, and that the Communications team will look into doing more work on Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn to drive more engagement.

Mr. Ricciardi shared updates on continuing to work with Reel- Scout on the NJ-411 updates on the Commission's website; the Garden State Newsletter, as well as the February Commissioner's Newsletter. He noted that February was an incredibly robust month for media about New Jersey with over 600 articles, stories, and mentions received.

PRODUCTION COMMITTEE: Tom Bernard and Janice L. Kovach, Co-Chairs

Commissioner Kovach stated that 2025 is trending higher than 2024 with 96 projects versus 82 projects. The committee discussed Steven Spielberg's visit to South Jersey last week, which was great. We discussed ITV and Sony, as well as the NJ Film Expo, scheduled for May 1st. The committee also discussed the Production Assistant Film Plan underway with Violet Films and agreed that having the videos about careers in the Film Industry is key.

Commissioner Bernard reiterated that it was all going smooth, and added that he hoped that there was a picture of Steven Spielberg with the train in south Jersey. Mr. Crowley advised that there was indeed a picture forthcoming. He discussed how the picture came about and the impressive qualified spend in south Jersey during that time.

DIVERSITY & WORKFORCE COMMITTEE: Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Tahesha L. Way, and Carol Cuddy

Commissioner Cuddy stated that discussions included how to most appropriately spend the \$5 million allocated to workforce training in New Jersey. She noted that \$3 million was allocated for grants, and that there are several organizations (that deal with real union members) that are still being finalized. She added that two universities, Montclair, and Brookdale have programs that would be included in the training, and that while Montclair's program is virtual reality and motion picture capture, Brookdale's is a more of a diversified training in different areas to get people introduced to the film industry.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN FILM AND DIGITAL MEDIA –
David Ramsay, Director - Workforce Innovation Partnerships

Mr. Ramsay provided an overview on the Film & Digital Media Workforce portfolio, stating that there were three overarching goals, 1), to create a support workforce development initiative that strengthens New Jersey's innovation industries and addresses the state's needs in our targeted industries, 2, to facilitate career pathways and opportunities for residents in overburdened communities, and 3), to make sure we create and support career awareness and opportunities to pursue high quality jobs in those industries.

Mr. Ramsay noted that the authority released a Request For Information last year, seeking insight from industry stakeholders and that responses validated our research and guidance from subject matter experts to invest in talent development.

Mr. Ramsay added that there were 3 initiatives of Partnerships, including two MOUs with public education institutions, including Montclair State University and Brookdale Community College, as well as a competitive grant program to address the identified needs in a holistic fashion.

Mr. Ramsay reiterated that \$3 million was available for grants to selected applicants to implement workforce development, training, and skills programs focused on strengthening and diversifying New Jersey's film and digital media talent pipeline.

Production Report: David Schoner, Senior Advisor

Mr. Schoner provided a production update stating that film industry in New Jersey was extremely busy, and that there were 20 projects in Pre-Production, one (1) in production, and six (6) projects that have wrapped.

Mr. Schoner reiterated that the commission strives to provide concierge level service to production companies, assisting as much or as little as needed, while also being preventative. He noted that while the NJ is more of a feature film state in a way, we also go after television.

He noted that reality competition shows like Project Runway can have a significant economic impact to the state because they may have 125 to 150 people working on the show at any one time.

Mr. Crowley added that some tv production companies may stay in the state for 40 to 50 weeks.

Commissioner Bernard asked if EDA staff was included on set visits since the Authority is new to working with the Commission. Commissioner Bradley asked if a stakeholder process could be combined with set visits to include legislators, and elected officials, to let them see what this program is doing. Ms. Corrado and Mr. Crowley advised that discussions about that are occurring, and that in addition to the First Lady and Lt. Governor, some legislators have been on set visits.

NEW BUSINESS/OPEN FLOOR

Commissioner Usan kicked off the discussion stating that there's two topics that keep coming up in his conversations with producers and executives in LA. 1), how will New Jersey be competitive in terms of post-production versus New York, and 2), the impact on the animation industry in LA and in Canada. He added that there's a real opportunity for us in terms of outreach to the animation industry and that he would like to see the Commission discuss and think about that.

Commissioner Smith announced some upcoming events occurring at the New Jersey Hall of Fame, including James Gandolfini Legacy Day. The event will be held on March 30, 2025 at 12:30pm, with his wife and family attending, along with members of The Sopranos to celebrate his legacy with the series, and his work with the Wounded Warriors.

Commissioner Smith added that New Jersey Hall of Fame inductee, Harlan Coben will promote his book "Nobody's Fool" at the Hall of Fame's Entertainment and Learning Center on April 5, 2025 at 6:30pm, and that the Hall of Fame induction ceremony will be back again live in the fall and that the date would be announced by Governor Murphy in June.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Myles Pressey, New Jersey Business Action Center congratulated Chairman Usan on his nomination into the New Jersey Hall of Fame.

Ms. Diane Raver, NJ Film Academy thanked the Film Commission for their support and congratulated Chairman Usan on his nomination into the New Jersey Hall of Fame.

On a motion by Vice Chair David Smith, and seconded by Mayor Kovach, the meeting was adjourned at 11:59am.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon Crowley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jon Crowley, Executive Director, NJ MPTVC