

**NJ MOTION PICTURE AND TELEVISION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, July 16, 2025**

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE: Chairman Michael Uslan; Vice Chairman David Smith; Shelley Adler, Secretary, Commissioner Tom Bernard; Commissioner Carol Cuddy; Commissioner Daniel Bryan; Commissioner Karen Kessler; Mayor Janice Kovach; Commissioner Michael Vezza; Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Tehesha Way; Emma Corrado representing Commissioner Tim Sullivan; Joseph Petrecca representing Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo of NJ Department of Labor Workforce Development; and Felicia Grant, Chair, NJ State Council on the Arts.

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE VIA CONFERENCE CALL:
Dr. Thomas Haveron

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: Paul Ceppi, Jen Becker, David Ramsay, Luke Brunskill, Danielle Esser, Hector Serrano, Fabiola Saturne, and Muneerah Sanders.

CALL TO ORDER:

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

Chairman Uslan introduced the Film Commission's two new summer interns, Mr. William Kastner, a junior at Rutgers University, and Natalie Wondolowski, a senior at Arizona State University.

PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES:

The next item of business was the approval of the March 19, 2025, meeting minutes. A motion was made to approve the minutes by Mayor Kovach, seconded by Commissioner Vezza, and approved by the fourteen (14) board members present.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Chairman Uslan's report touched upon the following topics:

- The recent Netflix groundbreaking
- Industry differences across the country compared to NJ,
- The public's awareness of the Film Commission's work
- Our goal is to become one of largest domestic production hubs in the United States.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Mr. Crowley discussed relevant Film milestones and hurdles over the last few years, including the writer's strike and production hold-offs. He then shared totals for a variety of areas, showing positive industry growth in the following areas: Qualified Spend, Daily Spend, Crew Hires, Shoot Days, Total Tax Incentive Projects, and Total Productions (ranked 4th nationwide).

Mr. Crowley described how major competitors fared in 2024 compared to New Jersey, and showed statistics that eight (8) major states/cities were down in production, but NJ was up 37%.

Mr. Crowley shared that the NJ MPTVC has been nominated as an outstanding Film Commission in the Location Manager's Guild International Awards, which will take place on August 23, 2025 in Santa Monica, California.

ANNUAL ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING:

ITEM Recommendation to Approve Annual Organizational Meeting Memo

REQUEST: Members of the Commission are requested to approve the following:

1. Election of a Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer,
2. Co-chairs for the following three (3) committees:
 - Marketing Committee
 - Production Committee
 - Diversity & Workforce Committee
3. Adoption of the Calendar of Meetings through July 2026
4. Affirmation of the Commission's Record Custodian, Assistant Records Custodian, Ethics Liaison Officer, Administrative Practice Officer, and Deputy Administrative Practice Officer

MOTION TO APPROVE: Comm. Vezza **SECOND:** Lt. Governor Tahesha Way **AYES:** 14

Mr. Crowley announced that Commission staff are working on reformatting the three committees to achieve greater impact, by enhancing the nature of engagement.

FILM READY NEW JERSEY PROGRAM:

ITEM: Recommendation to Approve Updates for the Film Ready NJ Program

REQUEST: Members of the Commission are requested to approve (1) amendments to the Film Ready Program Requirements, (2) 21 pending applications, and (3) delegated authority to the NJMPTVC Executive Director, or their designee(s), to approve or decline, for nondiscretionary reasons, individual municipal and county applications for certification or renewal of certification as film-ready, based on their full and complete compliance with the Film Ready program's established requirements.

MOTION TO APPROVE: Mr. Bernard **SECOND:** Mr. Petrecca **AYES:** 14

Commissioner Kessler asked whether members would be notified of application declinations as well as approvals at board meetings. Ms. Parchment confirmed that there would be notification of those decisions. Mr. Crowley added that so far applicants have met the requirements of the program, and that there haven't been any declinations.

Chairman Ulsan added that he's met with many producers in Los Angeles who were very impressed by the NJ Film Ready NJ Program.

Lastly, Ms. Parchment, shared current statistics regarding the program:

- 585 total towns and counties are available to be film ready,
- 192 localities have attended a film ready workshop,
- 8 total workshops have occurred,
- 43 applications have been certified since December 2023,
- 21 applications have been approved since January 2025,
- 53 localities are in the process of being certified, and
- 97 localities are being re-engaged.

MARKETING UPDATE:

Mr. Charles Ricciardi provided an update on marketing efforts for the Commission, focusing on print news, television news, advertising, and social media. He explained the Commission's engagement with print ads within the past year, including a special edition of *Variety*, a full-page ad in *The Hollywood Reporter*, and a full-back cover in *Cinematographer Magazine*, all to help raise film industry awareness in New Jersey.

Mr. Ricciardi shared statistics regarding the NJ Film Expo, demonstrating its value, including:

- \$2.4M in Total Publicity Value, and
- \$25,000 NJEDA Sponsorship Value.

Mr. Ricciardi provided updates on the Commission's social media. He praised the EDA staff and noted excellent results. Over the past three months, Instagram and Facebook have shown the greatest performance because of the new audience members and increased engagement. The following benchmarks have been reached:

- Instagram now has 3,080 followers
- Facebook saw a growth of more than 51,000 total views and has grown to 6,527 followers
- LinkedIn has recently been launched and is showing promise

Multiple Commissioners highlighted glowing feedback from expo attendees and industry partners like Four Wall Lighting. They echoed support for the expo and advocated for it to become an annual tradition.

Chairman Ulsan described the film expo served as a way for these partners to feel as though they are a part of a larger community. It also served as efficient messaging to studios and networks that had never worked in New Jersey. He said that there will be a film expo next year following the positive impacts and feedback, with enhancements including a marketing committee for the event, earlier sponsorship, and increased attendance.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN FILM AND DIGITAL MEDIA UPDATE:

Commissioner Way recused herself from this discussion and left the call at this time. She advised that she would return.

Mr. David Ramsay provided the Commission with a background on Workforce Development initiatives, speaking about the growth in film and digital media and the increase in demand for skilled professionals in space. He provided the following updates:

- **NJ Film Works Grant Program:** Applications for the NJ Film Works Grant Program closed on July 11, 2025. The number of applicants greatly exceeded initial expectations, reflecting strong interest in the program.
- **NJ Film Academy – MOU with Brookdale Community College:** Significant progress has been made since the MOU's inception. To date, 122 students have enrolled in at least one class. Financial assistance has been awarded to 27 students. Currently, three classes are being taught at Brookdale Community College, and one class is held at Hudson County Community College.
- **Dreamscape Learning MOU – NJEDA and Montclair State University:** Key milestones include the publication of the Construction RFP on June 25, 2025, with a target construction contract date of September 2025 and system installation scheduled for Spring 2026. The program will serve non-matriculated students as well as middle and high school students.

Commissioner Bernard stated that the Film Commission should make it known that scholarships are available for training. Mr. Ramsey added that he would be happy to market that information and work with the marketing team at the Film Commission. He also advised that making sure the training is provided at either low or no cost is a part of the scoring criteria for applicants.

Mr. Petrecca asked whether the Production Office Coordinators (represented by Local 161 ISTE) have been notified of the 18 students certified through Brookdale Community College. Mr. Ramsey stated that he would follow up to ensure that they were notified. He also confirmed that the certifications are public knowledge.

Commissioner Carol Cuddy added that it's also important that people who are a part of Local 161 are teaching the course, or are making special guest appearances, because otherwise it's somebody teaching what they've heard about, but not real experience.

Mr. Ramsay advised the EDA is responsible for monitoring goals and benchmarks. Quarterly reporting on outcomes is required. Mr. Ramsay also advised that students in the program do not currently receive college credit, but this is an important option to discuss going forward.

Commissioner Cuddy stated that she believed that it should not be up to any educational institution to determine the metrics of the program. She advised that the Board should determine the curriculum, who can attend the classes, post-program opportunities, and other factors.

Commissioner Uslan agreed with Commissioner Cuddy's statements and said that the Film Commission should be involved in the process to ensure maximum benefits are achieved.

Ms. Emma Corrado said that they will take the feedback from the Commissioners and formulate an official response of what has been approved by the EDA Board regarding curriculum and requirements of the program.

DIVERSITY PROJECTS:

Ms. Elizabeth Parchment provided an update on 2024 Diversity Projects.

- For 2024, 73% of total projects that went through the Incentive program received a diversity bonus
- The new 4% uplift was approved and signed into law by the Governor recently.
- The term “economically disadvantaged municipality” will address this uplift going forward.
- New language and eligibility requirements are under review by the Office of the Attorney General, and any applications submitted after June 30, 2025 will be subject to the new guidelines.
- For 2024, 73% of total projects that went through the Incentive program received a diversity bonus

PRODUCTION REPORT:

Mr. Schoner briefed the Commission on production statistics for the year 2025 so far. He told the Commission that they are working on both high-budgeted, high-profile projects as well as mid-range, lower-budgeted projects. He shared that they are working with a variety of companies, including Lionsgate, A24, NBC Universal, Warner Brother’s, Amazon Video, Netflix, and Paramount. There are 24 films and television shows that are currently in production. Mr. Schoner shared the names, filming dates, and cast of these 24 upcoming movies and television shows being filmed and produced in New Jersey. Mr. Schoener also shared the 14 movies and television shows that have already wrapped production this year.

NEW BUSINESS/OPEN FLOOR:

Mr. Petrecca advised the Commission about a clarification update to the child labor law the impacts the number of consistent hours minors can work on sets, which is positive news for the Film industry in NJ.

Commissioner Smith announced that Chairman Michael Uslan along with that the Jonas Brothers and the Isley Brothers will be inducted into the NJ Hall of Fame.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ms. Barbara St. Martin Cho, of St. Martin Cho Law, asked whether the Film Commission tracks the expenditures of small filmmakers in addition to large production companies. Mr. Schoner responded affirmatively. Mr. Crowley also responded that all services are provided to both small and large production companies. He said small production companies accounted for \$50 million spent throughout the state last year and this year, that we are aware of.

Ms. St. Martin Cho had an additional question for the Department of Labor, asking about compensation through cryptocurrency. She said cryptocurrency included a Capital Gains Tax and asked whether the Commissioner had any issues with individuals being paid through cryptocurrency. Mr. Petrecca advised that he was unable to answer a question revolving around taxation.

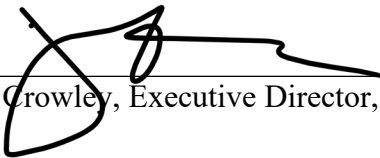
Mr. Gregory, JDJ Entertainment, spoke about the differences in infrastructure in states like California and Georgia. He asked the Commission what infrastructure they provide for small film

productions and asked if there were any tax incentives provided for filmmakers. Mr. Crowley said he would walk him through the Incentive program on a separate call after the meeting. He talked about a suite of offerings from the Commission, and said construction is typically dealt with through the ASPIRE program. Mr. Gregory thanked him for his time and praised the Film Commission for their work.

Mr. Juan Vaughn, JDJ Entertainment, asked about the staff headcount for the Workforce Development program. Ms. Parchment responded and said the Workforce Development department has a team of four.

Mr. Vaughn also asked why there was only one TV show included in the diversity projects report. Ms. Parchment responded that it depends on who applies and is able to qualify, and that there were less television applicants versus film applicants.

On a motion by Mayor Kovach, and seconded by Mr. Smith, the meeting was adjourned at 12: 24 pm.



Jon Crowley, Executive Director, NJ MPTVC