

**FLORIDA FILM AND ENTERTAINMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL**

1st Quarter Meeting

March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

**107 East Madison St.**

**Tallahassee, FL 32399**

**MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME**

Administrative (Interim Chair Ana Siegal)

Call to Order by Interim Chair Siegal at 10 a.m.

Roll Call:

*Councilmembers:*

Ana Siegel

Lisa Scott-Founds

Durand Adams

Aaron Bellamy

Brooks Timmons

Sandy Lighterman

Pamela Tuscany

*Ex-Officio Members*

John Richard

Dani DeStafney

*Members of the Public:*

John Lux, Film Florida

Gail Morgan, Destin/Fort Walton Beach Film Commission, Film Florida

*Office of Film and Entertainment (OFE) Staff:*

Commissioner Niki Welge

Susan Simms

Donyelle Marshall

Blaire Bisbee

**WELCOME**

Interim Chair Siegal welcomed everyone and said the next FFEAC meeting will be decided via email.

Blaire took roll.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### 2021 4th Quarter Meeting Minutes

Interim Chair Siegal called for a motion to approve the December 2021 meeting minutes.

Councilmember Sandy Lighterman made a motion to approve the minutes.

Councilmember Lisa Scott-Founds seconded the motion to approve the minutes.

The December minutes were approved unanimously.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### Legislative Update (Commissioner Welge)

Commissioner Welge stated this is the last week of legislative session. Yesterday was the day the legislature was supposed to have the budget on the desk for the 72-hour cooling period to take place and for session to end on time. They conferenced late into the evening and leadership sent an email saying they would come back tomorrow. Session has not officially been extended, but they will have to. The end of legislative session will either be sometime this week or next. Our agency budget was already agreed upon by both chambers yesterday, and no cuts to our division or our full-time employees were made. The new budget moving forward for fiscal year 2022-2023 will take effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Senate Bill 946, Senator Gruters tax credit bill for the film and entertainment industry, passed out of Commerce and Tourism committee but was not heard in other committees. There was a hail mary effort at the very end of session to get the bill attached to another tax bill, but it was unsuccessful. House Bill 217, Representative Trabulsy's rebate bill was not heard in a single committee this year. The likelihood of either of these bills moving forward at this point is very slim. There was no movement on the CITC bill, SB 1878 which was also filed by Senator Gruters. There was a Senate bill, but no House companion was ever filed. Last year, the bill was heard in a committee or two in the Senate, but this year there was no traction at all. The Senate passed SB 434 reauthorizing VISIT FLORIDA and extending their sunset through 2028. Their \$50 million operating budget was re-upped, but it is non-recurring funding which means they will have to go back every year and ask for the money again.

## Office of Film and Entertainment Team Report

Interim Chair Siegal invited the Office of Film and Entertainment staff to give their respective updates.

### Office Updates (Commissioner Niki Welge)

Commissioner Welge began by stating that we had no new Councilmembers join since our December meeting. Commissioner Welge thanked Pamela Tuscany, whose term expired recently, and is not seeking reappointment for another term. She stated she has offered to participate on the council until her seat is replaced. There are now five vacancies total. There are still vacancies in the Governor's office and in the House.

Commissioner Welge began a brief marketing update. She stated since Blaire has joined our team our marketing efforts have quadrupled and there are new marketing and social media campaigns for our office. Commissioner Welge reminded everyone to like and tag us in their content. We have new sponsored content on social media, new marketing materials and collateral, new history page on the website and increased app downloads. There is a direct correlation on the amount of marketing we do and the number of productions that are filmed in Florida. Film Florida is sponsoring a Virtual FamTour with LMGI and she will be acting as the host. The Virtual FamTour will be showcasing all our beautiful locations throughout the State of Florida. Filming for the intro/ending will take place at Vu Studios in Tampa at the end of the month, before the March Film Florida meetings. The LMGI Virtual FamTour video will be posted on our YouTube page once complete.

Commissioner Welge stated the Sales Tax Exemption program is having a record-breaking year and has already broken a record for the amount of production expenditures in February, with 4 months left in our fiscal year. There are several reasons why the numbers are higher, increased production activities in the state, covid compliance, production equipment, and the cost of doing business are more expensive.

The film and entertainment industry is an important part of economic development in the state. One thing that will negatively impact the number of productions this year is the Major League Baseball lockout. Florida is home to 15 spring training Major League Baseball teams which normally draw 1.5 million fans a year. It impacts our industry because the teams practicing here bring production activity to the state when the players are filming commercials for razors, sneakers, colognes. They are 98 days into collective bargaining, and they have failed to come to an agreement so far. Opening day has already been pushed back two weeks and it will have an impact on production activity in the state.

Commissioner Welge officially announced Sandy Lighterman has made the move from Miami Dade County to Broward County as the new Film Commissioner. Marco Giron has taken over the Miami Dade County Film office, who was the Doral Film Commissioner previously.

DeSoto County has come on board as a new local film commission. There are 67 counties in Florida, all but 3 of them have a film commission. Glades, Holmes and Hardee County still do

not have a film commission office. We are excited to have Desoto County on Board, so that their county can attract production activity. The end goal is to have all 67 counties with a film commission. The new Desoto County Florida Film Commissioner is Sandra Guffey, the Director of Economic Development.

Lastly, Commissioner Welge stated that she and Susan would be attending the Film Florida meetings in Tampa at the end of March. Commissioner Welge closed by encouraging members on the call to join Film Florida and attend the meetings open to the public on Wednesday.

#### Future Business Development (Susan Simms)

Susan stated that she was planning to travel to both Slamdance and Sundance in January but did not due to the pandemic and that both were virtual this year. She mentioned Florida filmmaker Sasha Levinson and her movie “Sylvie of the Sunshine State” won two best filmmaker awards. The film will now go through the indie film circuit.

Commercials continue to be the main production driver in the state, with a ton of reality content as well, much of which is focused on the outdoors. Florida has unparalleled natural resources and people can show up with a camera and capture something spectacular. Florida is home to the Space Coast with rockets and spaceships and that also sets us apart.

Susan thanked Gail Morgan, President of Film Florida, for connecting us with Glen Roberts with DoD who oversees approval of the use of military facilities for production activities. Florida, Texas, and California have more military assets than any other state, and people want to use these for filming. We use these assets as a carrot for business. The Gulf Coast is owning the 2-hour movie space. “Magic Mike” originally shot there in Tampa, where Channing Tatum is from. The movie sequel will be shot in south Florida, where they will spend a few weeks.

The “Bad Monkey” TV Series for Apple+ is shooting today in Key West after a week in Big Pine Key, Florida. They are finding it pricey, which is a challenge.

A few of the major film offices have some holes we are trying to plug, including Pensacola and Sarasota. Film Commissioners are changing chairs in the industry and moving into new opportunities. Marco Giron is the new Miami- Dade County Film Commissioner. The film offices are working on strengthening our communications because we are all stretched thin.

Susan mentioned her and Niki are traveling to Tampa this month, it’s the first in person Film Florida meeting in two years and Susan’s first time in Florida in three years. During the trip Niki and Susan will be touring Airlot in Orlando and Vu Studios in Tampa. Susan will head to Tallahassee for meetings as well.

Phone calls have recently picked up from people wanting to move to Florida all over the country. They are moving to places off the beaten path. Every day we are finding new people to connect with. The local incentives are keeping Florida in the game.

The main competing markets continue to be Los Angeles, New York, New Mexico, California, Louisiana, and Georgia. North Carolina is sneaking in. Governor Newsom signed a bill for an additional \$330 million in tax credits for the film industry, which is on top of the \$330 million they already have invested in their existing program. A new bill that has passed in the Senate will extend their tax incentive through 2030. \$150 million of the \$330 million is earmarked for new sound stage construction in California.

The film industry in California is down 39%, but remains the top shooting location for TV shows, in 2021. 97 TV series were shot in California, more than New York and Georgia combined. Feature films have a 19% drop, but they snagged the new Tom Brady movie as they got the California incentive. California has 28 TV series that have moved from other locations to the state. "Bad Monkey" season two is the main target for the California Film Commission to secure. We are trying everything we can to make sure they have a great experience in Florida so they stay here. Shows set in Florida are our primary goal and we try to secure as much filming set in Florida as possible.

Susan mentioned the "Florida Man" project that is shooting in Georgia. They renamed it "Panhandle," and it will be shooting in Savannah. Variety Magazine says it's a "Valentine to the Sunshine State." "Panhandle" will have one shooting day in Florida. It will be produced by the same company as "Bloodline."

Susan ended by saying she watched "Pieces of Her" set in Savannah, and they filmed in Australia. Each state has the same challenges as Florida when it comes to production.

#### Sales Tax Exemption Report (Donyelle Marshall)

Donyelle provided her Sales Tax Exemption report. As of today, 867 applications have been approved. On this date last fiscal year 669 applications had been approved, which is a 29.6 % increase. There are 16 weeks left in the fiscal year, with a weekly average of 25 approvals, the estimated year-end total is 1,220. Production companies are filming mostly in Miami Dade, Broward, Orange, and Tampa. The estimated \$1.3 billion in production expenditures is captured in direct spend. The top expenditures are in production equipment at \$218 million, set design and construction at \$129 million and real property at \$52 million. The top applicants are Florida based companies at 527 applications, second is California at 116 applicants and New York at 59 applicants. Interestingly, our neighbor Georgia only has 7 applicants.

Donyelle began the LATAM report by stating on January 31<sup>st</sup>, Televisa and Univision closed on a \$4.8 billion merger. The new company is now labeled as Televisa Univision Inc and will bring together Televisa's four broadcast channels, 27 paid TV channels, their movie studio, Bling TV, Televisa trademark, and Univision's U.S. assets. This includes Univision Unimas broadcast networks, 9 Spanish language cable networks, 59 television stations and 57 radio stations in major U.S. Hispanic markets. Televisa Univision has launched a 2-tier service which includes Vix, launching on March 31<sup>st</sup> and SVOD option Vix+, set to launch in the second half of 2022. These platforms will offer more than 50,000 hours of Spanish language content across genres.

NBC Universal is launching content TPlus brand on Peacock this fall, in sync with the company's Spanish language coverage of The World Cup in Qatar.

Donyelle spoke on the huge economic impact professional sports have on our state. Donyelle will be traveling to Miami to meet with the Miami Dolphins tax team, the South Florida Motor Sports team, who have a 10-year contract with Formula 1 to host the Miami Grand Prix, Miami FC which is David Beckhams 50 million-dollar MLS franchise, and lastly the CEO and VP of Financing at the Miami Marlins.

Donyelle closed by saying she hoped to share some of their new exciting projects at the next FFEAC meeting.

### Marketing Report (Blaire Bisbee)

Blaire started by providing a social media statistics update. She has worked to grow the Instagram following since starting with the office in November. In the last 90 days, we have reached 9,085 accounts, resulting in a 223% increase of posts seen on our account. 675 accounts engaged with our posts resulting in a 92.8% increase. Instagram has seen an increase of 393 followers which is a 31.6% increase resulting in 1,211 followers' total. The statistics are compared to the previous months of September 3<sup>rd</sup> through December 1<sup>st</sup>. The Facebook statistics include the previous 28 days. In the last 28 days our posts have reached 2,000 people and our page has increased by 35 new followers.

Blaire has also created new social media reels based on different Florida locations and she showed one of the reels titled "Florida's Bridges." Blaire stated we started new social media paid advertising on Facebook and Instagram. The video advertising our office services will run for 30 days targeting the film and entertainment industry professionals nationwide and Canada.

Blaire spoke regarding the water bottle social media campaign. She said an email was sent to all the Florida Film Commissions asking if they would like a box of our branded water bottles to distribute to film/ tv sets or industry professionals. We sent our branded water bottles to the interested film commissions including Film Tampa Bay, Palm Beach County Film Commission, and the Broward County Film Commission. A box was also sent to the "Bad Monkey" production offices. A flyer was placed inside each water bottle with instructions to snap an on-location photo with it and tag us on social media. Blaire thanked Jesse at Film Tampa Bay for going the extra mile and snapping so many great photos in the market.

She also sent an email to the local film commissions at the beginning of January reminding them of the importance of updating their location database with new photos, and new locations for their markets. We have seen quite a few new location additions to the database, so thank you to those who have taken the time to update it for their market!

A new website page was created called "The History of Film and Television in Florida." The new page highlights the origins of Florida as the first Hollywood, it contains links to various websites that include more detailed information regarding the history of the film industry in

Florida. You can check it out on our website under “about us” and then click “The History of Film and Television in Florida.”

Blaire concluded her report by detailing the new promotional items and an event approaching at the Capitol. The new branded Film in Florida tote bags arrived at our office. We plan to use these for future events. We will be placing an order for a promotional item for “take your child to work day” at the Capitol on April 28th.

#### Association Updates: (Film Florida, SAG, IATSE, etc.)

Neither IATSE nor SAG-AFTRA were present to provide an update.

Commissioner Welge handed the floor to Gail Morgan, President of Film Florida.

Gail started by saying Film Florida held their monthly professional development series Film Florida Fridays in February and featured a group of entertainment lawyers. The next edition is this Friday, March 11<sup>th</sup> featuring Pitching and Producing, with two Florida based writers and producers talking about getting projects from concept to execution. The Friday discussions are free and open to the public.

Season 4 of the Film Florida podcast continues. A new episode will be released every other week through Memorial Day. Gail encourages everyone to listen.

Film Florida’s next quarterly meeting will be held March 28-30 in Tampa. It will be the first in-person Film Florida meeting since 2019. Film Florida members are welcome to attend all meetings and the public is welcome to attend the Board of Directors meeting on Wednesday. The Florida Emerging Filmmakers Fund is open for submissions. One film that received funds premiered in Ft. Lauderdale last year, and another film premiered during the Miami Film Festival last week. Another film was recently awarded financial support.

Gail spoke on the legislative session efforts. Film Florida Executive Director John Lux attended the Legislative Fly-In at the Capitol in Tallahassee, and the Florida Chamber of Commerce and Associated Industries of Florida included the film industry as a priority for the 2022 session.

The 2022 legislative session wraps up soon and Film Florida backed bills SB 946 from Senator Joe Gruters and HB 217 from Representative Dana Trabulsy did not get across the finish line despite a last-minute attempt from Senator Gruters to attach an amendment to another bill. The bipartisan backed bills continue to get stonewalled by a few legislators in the Florida House. The plan is to regroup with a new plan in the 2023 Legislative session.

Gail ended by thanking the members of the FFEAC who are members of Film Florida and encouraged membership to the FFEAC members.

Gail handed the floor to John Lux. John Lux thanked Gail and spoke regarding the LMGI Fam Tour. There are over 20 location videos collected from regions all over the state and Commissioner Welge is the host of the LMGI Virtual FamTour. LMGI will release the video

first to their members in a premier, and then Niki and John will be a part of a Zoom session to do a Q and A. The video will be available to the public and that is when it will be available for us to use on our social media accounts.

Lastly, John closed by mentioning the amount of people that are moving to Florida. He talks to at least one a week. The interesting thing about most of them is that they are Republicans, and they cannot understand why our legislature is not more supportive of the film industry.

Ex-Officio Updates: (Enterprise Florida, Inc., VISIT FLORIDA, and CareerSource Florida)

John Richard of Enterprise Florida provided an update. He echoed John Lux's sentiment of the amount of people moving to Florida. John mentioned a video hosting platform called "Rumble," that relocated recently to Florida. They just moved to the Sarasota area.

Niki thanked John for his update.

Interim Chair Siegal asked if any other Ex-Officio members had updates.

Dani DeStafney from VISIT FLORIDA said she had no updates at this time, except the legislative ones that were discussed earlier.

Interim Chair Siegal asked if Career Source Florida had an update. No member was present to provide an update.

Public Comment

Interim Chair Siegal opened the floor for public comment.

Councilmember Lisa Scott-Founds mentioned how excited she was that Sandy Lighterman took over the helm at the Broward County Film Office.

Councilmember Lighterman thanked Lisa for the welcome.

**ADJOURN 11:11 A.M.**