

MINUTES

OKLAHOMA FILM & MUSIC ADVISORY COMMISSION

Tuesday, February 13, 2007

Governor's Large Conference Room, State Capitol
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

COMMISSIONERS

Present

Lael Erickson
Gray Frederickson
Kathy Henry
Steve Ripley
Jeanne Hoffman Smith
Lt. Governor Jari Askins

Absent

Charles "Chuck" Cissel
Byron Berline
Margo Gray
Max Weitzenhoffer

STAFF

Dino Lalli
Jill Simpson
Jessika Lauren
Claudia Connor

GUESTS

Dick Pryor
Jamie Jameson
Angie DeVore
Justan M. Floyd
Jon Shryock
David Turnipseed
Scott Forrester
Casey Courtney
Lane Savage

Lezette Boutin

The meeting was called to order by Lt. Governor Jari Askins at 2:00 p.m. and she asked if compliance with the Open Meeting Act had been met, to which Jill Simpson, Director of the Oklahoma Film & Music Office, replied that it had.

OPENING REMARKS

Lt. Governor Askins proceeded with opening remarks, including a formal introduction of herself and staff member, Dick Pryor. Lt. Governor Askins invited the board members to feel free to contact her with any questions, before turning the floor to Jill Simpson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Lt. Governor Askins moved and Lael Erickson seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2006 meeting. All voted in favor. Motion carried.

PRESENTATION ON TULSA INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Jill Simpson introduced guest speaker Jamie Jameson, a Tulsa based developer, who was in attendance to give a PowerPoint presentation on his project, the Tulsa International Festival.

- Jameson and his partners Ken Busby and Dr. Kerry Joels have started development on The Tulsa International Festival (T.I.F.), which is modeled after Scotland's Edinburgh International Festival.
- The goal of the festival is to revitalize Tulsa exclusively, especially downtown, create tourism, boost creativity and education, and stimulate economic development.
- T.I.F. will coincide with Tulsa's May Fest and plans to unite with other ongoing festivals such as DFEST and incite ancillary festivals to burgeon (i.e. ballet, music, film), with T.I.F. being the core festival that ties all these other simultaneously running festivals together. The program structure will include existing festivals, street entertainment, special events, and a grand finale. An example of a signature event would be hosting the Beijing Ballet or Yo Yo Ma.
- T.I.F. will be an annually funded festival that will run for approximately four weeks, with the 2008 dates tentatively scheduled for 5/23-6/21. T.I.F. will have full time managers working on the festival year round and is looking into securing a permanent home.
- T.I.F. is a non-profit through the Arts & Humanities Council of Tulsa. T.I.F. has a budget of approximately \$2.5 million with an anticipated generation of \$5-15 million in economic impact.
- T.I.F.'s target audience is Oklahoma, surrounding states, and international artists of all ages.

- T.I.F. will work with existing festivals on organizational and marketing issues, as well as possibly supplying seed monies for new festivals' start up costs.
- T.I.F. has the support of Step Up Tulsa, which lends support to grassroots projects.

Jeanne Hoffman Smith, Jill Simpson, Kathy Henry, and Gray Frederickson discussed with Jamie about getting in contact with the Oklahoma Creativity Project.

Jill Simpson introduced guest in attendance Angie DeVore, co-creator of DFEST, a Tulsa based music festival.

Angie DeVore shared her excitement about T.I.F. and DFEST uniting. DeVore is interested in Jamie's plans to expand on what she has been trying to do for the last six years, which is to "Bring Oklahoma up on the scene." DeVore discussed DFEST's goals of building up the Oklahoma entertainment industry and stressed the importance of working together towards this common goal.

Jill Simpson asked Jamie Jameson about T.I.F.'s inclusion of other on-going festivals to which Jameson replied that he'd like to help any festival that wants help.

REPORT ON FILM & MUSIC OFFICE ACTIVITIES

Jill Simpson provided an update on recent activities, including:

- Our bill, SB 623 being carried by Randy Bass, passed by the Senate Finance Committee without any questions.
- Legislative changes for Oklahoma's incentives.
- Impact Productions faith based projects.
- Economic impact numbers up from last year at \$18.9 million
- Oklahoma Film & Music Office's website hits are up to 60,000+, thus making our need for website optimization crucial for functionality.
- Simpson's attendance at Sundance Film Festival where Oklahoma director Sterlin Harjo's film, *Four Sheets to the Wind* had sold-out screenings and Tamara Podemski won a Special Jury Prize for Acting.

Jill Simpson shared that Oklahoma production companies have not been able to utilize Oklahoma's film incentives the way the legislation was written previously. As a result the new legislation changes call for adjustments to the crew tier requirements, and the budget minimum to be lowered to a half million with the intention of kick-starting the industry. Simpson also shared that she had a good meeting with the Department of Commerce and they were interested in meeting for further discussion.

Jill Simpson asked Lt. Governor Askins whether there was a way to acquire additional monies if the Film Rebate Fund was depleted. Lt. Governor Askins answered that there may be a way to make a special argument on that matter should the situation arise.

Lael Erickson inquired about New Mexico's incentives and the state's success in attracting film production.

Gray Frederickson discussed the issue of the Sales Tax Exemption not being able to be combined with the Film Rebate. Jill Simpson shared information about Oklahoma's rural tax credit and also mentioned that as it stands Oklahoma will never offer assignable tax credits.

Simpson explained to the group that Oklahoma's incentives and benefits are greater for smaller budget productions when compared to other states such as Oregon.

Steve Ripley inquired about Impact Productions' committal to filming in Oklahoma. Jill Simpson shared that she has met with both Impact Productions and The Weinstein Company to discuss their film projects. Simpson mentioned that it appears Tom Newman is indeed committed to filming *The Penny* in Oklahoma.

The group discussed the issue of the Film Rebate cap not being able to be removed. Steve Ripley mentioned a possible proposal of asking for money for the fund.

The group discussed several topics surrounding *Four Sheets to the Wind*, including:

- Jill Simpson's attendance at Sundance Film Festival in support of the film. Screenings of the film were sold-out and feedback was positive.
- *Four Sheets to the Wind* earned a Special Jury Prize for Acting, given to Tamara Podemski.
- Kathy Henry asked about having an Oklahoma premiere of the film.
- Steve Ripley inquired about possible reasons why *Four Sheets to the Wind* did not secure distribution at Sundance. Jill Simpson replied that this is due in part to the nature of the festival, and *Four Sheets to the Wind* not being a star vehicle or a film that easily fits the mandate of production companies. Simpson stated however, "The ball is still in play" as *Four Sheets to the Wind* will be going on to other festivals.
- Jill Simpson discussed Native American filmmakers being on the rise in the Oklahoma film industry.

Jill shared news with the group about Holly Hunter's recent trip to Oklahoma City for character research. Thanks to Mayor Cornett, Hunter gained all-access to resources in the state including being able to observe Oklahoma City detectives in action.

NEW BUSINESS

Jill Simpson share several updates on potential film production in Oklahoma, including:

- *Crazy Hearts* production is likely to go to New Mexico due to being unable to raise additional funds quickly in Oklahoma.
- John Grisham novel, *An Innocent Man*, is based on a true story about an Oklahoman and has been optioned by George Clooney. The Oklahoma Film & Music Office sent Mr. Clooney an information packet on our state's resources and incentives.
- *A Beaten Path* has partial funding and actress Julianna Margulies attached

- *A Darkened Path*, a Wicked Prophet Production that is seeking funding.
- *The Penny* is a \$6 million budget feature being produced by Impact Productions and The Weinstein Co. Jill Simpson has met with both sides to discuss Oklahoma versus Louisiana incentives and states that she feels Oklahoma is strong in the running.
- *When the Beast Returns* is Sterlin Harjo's current project in development.
- *Tooth and Nail*, a feature produced by Ted Kroeber who is interested in bringing additional horror film productions to Oklahoma.

Jill Simpson announced Oklahoma producer Chad Burris' recent honor of being awarded The Mark Silverman Fellowship for new producers through The Sundance Institute for his latest project, *The Left Handed Path*.

Simpson shared with the group that Moore-Norman Career Tech is discussing working with the Oklahoma Film & Music Office to tailor classes to train film and music crew.

Simpson updated the group on the OCU Music Scoring Program, stating that she has on-going meetings on the development of this proposed project.

Simpson shared that Fritz Kiersch and Jay Shanker attended a meeting with the Oklahoma Film & Music Office at the Capitol and made quite an impact there when they stressed the problem of talented Oklahoman youth leaving the state because of the lack of entertainment industry jobs.

Kathy Henry inquired about the next Oklahoma Music Industry Meeting, to which Jill Simpson replied that the next scheduled meeting will take place in Tulsa at the Circle Cinema with the date to be announced soon.

Jill Simpson invited the group to the Oklahoma Film & Music Office's Legislative Reception to be held at the Harn Homestead in Oklahoma City on May 8th.

Kathy Henry suggested scheduling the next Advisory Board Meeting to coincide with the date of the Legislative Reception.

The group discussed various issues and challenges in the Oklahoma film industry with the guests in attendance, the main topics are as follows:

- Justan Floyd asserted that Oklahoma has a talented crew base skilled for the needs of indie productions.
- Big productions tend to bring in their own crew.
- Brian Blagowsky's "Film Commission" website comes up in the top ten of search engine results, and as a private entity, this title is misleading and causing a challenge for other crew in getting jobs with him being the first point of contact. The first point of contact should be the official Office of the Oklahoma Film & Music Commission.
- Crew base is confused as to which guide they are actually in—Blagowsky's or the Oklahoma Film & Music Office's official guides, printed and electronic. Justan Floyd shared his feelings about both guides being ineffectual.

- Guests expressed their frustration with not getting enough work and hearing from production companies that they don't know there is a crew base in Oklahoma.
- Guests want to remain in-state to work with the goal of the entire crew base in Oklahoma to have equal opportunities and access to jobs for a chance to flourish.

Steve Ripley stressed the importance of not having Brian Blagowsky's website appear above the Oklahoma Film & Music Office on search engine results.

Lt. Governor Askins offered to help Jill Simpson work on improving the Online Production Guide database.

Kathy Henry proposed an idea to have start meetings on the Oklahoma film industry to keep an on-going discussion with issues as they arise.

ADJOURN

Lt. Governor Askins called for an adjournment. Lael Erickson moved and Gray Frederickson seconded a motion to adjourn. The Commission adjourned at 4:00 p.m.