




Opposition to Agenda item #16-1357

1 message

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Opposition to Agenda item #16-1357

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Opposition to Agenda item #16-1357, Please include this letter into public record, and it is to be included in any hearings, studies, and/or reports pertaining to this issue.

My name is Richard Doherty, a citizen of the San Fernando Valley, with degrees in Electrical Engineering and Film Production, engaged in the film industry for almost 2 decades.

I would like register opposition to the proposed amendment in its current form. While I would like to commend the Council and the Personnel and Animal Welfare Committee for their attention to the matter of animal welfare, and I do agree that some of the conclusions of the Committee do address issues that may be of some concern, namely completely untrained individuals owning animals that require expert and careful care.

Nevertheless, it is critical to understand and address the economic impact it may have on the film industry, which is a critical industry for the Southland, and is an industry in which I have considerable experience. I think it is also important to address any impact on responsible and competent animal education programs, which in my opinion serve important educational needs, though I personally do not have any expertise in this area.

On the issue of filming:

- Film, Television, and Commercial production is a critical business in Los Angeles, both in terms of economic impact and visibility.
- This industry is mobile, and in the past, when challenging taxation or regulation has arisen, it is well understood that production companies simply begin to do production in other places that are friendlier and less expensive.
- Los Angeles can ill-afford to allow the loss of local jobs and local revenue were production to move to other locations. This includes not only animal training jobs (which are represented by the union, and extensively monitored by multiple agencies including USF&G at both their animal care facilities and on set by American Humane representatives), but also significant numbers of production jobs that would be moved to other locations.

In addition, I have heard that people unfamiliar with the film industry believe that Computer Graphics Technology (CGI) is now capable of replacing the animals with digital representatives. Let me assure you from my position as an expert in this area, this is simply not the case. While it is true great strides have been made in the area of lifelike animal work, these visual elements still require vast amounts of manpower, technology, and infrastructure to complete something remotely acceptable to audiences. While it is possible to replace, for example, a living dog on set with a virtual, computed image of a dog, it is approximately 100 times more expensive to do so, and therefore relegated to only the most high-end, big budget productions, notably performing actions a live animal would not be able to safely perform. More importantly, hiring companies to perform CGI work means a net loss of jobs and revenue from Los Angeles (and from the US), as most major industry CGI work is performed in India and Canada (namely Toronto). In reality, production companies would find this prohibitive and will simply move production out of Los Angeles to places with better regulatory structure.

I have had experience with animal handling and training industry on set, and in my entire experience I have only witnessed the utmost competency and continued care for the animals by these individuals. In addition, they are monitored by outside agencies. Animals I have seen working for professional animal handling and training companies always seem happy, eager to work, well-cared, well-fed, etc. On set, animal trainers are some of the busiest production staff, as they are continually attending to the animals' comfort, care, health. I simply want to assure the Council that proper, expert animal training for the film industry is of benefit to audiences, local jobs, and the City of Los Angeles.

Warm regards,
Richard Doherty

