

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

CALIFORNIA

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October 23, 2014

Council File: 14-0443
Council District: All
Contact:
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Ad Hoc on Film and Television Production Jobs Committee
Los Angeles City Council
c/o Richard Williams
City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall

COMMITTEE TRANSMITTAL: VARIOUS ACTIONS RELATED TO IMPROVING CITY SERVICES FOR THE FILM INDUSTRY

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD) or designee, respectfully requests that the City Council and Mayor:

1. APPROVE the attached Film Permit Customer Service Survey (Filming Survey).
2. INSTRUCT EWDD to collect and analyze the Filming Survey data on an annual basis and present findings and recommendations to address any issues identified in the Filming Survey to the Mayor and City Council for consideration.
3. INSTRUCT FilmL.A. to notify all customers that obtained filming permits from the City of Los Angeles in the past two years of the new Filming Survey; provide a link to the Filming Survey on the FilmL.A. website; and add a link and language describing the Filming Survey to all new film permits issued.
4. REQUEST that FilmL.A. provide a report to the Ad Hoc on Film and Television Production Jobs Committee on issues raised during the Location Manager Interviews including, but not limited to current fee structures; permit expediting; community notifications; and the Film Permit Refund Policy.
5. REQUEST that the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) provide a report to the Ad Hoc on Film and Television Production Jobs Committee on after-hour notifications and communication with Film Unit Fire Safety Officers.

6. REQUEST that FilmL.A. work with the LAFD, Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP), and Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) to automate the Application Intake System (System) and link it to the FilmL.A. database.
7. REQUEST that the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) consider allowing the film industry to utilize parking at the John Ferraro Building and other LADWP facilities for film industry use.
8. REQUEST a report from the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) on the status and availability of Film Unit Vehicles and efforts to ensure reliable field response capabilities.
9. Consider department specific requests in the upcoming budget process for FY2015-2016 which support expanding film production in the City of Los Angeles and use of public property for location filming.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The cost associated with overseeing and reporting on the Filming Survey by EWDD is minimal and should have no fiscal impact to the General Fund.

No other recommendations have any immediate impact on the General Fund.

BACKGROUND

Filming Survey

Historically, the City of Los Angeles, through various offices, departments, and FilmL.A. receives input from the public and industry regarding filming concerns. These concerns are individually addressed and traditionally have not been collected or summarized in an organized manner. On April 17, 2014, the Ad Hoc Committee on Film and TV Production Jobs considered Motion 14-0443 (Krekorian - Price), directing the EWDD to create a survey to evaluate film permittee experience working with the City of Los Angeles, FilmL.A., and all City departments. The motion suggested circulating the survey to all film permittees since 2013 and posting the survey online at <http://ewdd.lacity.org>.

Location Manager Interviews

On an annual basis, the EWDD along with the Office of the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA), FilmL.A., Mayor's Office, and interested Council offices, meet with location managers to obtain their feedback. The participants are granted confidentiality so they can freely discuss their experiences. Based on the feedback, the EWDD Citywide Filming Coordinator and Industry Liaison compiles the aggregate data and works with City departments, FilmL.A., Teamsters Local 399, and all affected entities to address any issues raised and facilitate the necessary changes. The EWDD also hosts a quarterly Citywide Film Taskforce meeting, where the various departments report back on the improvements and/or changes that were implemented, engage in open dialogue on current concerns and develop shared solutions.

In a step towards formalizing the City's review of efforts to support and grow film production and the entertainment sector as a cornerstone of the region's economy this report seeks to

summarize feedback and recommendations from this year's Location Manager Interviews for Council consideration.

SUMMARY

FILMING SURVEY

By utilizing a standard Filming Survey, accessible to all who are impacted by filming in Los Angeles, the City can provide a useful tool for data collection and analysis. The information synthesized through the Filming Survey will be made available to policymakers to develop improved programs and services. A summary of the Filming Survey data will be incorporated in an annual report to Council along with data collected from the Location Manager Interviews. The Economic and Workforce Development Department will create a link on the department website that will allow film permit recipients and other interested parties to submit the Filming Survey electronically. FilmL.A. will assist in directing permittees to the website by providing a link to the survey on all future permits. If approved as to form, the attached Filming Survey would be available to everyone affected by filming to provide the City with feedback associated with their filming experience.

LOCATION MANAGER INTERVIEWS

On May 22-23, 2014, the EWDD, CLA, staff from Councilmember Krekorian's office, FilmL.A., and Teamsters Local 399 met with ten location managers selected by Teamsters Local 399 because of their familiarity with the City of Los Angeles. Each location manager was provided approximately thirty minutes to discuss their personal experiences as film location managers in the City.

The location managers were complimentary of the City's efforts to make film permitting and on-location production simple and cost-effective. Additionally, the location managers appreciated the development of expertise and responsiveness in the City departments that work regularly with the film industry. Location managers acknowledged the reduced fee rates being offered by City departments but stated that having skilled, responsive and reliable film support personnel within each department was of primary import and in many cases worth paying added fees to ensure.

The summary below represents an aggregate of the results of the interviews conducted by department or agency as well as the current status of efforts taken to address requests and concerns.

FILML.A. – Although location managers were very satisfied with FilmL.A.'s services, some requested a review of fee structures, particularly for commercials, which have been seen as cost-prohibitive. The location managers also requested an evaluation of opportunities for acceleration of the permit process, review of the community notification process, and timeliness of permit refunds.

LAFD – Location managers raised the need to access Fire Safety Officers (FSO) after hours and on the weekend. Currently, the LAFD Film Unit Fire Safety Officers are available between 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.. When an officer is assigned to a film shoot, they are provided the filming schedule on the day prior to the shoot. However, film companies often finalize their schedules after 5:30 p.m. and do not have a way to contact the FSO to notify them of any changes to the schedule for the next day. This situation poses a frustration to the

officers as well as the filmmakers since the officer may wait several hours for the film company to arrive or the FSO may arrive after the film shoot has already set-up. LAFD is looking into options to address this issue and establish an after-hour notification system that can also link or communicate with the FilmL.A. database.

LADOT – The location managers' primary request of LADOT was for signage-related parking restrictions to be posted every 50 feet instead of every 100 feet. LADOT posts approximately 300,000 signs per year specifically related to filming. The workload and demand for additional signage has increased each year with the result of positive increases in local film production. In last year's interview with location managers, the film industry requested that signage be posted every 100 feet instead of every 300 feet. This was accommodated by LADOT but required more time and resources. In order to meet the new request, LADOT has stated that they would need additional equipment and staffing. LADOT has responded to this and other issues in their report to the City Council (C.F. 14-0471) dated July 30, 2014.

LADWP – In the location manager interviews, the film industry requested acceleration of the film permit approval process, access to properties that have been off-limits due to homeland security guidelines, and use of LADWP parking lots. The EWDD, CLA, staff from the Mayor's and Councilmember Krekorian's office met with the LADWP executives and its Film Unit staff on June 3, 2014 to discuss these issues. LADWP has hired an additional staff member to assist with accelerating the filming approval process and was well-received at the July 2014 Citywide Film Taskforce and the Teamsters Local 399 General Membership meeting on October 21, 2014 where the department released a list of additional properties that can be used for filming. It is recommended that LADWP still consider allowing use of the parking lot at the John Ferraro Building as well as other facilities not under homeland security restrictions for film production in the future.

LAPD – The location managers commended the professionalism and reliability of LAPD Film Unit staff comprised of six full-time, uniformed police officers and one sergeant. However, they raised concern that the unit does not have enough vehicle support for field response capability. In November 2013, the LAPD Film Unit lost both of its Black and White cars and one of the two unmarked cars available to the unit does not have emergency equipment or lighting. It was recommended that LAPD equip the Film Unit with permanent replacement vehicles to improve response capability.

RAP – The City's Recreation and Park Department's property is one of the City's most highly-valued for location shoots. Given the importance of RAP's role in daily film production in the City of Los Angeles, the location managers spent a great deal of time discussing desired improvements that could be made in RAP's delivery of services to the film industry. RAP has been working continuously with location managers to institute changes and has successfully addressed the majority of issues raised to date.

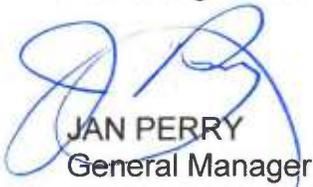
RAP has recently hired thirty part-time Park Activity Monitors and a training was held on September 13, 2014 for current staff and all new hires. Recreation and Parks executive management and supervisors, the Economic Workforce Development Citywide Filming Coordinator and Industry liaison, Teamsters Local 399, and one location manager participated in the training to provide the City and film industry perspective. By hiring the 30 additional part-time monitors, RAP will have greater capacity to adequately staff film shoots and increase responsiveness.

The Film industry raised concerns about the “hold process” for park-related property. Currently, a location manager can place a hold on a City park and maintain the hold until they film or release the hold for other filmmakers to use. Fifty percent of the time these holds do not materialize in actual filming, while other filmmakers interested in the site for the same day are placed on a waiting list. The Film Park Office does not release the names of those holding the reservation in order to ensure privacy. The film industry requested that RAP provide those names so an earlier release of the property could potentially be negotiated between the private parties. As a solution, RAP will create a field on the application requesting permission to release the requestor’s contact information. This voluntary release facilitates private party negotiation and allows RAP to be held harmless.

RAP’s Film Office processes approximately 3,500 applications a year for use of park property. This application consists of a three-step manual intake process and in some cases is duplicative of the permit process conducted by FilmL.A. creating inconsistencies and confusion. FilmL.A. has offered to host an application on their website which could be accessed by RAP. This step towards automation and data-sharing is anticipated to improve response time and increase efficiency.

CONCLUSION

The recommendations embodied in this report are intended to enhance the City’s support of the film industry and provide the level of feedback necessary to create metrics and benchmarks for future public investment in staff and systems that serve the industry. EWDD and the many departments and agencies of the City that interact with the film industry on a daily basis are engaged in efforts to ensure that the City of Los Angeles remains a premiere location for film shoots and film production. EWDD looks forward to facilitating these continued efforts and providing regular input for policy consideration.



JAN PERRY
General Manager

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Attachment: Film Permit Customer Service Survey

