



## **SAN FRANCISCO FILM COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday December 11, 2023 @ 2:00PM**

**Hearing Room 416**

**City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place**

### **1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL**

#### **Announcement**

#### **Call to order by President Wang**

#### **Film Commissioners Present**

Villy Wang, President; Matt Stiker, Vice President, Jim Beaumonte, Commissioner  
Kate Goldstein-Breyer, Commissioner; Claudine Cheng, Commissioner  
Tony Delorio, Commissioner; Franco Finn, Commissioner; Jack Song, Commissioner

#### **Film Commissioners Absent**

Lourdes Portillo, Commissioner; Carolyn Tyler, Commissioner

#### **Film SF Staff Present**

Manijeh Fata, Executive Director; Sofia Alicastro, Deputy Director; Ismael Castillo, Senior  
Production Coordinator

#### **Film SF Staff Absent**

Mark Hogains, Production Manager

### **RAMAYTUSH OHLONE LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Explanatory Document:

<https://sf.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/Ramaytush%20Ohlone%20Land%20Acknowledgement.pdf>

### **COMMISSION MEETING AGREEMENTS**





Explanatory Document:

[https://sf.gov/sites/default/files/2023-04/Commission%20Meeting%20Agreements\\_new.pdf](https://sf.gov/sites/default/files/2023-04/Commission%20Meeting%20Agreements_new.pdf)

## 2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

### ACTION

Presentation of and possible action to approve the minutes of the November 29, 2023 Film Commission Special Meeting.

Explanatory Document:

[https://sf.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/Film%20Commission\\_Special%20Meeting%20Minutes\\_11-29-2023-DRAFT.pdf](https://sf.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/Film%20Commission_Special%20Meeting%20Minutes_11-29-2023-DRAFT.pdf)

**Motion** - Commissioner Delorio

**Second** - Commissioner Cheng

### Commissioner Comment:

No comment.

### Public Comment:

No comment.

Unanimous vote to approve the minutes.

## 3. PRODUCTION SPOTLIGHT: LADY CHAMPAGNE

### DISCUSSION

Writer Director D'Arcy Drollinger and Producer Marc Smolowitz discussed their recent project, the independent feature film *Lady Champagne* and how they utilized the Film SF's Scene in San Francisco Rebate Program.

**D'Arcy Drollinger:** Wrote and directed *Lady Champagne* his 2<sup>nd</sup> feature film, finished principle photography about a month and a half ago. Drollinger highlighted how his first film could not have looked as fantastic as it did without the help of the Film Commission. As a local independent filmmaker, he feels so lucky for the rebate, the partnership, and the willingness to think outside of the box to make his dreams come true in a way he didn't think was possible. The rebate has been career-changing and has opened so many doors, especially for the





production's budget. It's hard for films to find the economics and finance, and this support opened so doors and made their budget look like a million bucks. Drollinger owns the Oasis night club, and the production was able to hire and provide invaluable hands-on experience in filmmaking to almost 70 drag performers, especially at a time when drag is being attacked across the county. Drollinger highlighted how the support from the Film Commission was powerful. As an example, the production got to spend a week in the Hall of Justice jail and have a positive experience with the Sheriff's department. The police and the fringe drag community working together in a joyous way was so profound. This project felt so important coming out of the pandemic. Drollinger gave thanks to Executive Director Fata and the team for their support. He had come to Executive Director Fata early on for help and support in acquiring a soundstage and they now have it for his productions big and small. This doesn't just help him, it helps the entire filmmaking community.

**Marc Smolowitz:** It was wonderful to work with Film Commission on *Lady Champagne*. Smolowitz highlighted photos that showcased dancing in jail cells in the Hall of Justice and the ability to paint the jail pink. He talked through the sound stage space which can accommodate makeup, hair, wardrobe, sound stage, 55 crew, 120 actors, and how it was so incredible. Highlighted how the production can continue their workforce development model through exposure and serve underserved audiences and talent. Smolowitz thanked the Film Commission for believing in LGBTQIA+ independent cinema. He shared that he's no stranger to making films here in the city and has observed the fits and starts this City has experienced. Under Executive Director Fata's leadership, this work is flourishing. Smolowitz highlighted how this partnership and program has enabled them to become Ambassadors of the Scene in San Francisco Rebate Program.

#### **Commissioner Comment:**

**Commissioner Beaumonte:** Thanked the production for shooting their project in San Francisco. Remarked on the level of movies filming in San Francisco and how focus could be leaning towards independent film community.

**Vice President Stiker:** Thanked the production for sharing their story in person. Inquired how the production would respond to the question, "why film in San Francisco?"

**Marc Smolowitz:** Responded that the reason to film in San Francisco is because you have this Film SF team, and this Film Commission ready to respond and partner with you. Inquired from the Commission, how many of you have seen a movie that's supposed to be San Francisco and it's not?





**Vice President Stiker:** When productions use movie magic to make it seem they are conducting filming in the city like San Francisco because they think it's more economical, you can tell it's not the actual thing.

**Marc Smolowitz:** Halifax, Canada is often used as a stand in for the City. Provided an example of a production anchored in the Harvey Milk era limited filming in San Francisco. Provided instances on how Film SF could have assisted and can assist with finding actual locations.

**Vice President Stiker:** Stated he wanted to dig into the story of the Sheriff's Department and their partnership with the drag community while filming in the jail. Asked if this story has been promoted more broadly yet?

**Commissioner Song:** Suggested highlighting the story and production at film festivals once they're ready.

**D'Arcy Drollinger:** Responded to Commissioner Stiker's question by highlighting the sensitive nature of filming during a time when others could not due to the strikes, but that an outcome of the engagement is that he is still friends with the Sheriff and staff with whom he worked and they would like to share and highlight this partnership and success story at an appropriate time.

**Executive Director Fata:** Suggested that the team do some public relations around the Sheriff's department participation in the film.

**Commissioner Finn:** Asked what the timeline looks like and the plans for the footage to be released.

**D'Arcy Drollinger:** Informed the Commission about the state of the production and the plan to submit to 2025 festivals.

**Marc Smolowitz:** Agreed that Sundance 2025 is the current projection.

**Commissioner Finn:** Asked about the process to paint the jail.

**D'Arcy Drollinger:** Informed the Commission about using volunteers from OASIS.

**Marc Smolowitz:** Highlighted how the number of things that the office said yes to on this project was huge. Just the fact that the City is saying yes to storytellers is huge and means the world.

**D'Arcy Drollinger:** Highlighted the Botanical gardens, and that it was a dream to film at.





**Marc Smolowitz:** Commented on how tourists love seeing the filming, and in the Mission, residents love it. The city is returning and this is a huge part of our economic recovery.

**Commissioner Delorio:** Presented his excitement, especially being born and raised in San Francisco. Asked if filming was done in conjunction with Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)– was there any connection at that time?

**D’Arcy Drollinger:** Informed the Commission that filming during APEC would have been challenging.

**President Wang:** Thanked the production for presenting and sharing their story. Inquired what would be on the production’s wish list for the next film or for soundstages in order to expand our capabilities?

**D’Arcy Drollinger:** Responded that they would like to be a bigger support to the community in terms of equipment and resources especially for truly low-budget films. Drollinger added that Oasis Arts is the building and the non-profit and they would like to give grants in the form of space and equipment.

**Marc Smolowitz:** Responded with an example of a production rate card where different budget levels of films could use the resource to attract some of the bigger movies and prop up the smaller ones based on their budgets. Inquired about the ability to imagine an economy for those types of films.

**President Wang:** Suggested a visit to the Oasis Arts soundstage space for Commissioners.

**D’Arcy Drollinger:** Agreed and shared that they will have a grand opening and invite everyone in the early new year.

**Executive Director Fata:** Highlighted how meaningful it was for this project to come to fruition with the ups and downs of securing a sound stage and dealing with the leases.

#### **Public Comment:**

**Dee Dee Escobedo:** Shared how the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) has contracts that cover every budget level and they would be happy to assist and work with them.

**D’Arcy Drollinger:** Highlighted that a goal is to be able to afford SAG-AFTRA actors and union folks.





**Marc Smolowitz:** Highlighted his upcoming production, *Outerlands* which will use the Scene in San Francisco Rebate program in Spring 2024.

#### 4. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF PRESIDENT

Action

President Wang passed President control of the meeting to Vice President Stiker who opened the meeting with nominations for the President.

**Commissioner Beaumonte:** Nominated President Wang.

**Commissioner Comment:**

**Commissioner Delorio:** Highlighted the work of President Wang and reflected on how much she has shown up and done the work as a leader.

**Commissioner Stiker:** Commented about his experience as an early Commissioner with President Wang and how impactful her leadership has been.

**Public Comment:**

No Comment

Unanimous vote for Villy Wang as President of the Film Commission.

#### 5. NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF VICE PRESIDENT

ACTION

**Vice President Stiker:** Nominated Commissioner Song and provided rationale for the nomination.

**Jack Song:** Accepted the nomination.

**Commissioner Comment:**

**Commissioner Delorio:** Thanked Vice President Stiker for his service and highlighted how he was a mentor for him.

**Public Comment:**

No comment





Unanimous vote for Jack Song as Vice President of the Film Commission.

**Commissioner Song:** Shared his appreciation of Vice President Stiker and how he became involved with the Commission.

## 6. REVIEW AND APPROVE BYLAW CHANGES ACTION

Explanatory Document:

Proposed changes:

<https://sf.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/BYLAWS%20with%20proposed%20updates.pdf>

Clean document:

[https://sf.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/Film%20Commission%20Bylaws\\_draft\\_12\\_6\\_23.pdf](https://sf.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/Film%20Commission%20Bylaws_draft_12_6_23.pdf)

### **Commissioner Comment:**

**Commissioner Beaumonte:** Highlighted the Administrative Code section that addresses gifts as Purpose.

**Executive Director Fata:** Provided context on the rationale for where the Admin Code is placed in the bylaws.

**President Wang:** This serves to align with other Commissions.

**Commissioner Beaumonte:** Highlighted the change in who picks the Executive Director of the Commission to the Mayor which doesn't acknowledge who will be doing the leg work or if the Commission will have additional roles in selection.

**President Wang:** Discussed the ambiguity of the previous Executive Director selection process.

**Executive Director Fata:** Discussed how the City Attorney updated the bylaws from the Admin Code which was approved by the Board of Supervisors. Took the Commissioners through the Admin Code Section 4.1025 and where the context comes from.

**Vice President Stiker:** Inquired where we are in the timeline for revision, or is the commission accepting or rejecting the current bylaws? Inquired if we can update the Commission role into Executive Director selection?





**Executive Director Fata:** Informed the Commission that changes can be made to the bylaws around the concerns they are finding. Highlighted the language which was approved through the Board of Supervisors in the Admin Code and the level of detail that went into that.

**President Wang:** Read Admin Code to Commission to look at section 19 to Appoint Department heads subject to the provision of this charter. Highlighted 4.102 sub 5 for Boards and Commissions power and duties. The way the bylaws were written was contradictory to the Admin code and that's why it was rewritten.

**Commissioner Beaumonte:** Asked for clarification between bylaws and Admin Code.

**President Wang:** Discussed the context for Executive Director selection and the need to reference the City Charter when looking at the bylaws. This is the Film Commission's Bylaws so if folks feel there is greater clarity by being more specific, we can do that. She would then send to the City Attorney.

**Executive Director Fata:** Highlighted the Admin Code process of Appointment of the Executive Director.

**Vice President Stiker:** Suggested Commissioner Beaumonte make a motion if compelled to do so about adding language or direction if he feels it's necessary.

**President Wang:** Read Admin Code Charter 4.126 to the Commission. Highlighted the purpose of the bylaws as the guidelines for the Commission. There's already the Admin Code and that is confusing to look at both sources (Admin Code and Bylaws) without specific guidance and coming up with a process from that. Understands the hesitation. The proposed edit doesn't change, it just clarifies. If there is an opposition to the language itself, they would have to change the Admin code.

**Vice President Stiker:** Stated that given the language in the Bylaws and Admin Code, he motions to approve the bylaws as is.

**President Wang:** Recognized the motion to approve the Bylaws as is but continued discussion as there was more to discuss first.

**Commissioner Beaumonte:** Brought up another point that he wanted more clarification around email delivery of the minutes to Commissioners. Is this for the public library or Commissioners?





**President Wang:** Read the relevant section and discussed how there is no longer a requirement to physically mail minutes which is what that was referencing.

**Commissioner Beaumonte:** Suggested a change to the language, "the Executive Director is appointed as provided in Charter Section." Asked if we can make the selection more explicit.

**Commissioner Goldstein-Breyer:** Concurred with Commissioner Beaumonte on making it clearer. It's curious to discuss how the Executive Director is appointed but not include the initial step of how the Executive Director is researched and nominated but you arrive at the same information though we have to go to another source to get the rest of it.

**President Wang:** Appreciated Commissioner Beaumonte's level of engagement with the material. Discussed the due diligence that went into creating the bylaws with the City Attorney.

**President Wang:** Shared that there are people who roll back when there is "legalese" but appreciated that Commissioner Beaumonte took the time to read through everything and provide suggestions and feedback. It was a milestone to bring Manijeh Fata into the role of Executive Director. If there's any highlight of her tenure, it's that hire. That said, this is a set of Bylaws that Commissioners need to understand and own. There is currently a motion to accept it as is from Vice President Stiker. Is there a motion to either have a different way to approach the Bylaws or any amendments which would require further City Attorney input or is there a second to the motion?

**Commissioner Beaumonte:** Seconded motion.

**Commissioner Song:** Recognized Commissioner Beaumonte's perspective and said that his recommendation make sense but for efficiency's sake, agrees with the motion ahead. Clarified that the Charter is for the City and that that particular section was clarifying the Mayor's role in the appointment process but the Bylaws are the Commission's and should be written from the Commission's perspective.

**Public Comment:**

No comment.

Bylaws changes unanimously approved.

## 7. COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION AND NEW BUSINESS DISCUSSION





Allows President, Vice President, and Commissioners to report on recent film activities and make announcements that are of interest to the film and media community. Allows Commissioners to introduce new agenda items for future consideration by the Commission.

**Commissioner Cheng:** Inquired as to who is sending out information about the commitments made during the retreat.

**Commissioner Beaumonte:** Discussed the retreat and the commitments as summaries.

**President Wang:** Highlighted the Ninth St. Filmmaker Block Party with Independent Television Service (ITVS), SFFILM, and the Roxie. Highlighted that Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC) / Bay Area Media Maker Summit (BAMMS) collected valuable data in their film landscape report.

**Public Comment:**

No comment.

**8. FILM SF STAFF REPORT**

DISCUSSION

By Executive Director Manijeh Fata, Deputy Director Sofia Alicastro, and Senior Production Coordinator Ismael Castillo.

This report included:

- Report on recent/upcoming meetings, events, festivals, and productions
- Production stats

**Commissioner Discussion:**

**Vice President Stiker:** Inquired about Film USA at FOCUS London and the connections made.

**Commissioner Beaumonte:** Highlighted how other cities copy the look of other cities.

**Vice President Stiker:** Discussed what makes tourists come to a city: natural beauty vs inspirational scenes of a movie or tv... there is no formula.

**9. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

DISCUSSION

Members of the public can comment generally on matters within the Commission's purview as well as to suggest new agenda items for the Commission's consideration.





**Dee Dee Escobedo:** Thanked the Commission for listening to the SAG-AFTRA report. Informed the Commission that there can be a comparative analysis at the next meeting.

## 10. ADJOURNMENT

