



September 6, 2024
401 E. Pratt Street, 17th Floor Conference Room
Baltimore
1:00pm – 2:30pm
Minutes

Members in Attendance:

Meryam Bouadjemi, Chair	Office of the Governor
Jimmie Briggs	Skoll Foundation - Virtual
Ruchi Bhowmik	Netflix - Virtual
Renard Jenkins	Former Warner Bros. Discovery – Virtual
David O’Ferrall	IASTE Local 487
Frank Dickson for Secretary Jake Day	Department of Housing & Community Development
Caroline Bauk for Secretary Portia Wu	Department of Labor - Virtual

Guests:

Julie Woepke	Department of Commerce
Jack Gerbes	Department of Commerce
Catherine Batavick	Department of Commerce
Jerel Registre	Department of Commerce
Steven Skerritt-Davis	Department of Commerce
Sarah Flammang	Department of Service and Civic Innovation
Emily Sollenberger	Department of Commerce - Virtual

I. Meeting called to Order

Chair Meryam Bouadjemi called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM.

II. Minutes of the June 28, 2024 Meeting

Chair Bouadjemi announced an amendment to the minutes to include Steven Skerritt-Davis and Leslie Gillard to the meeting attendance. Upon a motion made and duly seconded, the amended minutes of June 28, 2024, were approved.

III. Chair’s Report

Chair Bouadjemi gave a presentation of the Chair’s Report, which included a recap of the previous meeting and a brief overview of the focus and goals of the MEIC. First, she proposed that the Council meet on a quarterly instead of monthly basis and to have smaller groups meet more frequently. These smaller groups would be organized based on key areas of focus, which include physical production, technology and entertainment, and arts, culture, and promotion. Meeting in these smaller groups will lead to focused discussions and provide more flexibility with the Council members schedules. The Council approved of the changes and the Chair said she will send a follow-up email with more details.

Chair Boudajemi continued by discussing some of the MEIC's accomplishments, such as increasing sponsorships at the Maryland Film Festival and engaging with the Governor. Additionally, Chair Boudajemi articulated the importance of increasing the profile of signature Maryland events, such as Preakness and national events in DC. She expressed the Governor's desire to elevate the Preakness reputation to that of the Kentucky Derby, which can be accomplished by attracting celebrities and pursuing new marketing avenues.

Chair Boudajemi invited Mr. Jerel Registre to give a brief overview of the strategic plan progress. Mr. Registre explained the development of the plan, which utilized Vision Planning Consultants and McKinsey + Associates to draft the initial research and then the Maryland Economic Development Commission's expertise to provide strategic direction. Mr. Registre explained that following the feedback from the Governor, key areas were identified within the initial subsectors to provide further focus to the economic plan. Thus, the initial subsectors of life sciences, technology, and manufacturing were converted to computational biology, quantum computing, and aerospace, with a focus on navigation hardware and artificial intelligence in all sectors. Mr. Registre explained that Maryland can be a leader in these industries due to its highly educated population and its current standing within these fields. Furthermore, he urged the Council to evaluate how these developments effect the MEIC's outlook, specifically on how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and quantum could affect the entertainment industry and create new opportunities.

IV. Film Incentive Report

Chair Boudajemi referenced the research presentation that was conducted focusing on film incentive comparisons. She thanked Mr. Timothy McGowan for conducting the research and welcomed the Council to reference the larger presentation throughout the discussion. Chair Boudajemi continued by highlighting some of the main takeaways for consideration which included eliminating the \$10 million cap per project provision, updating the website, and exploring new marketing strategies. She illustrated the Maryland Film Office website which appears outdated compared to our near competitors such as North Carolina and Virginia. She urged the Council to explore ways the Film Office can better position itself without increasing incentives given the budgetary challenges the state faces.

The discussion was opened to the Council. Councilmember Ruchi Bhowmik noted that the Governor of New Jersey was deeply involved in events regarding the entertainment industry and that he is positioning the state for long term growth. Also, she noted that other film offices are more engaged, regularly flying out to Los Angeles and New York City for intelligence. Ms. Catherine Batavick mentioned that she recently attended the Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI) Event in Los Angeles. She talked to experts in the industry and explained that while the entertainment sector is facing economic challenges, film production companies are gearing up for 2025. While production budgets may remain low, the number of projects is expected to increase in next year. With that in mind, Ms. Batavick reiterated that the Maryland Film Office is focused on securing projects with independent production companies, which usually have lower production budgets. Councilmember David O'Ferrall added that the intelligence gathered is proof that these trips are vital. The Council agreed that the Film Office's low marketing budget was an obstacle to the State's success in the industry.

Mr. O'Ferrall referenced that Kentucky was able to spread out their modest incentive program over 75 projects by attracting small film productions. In his opinion, this secured more jobs than spending all their incentives on one large show. Also, Mr. O'Ferrall opposed eliminating the \$10 million cap per project as he prefers utilizing smaller film production companies. He also said that the cap was not an obstacle in securing Lady in the Lake, so there would be no need to eliminate the provision. Mr. Jack Gerbes

responded that Lady in the Lake was an unusual circumstance as they would not have been able to secure the show had the budget approximations been accurate. Ms. Julie Woepke proposed instating a waiver, which would allow the Film Office to utilize more than \$10 million if there was a project of particular significance. Ms. Ruchi Bhowmik was in favor of this proposal.

Furthermore, Mr. Renard Jenkins and Mr. O’Ferrall addressed changes in the industry. Mr. Jenkins noted that certain independent production companies are changing their financial structures and are putting more money in the hands of creators. Also, some shows and movies are infusing gaming aspects into their projects, which increases engagement with the audience. Mr. O’Ferrall mentioned that production companies are improving ways to profit off streaming services, such as having their shows on multiple streaming services despite being competitors. Also, Mr. Jimmie Briggs was wondering whether Maryland can capitalize off the SXSW festival.

The Council then engaged in general discussion.

V. Governor’s Service Year Report

Chair Bouadjemi invited Deputy Secretary Sarah Flammang to give a presentation on the Department of Services and Civic Innovation’s (DSCI) Service Year Option. Sarah Flammang explained that DSCI is placing high school graduates and transitioning adults in work placements to prepare them for their next professional steps. Class Two launches on September 11th and is expected to have over 500 members, which is going to grow to 2000 by 2026. While the program supports all industries, 20% of the class had apprenticeships in the creative industries, which include social media, digital media, digital marketing, and community outreach roles. Ms. Flammang urged the Council to think of ways it could support these young adults within the entertainment industry. The Council noted that growing the talent within the entertainment industry is vital to Maryland’s success. Also, the MEIC plans to leverage this program as an incentive for production companies to invest in the state.

VI. Good of the Order

No additional information was shared.

VII. Adjournment

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 2:28 PM.