

## MONROVIA OLD TOWN ADVISORY BOARD

### Filming Committee

After a small, but strongly concerned, number of Old Town merchants brought filming complaints to MOTAB, Chairman Whalen asked me to consult with Pam Fitzpatrick and bring together a group of merchants to review and make recommendations regarding filming in Old Town.

I consulted with Pam and brought together a committee of persons considered to be neutral on the subject. These are Nita Millstein, Lisa Barrios and Dick Hale, with Pam as a continuing consultant

The Committee decided on three actions 1) we would gather basic in-print information on filming in Old Town, 2) we would survey Old Town merchants and 3) we would interview Gloria, Shelia and Diane as well as an appropriate filmmaker

We reviewed the Monrovia Filming Guidelines and permit information and learned from Diane that the City had been paid \$27,185 for film permits and MOTAB had received \$11,750 in impact fees over the past year.

Nita prepared a survey that was reviewed and critiqued by the Committee as a whole and the slightly revised version was e-mailed or mailed to Old Town merchants/tenants (copy attached)

Diane received the filled out returns from the merchants, compiled the raw data and delivered her report to us (copy attached) While the data indicates that most merchants favor filming, both those who do and those who were anti-filming were equally concerned about parking problems and business interruption. We brainstormed for solutions to these specific problems. Our recommendations are attached but I will read many of them as they are a significant part of this report.

In the meantime, Lisa Barrios and I interviewed Gloria Huss, Shelia Spicer and Diane Delmatoff. Gloria works for MOTAB and has supervised Old Town filming for 15 years. She has recently worked with Shelia as liaison between governmental bodies and filmmakers. Her analysis of Old Town filming problems include 1) the fact that production companies often have short time frames and small budgets while merchants expect more planning time and funds, 2) production companies don't always do what they say, 3) union regulations take time and are misunderstood by merchants and finally 4) every business is different and 5) certain merchants always have problems

Shelia began by remarking that filming is down but we do no marketing She believes that problems result from the fact that, while some filming companies are very professional, others are not. At that time, her responsibilities included: issuing and monitoring permits; setting up meetings with Diane, Dan and Gloria; notifying merchants; creating

and distributing signature forms; arranging police and public works support; fielding phone calls and responding to complaints

When we met with Diane, we learned that she and Dan had just been given the responsibility for filming. As a result (1) there would always be two persons responsible for overseeing film sites and (2) putting filming supervision in one City Department would provide better coordination. Based on our other interviews, we felt these goals to be very worthwhile

Prior to interviewing Jim Fitzpatrick, we reviewed information about the California Film Commission on the Internet. The Commission is a State Agency formed to protect and increase filming in California. Jim is the knowledgeable, experienced and very open Deputy Director of the California Film Commission. He informed us that Monrovia has a bad reputation among film makers as being both difficult and expensive. We discovered that the incidents that fueled this reputation occurred approximately 15 years ago but were still considered as representative of our community today

Jim is a former film maker, himself, and proved capable of giving us far more information and advice than Lisa and I could deal with. We recommend that he meet with the filming personnel on the City staff and believe his knowledge and experience would be helpful in solving problems related to filming and in promoting increased filming in Old Town

We have discussed this recommendation with the rest of our Committee and found strong support for making use of the Film Commission to reverse negative views of filming in Old Town and encouraging increased filming in the future

We propose that MOTAB accept our report and that it support all of our recommendations as well as our agreement with the new City approach to filming.

**MONROVIA OLD TOWN ADVISORY BOARD (MOTAB)**  
**Old Town Filming Survey**

Business name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Your name (pls. print): \_\_\_\_\_

Type of business: \_\_\_\_\_ restaurant \_\_\_\_\_ retail sales

\_\_\_\_\_ personal services \_\_\_\_\_ professional services \_\_\_\_\_ other

1. From your overall perspective, how would you describe your view of filming activities in Old Town? (please circle a number on the scale below)

\_\_\_\_\_

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

1 (Strongly against)              5 (Neutral)              10 (Strongly in favor)

2.a.1. If you are **against filming**, what are the primary reasons?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2.a.2 Do you see any benefits to the filming activity, and what might those benefits be?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. b.1.If you are in **favor of filming**, what are the reasons for your approval?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2.b.2. Do you see any downsides to the filming activity? If yes, what are they?

2.c.1. If you are **neutral on this issue**, what do you see as the benefits?

\_\_\_\_\_

What do you see as the downsides?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Regardless of your view of filming, do you have any suggestions for improving filming activities in Old Town?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Your perspective: How has your business been involved in, or affected by filming? (Check as many boxes below as apply)

Your business has been in a film shoot

Your business has received compensation for proximity inconvenience.

Your business has been in close proximity to filming activity, but hasn't received compensation.

Your business has not been within proximity to a film shoot

5. Are there any other comments you want to make on this topic?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Would you be available for a follow-up conversation if requested?

If yes, what is the best way to contact you? \_\_\_\_\_

Please return completed form to the City of Monrovia by using the enclosed return address envelope, or hand-deliver to City of Monrovia, attention Diane Delmatoff.

## Filming Survey Results

Total surveys returned – 63

Question #1 Circle from 1 – 10 your view of filming activities in Old Town with 1 being strongly against, 5 being neutral and 10 being strongly in favor

### Against

- 1) 5 responses 8%
- 2) 1 response 2%
- 3) 1 response 2%
- 4) 2 responses 3%

Total - 9 respondents are against filming

### Neutral

- 5) 11 responses 18%

Total – 11 respondents are neutral

### In Favor

- 6) 7 responses 11%
- 7) 1 response 2%
- 8) 9 responses 15%
- 9) 7 responses 11%
- 10) 18 responses 29%

Total – 42 respondents are in favor of filming

One survey did not answer this question

Combined questions 2.a.b.& c - reasons for being against filming and what are the downsides of filming

Lack of notice or last minute notice

75% signature rule is unfair

Disruption to business without compensation (5) responses

Parking spaces being taken (13) responses

Filming crews don't stick to their schedules

Walk in traffic is diminished (4) responses

Traffic /Congestion (9) responses

Coordination could be better

Crews take too many liberties

Closing roads is inconvenient (3) responses

Possible impairment of business (3) responses

Noise

**Combined questions 2.a.b. & c. – reasons for approval of filming and what are the benefits of filming**

**Revenue (31)**

**Recognition/Exposure/Good PR for Monrovia (31)**

**Bring in more consumers**

**Filming crews spend money in town (3)**

**Business exposure (3)**

**Increased traffic to Monrovia (7)**

**Exciting to see actors**

**After hours filming brings in revenue**

**Free advertising (business name gets listed in the credits)**

**Question # 3 Suggestions for improving filming in Old Town**

**Increased communication**

**Increase notice time (5)**

**Changing the approval percentage to 90%**

**More filming (2)**

**Fair compensation**

**Make merchants aware of how film money is spent**

**Every merchant compensated**

**The City charges too much and this deters filming**

**Don't do long shoots or multiple locations at same time**

**Get more business involved**

**Keep it after hours if possible (2)**

**Possibly waive parking tickers during filming**

**Require remote parking for staff & support vehicles (2)**

**Protect business entrances (2)**

**Approval of all merchants**

**It's fun to see Monrovia in films & on TV**

**Better coordination**

**Pay everyone the same amount**

**Insist filming crews respect other business activities**

**Compensation for affected businesses should be taken by a group of individuals  
w/financial gain in this matter**

**Set fee schedule**

**Redefine filming guidelines**

**Stop filming (2)**

**Signage on filming days to direct visitors to free parking**

### Any other comments

Businesses should always be compensated, even a small amount

More filming should occur in Old Town

A strong effort should be made to erase Monrovia's negative reputation in the filming industry due to the infamous Pepsi shoot

It is the ultimate compliment for a film Co. to want to share our businesses & town with the rest of the world. With fair guidelines we can all be benefited by this

I think filming in Monrovia should continue

Some stores get greedy and ask too much – that was a huge problem a few years ago - I don't know of any way to stop that – that is really the only negative

Filming helps the whole city get exposure

It is good in this economy to include as many areas of revenue as possible

Overall, I believe the film making is fun & draws positive attention to Monrovia

Should be a regulation on whom & how you get compensated

There should be a basic compensation schedule that ensures all business owners within a radius are paid a fee

My only concern is parking

I can't make any negative comments because I personally have not had any negative experiences

I think the guidelines are about as good as we can make them. Just keep an eye on the actual filming day

Don't charge them so much that they will stop. Keep the money in town

Filming is good for the city

All things considered, I would rather see them go elsewhere

There should be standards that are adhered to no matter who you are

A while ago there was a shoot using our neighbors space during evening hours. The director & others set their staging area 3 feet in front of our door and we were told to turn our Fax/phones off. This was unacceptable

The downtown district is comprised of only a few blocks. We are all affected & only stores that are filmed are compensated. It's not fair to all of the tenants

I am in business to make money, not be background for a film shoot

The film crews are rude and arrogant, they block driveways

Parking has been an issue for staff, but not since opening the lot in the Commons

**Our recommendations are as follows:**

**1. Film crew parking:**

**- Require film crews and adjunct staff to use the Colorado Commons parking structure**

**- Ensure that the city provides for patrolling and monitoring of crews to ensure that this parking requirement is adhered to**

**2. Signage:**

**- On film days, provide signs throughout Old Town with the following message:**

**"Pardon our inconvenience, Old Town Monrovia is in the movies again!  
Free parking is provided for you at the following locations:**

**"**

**3. Parking for Customers and Merchants:**

**- For large-scale shoots that are expected to cause considerable parking shortages or traffic disruptions, provide valet parking. Valet service should be paid for by the film co. and/or MOTAB funds.**

**- On shooting days, encourage employees of Old Town businesses to park in the Colorado Commons lot, or another off-street parking location**

**- Encourage merchants to send e-mails to their customers prior to large film shoot days to inform them of free parking alternatives**

**4. Business Disruption and Merchant Communication:**

**- Continue to work on perfecting the merchant notification process. Seek suggestions on improvements. Use MOTAB meetings to check for issues and suggestions.**

**- Have city staff create a 3-fold flyer for merchants that discusses "How to Survive and Benefit from Filming in Old Town". The flyer should include suggestions on how businesses can turn the disruption into a business benefit.**

**- Ensure that the city representatives charged with responsibility for monitoring filming activity have a dual responsibility:**



- to monitor film company adherence to the Letter of Agreement and
- to be alert to potential business disruptions that can be minimized

- Ensure that film companies provide information regarding the planned location of generators, porta potty units and any other large equipment that could cause business disruption. Review the planned locations to ensure reasonableness and merchant notice.

The recommendations above directly address the concerns identified in the Survey that Old Town merchants completed. However, in our committee process we've learned about other issues that we believe should be addressed. The additional recommendations below reflect the sense of our committee on these additional issues:

1. As the City considers filming requests, consideration should be given to the cost/benefit of the filming activity. In cases in which one or more merchants will have their businesses disrupted, there must be a benefit to the larger community that reasonably outweighs the negative impact to the merchant(s). Film activity benefits should not automatically outweigh the cost to the merchant community.
2. Since the great majority of merchants expressed support for filming activity, the City should meet with the California Filming Commission to discuss ways in which filming activity can be brought to Monrovia. Our interview with the Commission representative revealed very negative views of Monrovia within the filming community. If we want to encourage future filming, we need to understand the negative views and work to reverse them.

## INTERVIEWS

Date: July, 2009

**Name: Jim Fitzpatrick, Deputy Director California Film Commission**

7080 Hollywood Blvd.

Hollywood, CA 90028

(323) 860-2960 X 136

**Subject: Filming in Old Town Monrovia**

*This excellent Q + A  
was prepared by  
Lisa Barrios*

### QUESTIONS FOR CALIFORNIA FILM COMMISSION

1. **May we have a copy of the California Film Commission's guidelines for film projects?**

We can get the guidelines from the Film Commission website.

2. **Please describe what you are doing to retain filming in Southern California and particularly in its smaller communities? (Other than the measures specifically mentioned on your website.)**

Meeting with communities, getting them in line with our guidelines and cost.

3. **How does your Commission relate to and interact with the film production companies?**

We serve as a mediator when they are struggling with a film location.

4. **Are the productions obliged in any way to follow your guidelines?**

**If so, how is this manifested ?**

Only the state has guidelines, not the Commission.

5. **Do the film companies representatives report to you on their activities? If so, by what means or media? In what time frames?**

Yes.

6. **How many of these people are assigned to the site, are union personnel?**

The majority of the personnel are union. All staff has a specific job for safety reasons.

7. **Do production units have some communities that they find difficult to work with?**

Yes and the majority of these communities are avoided. Production companies communicate with one and other regarding this matter.

Pg 2

**8. What are the most frequent complaints from productions about communities?**

The biggest issue is "extortion". Lack of consistency, vague guidelines, mentioned Monrovia's guidelines are "wishy-washy". *Note: He did not have an updated version of Monrovia's guidelines. He requested an updated copy.*

**9. Is there a distinction between filming issues in residential areas versus business areas of a community for production companies? (Local businesses have a much different view of film productions than residents do, after all.)**

Yes.

**10. How does downtown (i.e. Old Town) Monrovia rate among communities used for filming?**

Said he "can't answer that", due to lack of *current* records. However generally speaking in the past Monrovia has been known to be difficult and expensive. This is usually reported after the fact, and it is in regards to the Monrovia merchants, not residential.

*In a sub-question, he criticized the City rather than the merchants.*

**11. What can communities, such as Monrovia, do to encourage filming in our town?**

Be consistent. Recommend to communicate with the commission upon updating guidelines.

*BMS*

**General comments and recommendations:**

- ❖ He strongly encouraged our city to support "keeping filming in California" for many obvious reason, mainly employment.
- ❖ Check out the guidelines with the City of Santa Barbara, they draw a lot of income with still photography and filming.
- ❖ Filming is a business that can help create wealth in a community.
- ❖ Michigan, New Mexico, Louisiana and Canada have increased filming 41%, since 1998.
- ❖ In the year 2011 a large tax credit and rebate will be offered to film companies that film in California. This tax incentive will be taken advantage of by many film companies and will in increase local filming. Recommends we have filming guidelines worked out before then.
- ❖ Jim reviewed our old guidelines and said that the 30 day street closure notice is a "death clause". It would probably detour most companies. The production companies do not even have that information 30 days before a shoot.
- ❖ 75% signatures is good