

ITEM #45

**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL
REGULAR MEETING**

APRIL 20, 2021

**SUBMITTED AT THE REQUEST OF
COUNTY ADMINISTRATION**

MEMORANDUM

TO: Bertha Henry, County Administrator **Ritter,**
FROM: Stacy Ritter, CDME, President/CEO, Visit Lauderdale **Stacy**
DATE: April 15, 2021
RE: Film Production

Digitally signed by Ritter, Stacy
Date: 2021.04.16 09:11:36 -0400

This memo will serve as an overview of the GFLCVB's past and current activities with film production. While some of this predates my service here, I am familiar with the history of the issue.

Many years ago, the "Film Department" resided at the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance and before that at the Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce. Somewhere around 2006-09, there was an agreement to move this department from the Alliance to the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau, which was presented and approved by the Board of County Commissioners at the time. Subsequently, a "Film Commissioner" was hired by the CVB and a two-person department was created to entice film production in Broward County and to process film permits for Broward's municipalities. That department evolved into what was known as "Underground" and expanded its scope to include music, fashion, and art as well as film. As the department evolved into other areas, the time spent to bring film production to Broward diminished, although film permits continued to be processed in great numbers by the CVB.

Several years ago, we included a film incentive in the CVB's budget, realizing that many other destinations had an incentive, and it would help us "sell" Greater Fort Lauderdale to the film world. It should be noted here that "film" includes still photography, commercials, television, music videos and movies. The incentive included in the budget was not sufficient to attract major productions to Broward County and the State of Florida provides no assistance, having eliminated its own film incentive program years ago. As a result, due to budgetary shortfalls in the current fiscal year's budget, the incentive was eliminated.

Budget reductions further prompted us to eliminate the Underground department completely, only maintaining the film permit process with a single staff member who is temporarily filling this role.

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While we believe that bringing film production to Broward County is important, the current structure is not sufficient to both build relationships with decision makers and process the permits.

The labor-intensive film permit process is complicated and onerous. Each municipality has its own policies and rules for a film company to shoot in that municipality. Multiple jurisdictions are involved depending on where the filming takes place. Parks, public works, police, fire, city administration and others may be asked to sign off on a permit. The CVB has no jurisdiction and serves as the middleman to the city and the production managers. The time it takes to process a permit is extensive because we contact each entity for sign-off not requiring the city or the producer to do anything but contact us. The CVB processes approximately 35 film permits a week on average.

Another deterrent to being competitive in film is that Broward County does not have the infrastructure needed by many film companies to be cost effective for them. Exterior filming can be done here, location shooting can be done here, but we only have a couple of sound stages for internal filming. For major productions, that infrastructure is critical.

In short, to be successful in bringing film productions to Broward, a department needs to be built with sufficient staff and funded appropriately, that includes incentives that would attract film business. Lastly, to attract major productions, the critical infrastructure would need to be addressed. While a designated person whose job is to find the business is needed, it appears that the problem and the solution are bigger than just one person and could have a significant budgetary impact on the general fund as TDT funds could only be used for limited purposes.