



Seattle Film Commission

Meeting Minutes – Monday, January 26, 2026, 10:00AM – 12:00PM

City Hall Boards & Commissions Room and Virtual

Commissioners Present: Champ Ensminger, Tom Florino, Mark Freid, KD Hall, Michael Huang, LexScope, Kat Ogden, Anthony Tackett

Commissioners Not Present: Davis Powell

Staffed by Office of Economic Development: Chris Swenson, Hana Peoples

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to order
2. Roll Call
3. Land Acknowledgement
4. Public Comment
 - a. None
5. General Order of Business, Part 1
 - a. Approval of December 2026 meeting minutes
 - i. Voted to approve
 - b. Position 11 – Update
 - i. City Council is establishing Committee structure, OED is in communication and will schedule Position 11 appointment then, hoping for early February
 - c. Position 1 – Vacancy, application and appointment process
 - i. Lowell Deo has resigned from Position 1 to address work/life balance
 - ii. OED will initiate public application process
 1. Public application timeline and process will be announced
 2. SFC will review applications and make recommendations to OED
 3. OED will present recommendations to Mayor’s Office
 4. Once appointed, will present to City Council Committee and move to full Council for vote and appointment
 - iii. Positions 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 expire at end of April 2026, OED will share information and planned timeline and appointment process with SFC per public application protocol
 - d. OED
 - i. Federal impacts information request
 1. None reported
 - ii. Commercial Film Initiative update
 1. Roll out presentation and client / agency / production company networking event planned for February 19
 - iii. Seattle Film Ecosystem conversations
 1. OED leading conversations with leadership of key organizations including Washington Filmworks, KC Creative, WA Dept of Commerce, SIFF, NWFF, Tasveer to address resources and coordinate plans for evolving local film ecosystem
 - iv. M5 Creative update
 1. M5 Creative building agreement between OED and Seattle Center expired at end of 2025; City is considering the building as a continued asset as film ecosystem conversations evolve
 2. SFC requests summary document of operating, pricing, and numbers/types of tenants, productions, and office use of the M5 Creative building



6. Discussion

- a. Mayor Wilson Arts & Culture Transition Team (Randy Engstrom)
 - i. Transition priority pillars: Physical, knowledge, and economic infrastructure
 - ii. Affordability – How can we increase funding and access to capital, and bring down costs that prevent creatives from thriving?
 1. KD – Often find creatives are used as resources but not paid competitive rate; contracts need to be available and competitive
 2. Anthony – Was not making enough in narrative so added broadcast to work portfolio; lives outside Seattle to be able to afford to be in the industry; hearing that larger clients are tending to lower their costs which impacts rates of workers and makes it difficult to afford to live and work in the City; seeing larger corporations hire key positions from LA and hire locally for only the lower rate positions
 3. Michael – Is there a way for the City to incentivize hiring local, similar to what WF does with their incentive program?
 4. Mark – Agree with Michael, this is part of a larger discussion we are having; Commercial Initiative and GSP (and board member Tom Florino) are looking to address this
 - a. Randy – Heard across the board that better connection with corporates is desired
 5. Anthony – Would like to tie in a “Filmed In Seattle” tag like Atlanta does; KD mentions Mayor Wilson’s socials interaction as an example of positive interaction and awareness
 6. Kat – Impressed by Cincinnati co-branding between City and film community, creates a sense of partnership, would like to learn from that
 - iii. Culture – How can we name and amplify the creative identity of the city? What policies and programs are working, and how might we improve those that aren’t?
 1. Randy – “Seattle is dying” narrative means we have no north star for telling the story of what we want the City to be; what’s our shared agenda?
 2. Mark – Need to focus on “Made in Seattle” branding and focus, what is the way OED can brand and communicate this?
 3. Kat – Impressed with Kodiak Island in their branding; have been looking at how other Cities do this
 - iv. Integration – How might we break down silos, both in the creative community and in the City, to drive better outcomes for the creative community? What cross sector opportunities and partnerships should be pursued?
 1. Tom – Important to understand the transition from the arts into creative industries; it’s not that we don’t have talented people and a growing commercial sector, it is how we present these assets to community and world – we can do a better job; Harbor Island Studios has not been marketed effectively, they should allow for some access to public utility, but to become viable long-term assets they must offer commercial availability; there is a way to think creatively about how to achieve that goal, e.g. if there is a tie in to public good they get additional incentives from Washington Filmworks, King County, or City; there are examples in LA and other places that allow studios to do this
 2. Anthony – Recommend focusing on Building Bridges instead of Breaking Down Silos, which has a negative connotation in some communities



3. Anthony – SFC and OED community and industry events introduce community to filmmaking, have seen community members go from not knowing about filmmaking to working on film sets
 4. Randy – See a big appetite across the board for community, networking, business events like the OFM and OED Mixer networking event
 5. Michael – Continuity between leadership administrations can be very frustrating; how do we build something that is transition-proof; how do we grow the things that work so they're developed as a marathon and not a sprint
 - v. What City is doing right (across Commissioners)
 1. Drone policy expansion to Parks has huge improvement to availability for production filming
 2. Low permit fees, easy and fast ability to film in locations is big attraction
 3. Permit coordination process is expert, would like to see cross-departmental support improve
 4. Branding and QR code direction helps understanding, visibility, awareness of the Commission and work it does
 5. City has supported SFC with budget and administration to provide learning, education, and engagement across the industries and community, specifically with SFC's Inside Scoop conversations
 - vi. Randy
 1. Can Lake City Way empty big box, loading dock, parking lot location be a film hub
 2. Can 2nd floor downtown office space be offered to SFC for work space, and participate in Seattle Restored ground floor retail space
7. General Order of Business, Part 2
- a. Committee and workgroup updates
 - i. Executive Committee
 1. Recap of conversation with Transition Team
 2. Priority Committees did not meet in January
 - b. Budget
 - i. 2026 budget preview
 1. Four pillars: Inside Scoops; AFCL membership and travel; marketing swag; training and learning
 - ii. Treasurer designation
 1. Tabled to February meeting
 - c. Commitments and events
 - i. Inside Scoop – Cadence, location discussion
 1. Thoughts:
 - a. KD recommends continuing, feels that it engages Commissioners as
 - b. Mark recommends partnering with location or organization, like HIS or FCT to help make us more attractive than a solo event
 - c. KD supports Mark and proposes coordinating with local studios like Converge
 - d. Michael agrees that spreading the relationships and locations is a great thing to do; also offers Milli agency common space as a location
 - e. Anthony utilized Inside Scoop to restart African Diaspora Filmmakers meetings; missing is the next steps of connecting with work and finances
 - f. OED shares that Inside Scoops were intended as a connective tool for Commissioners, who are volunteer, to engage in sector-specific shorter



industry conversations with community; expanding may require more administration, so want to be sure any new structure can be supported

2. Proposal:

- a. Continuation of Inside Scoops but with upgrade
- b. Blueprint of marketing plan will help with continuity and administration time

ii. Upcoming

1. January 26 – Mayor Wilson Arts & Culture Transition Team at Town Hall Seattle
 - a. OED will check to see if there are any guest list spots for Commissioners who weren't able to register
2. February 2026 TBD – City Council
 - a. Date TBD pending Council Committee structure and availability
 - b. Kat offers co-presenting to interested Commissioners

8. Adjourn