



EL DORADO COUNTY PLANNING & BUILDING DEPARTMENT

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Date: June 6, 2025

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Karen L. Garner, Planning and Building Director

Subject: County Film Ordinance Update

Recommendations

1. Direct staff to prepare a County Film Ordinance based on the State's recommended Model Filming Ordinance and rescind EDC Resolution 86-90.
2. Direct staff to submit the County Film Ordinance to the California Film Commission as required per Government Code 14999.21.
3. Direct staff to prepare a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement between the County and the El Dorado Chamber of Commerce on behalf of El Dorado Tahoe Film + Media (Film Office).
4. Direct staff to prepare a fee schedule for Film Permit activities.
5. Return to the Board with a Film Permit Ordinance, MOU and Fee Schedule for approval.

Summary

On February 11, 2025, the Board provided direction not to fund economic development and tourism related activities to outside agencies as part of efforts to balance the FY 2025/26 budget. This included the El Dorado County Chamber Film Commission, known as El Dorado Tahoe Film + Media (Film Office) that has been funded at \$150,750 for the past several years. Film productions have a very direct positive economic impact to the County primarily through contributions to Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) and Sales Tax. According to the Association of Film Commissioners International, "At its core, a commission is a specialized screen sector organization focused on economic development."

If the activities of the Film Office ceased, it is highly unlikely that any of the TOT and sales tax generated by the activities would otherwise be realized by the County. In other words, if the County does not have an active and capable Film Office, film activities will go elsewhere.

There are both state and local regulations that affect filming activities in the County. Resolution 86-90 adopted a film permit process for the County in April 1990 and has never been updated. It is largely based on the State's Uniform Film Permit requirements in effect at that time. Current State code, TITLE 2 - GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, DIVISION 3 - EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, PART 5.7 - ECONOMIC AND MOTION PICTURE DEVELOPMENT, CHAPTER 3 - Uniform Film Permit, has since been modified. Therefore, the County's film permit resolution is inconsistent with state requirements. One of the key requirements of the State is that every jurisdiction have a designated person to assist with film activities.

Because of the direct economic benefits of film production activities, it is recommended that the County;

- Update the County's Film Permit Resolution/Ordinance
- Restructure the Film Permit Program with a goal of being "self-funding"
- Continue utilizing the services of the current designated Film Officer
- Work with the Film Officer to gather data on the economic impacts of film and media production in the County and report back to the Board at least annually.

Requirements

What EDC Resolution 86-90 obligates the County to do

- Designate one person and one alternate to work directly with the film industry
- Use the standardized permit application form adopted by the California Film Commission
- Use the standardized insurance form adopted by the California Film Commission
- Obligates the Community Development Department and Department of Transportation to develop the systems necessary to fully implement the adopted filming permit process and bring such systems before the Board of Supervisors for action
- The designee and alternate designee shall be selected by the El Dorado Chamber of Commerce and approved by the Board of Supervisors and shall be directed to work with the Department of Transportation and the Community Development Department to develop the systems noted in the resolution.

What EDC Resolution 86-90 obligates the film designee to do

- Coordinate all county department review and approvals
- Issue permits within 2 days for "normal" permits
- Issue permits within 4 days for permits requiring traffic control exceeding 3 minutes, stunts or special effects
- Issue permits within 10 working days for road closures
- Notify other non-county agencies that have jurisdiction

What CURRENT State Code obligates the County to do

- Comply with TITLE 2 - GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, DIVISION 3 - EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, PART 5.7 - ECONOMIC AND MOTION PICTURE DEVELOPMENT, CHAPTER 3 - Uniform Film Permit
 - Have a designated person for commercial film activities. This person's responsibilities shall include, but not be limited to:
 - The attraction of media production to the jurisdiction
 - Assistance in expediting the issuance of any necessary permits
 - Coordination of multi-jurisdictional filming
 - A uniform permit application form
 - If proposed, local government agencies are required to submit any draft filming ordinance or amendments to the CFC 30 days prior to adoption as per Section 14999.21.
 - The local legislative body shall consider the commission's findings prior to final adoption of the ordinance or amendment unless the commission's findings are not

available within the prescribed time limits. Any and all findings made by the commission pursuant to this section shall be **advisory** to local government.

- Require certain data on the film permit application.
- Can't charge fees that exceed actual costs incurred.

Benefits

As previously noted, film production activities have a very direct financial benefit to the County, particularly in generating TOT and sales tax. The Film Office has tracked that impact each year since 1993.

	Years	# of Proj.	Impact \$\$	Funding	Return	% on Return
1	1993	17	1,856,700.00	74,500.00	1,782,200.00	2492%
2	1994	24	1,321,900.00	74,500.00	1,247,400.00	1774%
3	1995	25	6,059,000.00	63,913.00	5,995,087.00	9480%
4	1996	20	1,984,500.00	89,683.00	1,894,817.00	2213%
5	1997	33	3,265,750.00	63,747.00	3,202,003.00	5123%
6	1998	33	2,721,000.00	78,016.00	2,642,984.00	3488%
7	1999	24	1,198,500.00	84,279.00	1,114,221.00	1422%
8	2000	27	2,169,000.00	91,356.00	2,077,644.00	2374%
9	2001	27	2,004,500.00	92,606.00	1,911,894.00	2165%
10	2002	33	4,726,300.00	69,455.00	4,656,845.00	6805%
11	2003	30	3,880,500.00	92,606.00	3,787,894.00	4190%
12	2004	26	1,493,000.00	100,000.00	1,393,000.00	1493%
13	2005	31	3,227,750.00	101,650.00	3,126,100.00	3175%
14	2006	37	1,290,500.00	107,148.00	1,183,352.00	1204%
15	2007	23	2,073,500.00	111,270.00	1,962,230.00	1863%
16	2008	29	1,337,000.00	96,200.00	1,240,800.00	1390%
17	2009	29	2,619,050.00	113,601.00	2,505,449.00	2305%
18	2010	27	1,811,000.00	104,140.00	1,706,860.00	1739%
19	2011	35	1,837,500.00	118,003.29	1,719,496.71	1557%
20	2012	29	1,761,000.00	124,824.60	1,636,175.40	1411%
21	2013	34	2,177,000.00	129,509.00	2,047,491.00	1681%
22	2014	33	2,336,000.00	110,538.00	2,225,462.00	2113%
23	2015	27	2,114,500.00	150,283.00	1,964,217.00	1407%
24	2016	27	2,736,000.00	137,175.00	2,598,825.00	1995%
25	2017	34	2,790,700.00	140,750.00	2,649,950.00	1983%
26	2018	20	4,665,000.00	140,750.00	4,524,250.00	3314%
27	2019	25	2,302,500.00	140,750.00	2,161,750.00	1636%
28	2020	25	2,386,000.00	150,750.00	2,235,250.00	1583%
29	2021	32	4,618,000.00	150,750.00	4,467,250.00	3063%
30	2022	23	1,678,000.00	150,750.00	1,527,250.00	1113%
31	2023	21	2,145,000.00	150,750.00	1,994,250.00	1423%
32	2024	29	2,148,600.00	150,750.00	1,997,850.00	1425%

The financial contributions can vary significantly from year to year based on the number and size of film productions during that year. The financial impact provided by the Film Office uses an industry standard formula for estimating production spending. The generally-accepted direct

spending for on-location production formula is recognized by the Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI), the only global non-profit professional organization representing city, state, regional, provincial, and national film commission members across six continents.

In addition to the congregate data above, the Film Office has tracked individual projects and their impact each year (Legistar Attachment D).

Following are the factors included in the estimated spending and specific local impacts from past productions. It should be noted that film crews generally receive a daily stipend for many of their expenses. This is “outside” money coming in and being spent in the County which is ideal. The money spent by film crews far exceeds any cost of services provided.

Accommodations/Lodging

Crews and cast members need places to stay, so they rent hotels, motels, or vacation home rentals, depending on the length of the shoot. Every project needs to house its crew.

- Maverick: Top Gun, the location manager rented a home for 3 months to live in South Lake Tahoe during the preparations for the filming; a private home was rented for the star of the film; and the crew of approximately 200 was lodged at a hotel in South Lake Tahoe during the filming.
- During Covid HBO MAX 12 Dates of Christmas rented nearly 200 rooms per night for approximately two months at a Tahoe Resort Hotel in South Lake Tahoe, keeping the hotel open while many were closed during the pandemic.

Food & Catering

Meals for the cast and crew are a major expense. Local restaurants, catering companies, and food vendors benefit from these contracts.

- Local caterers like Diane Wilkenson of Placerville are hired to feed the crews and have worked on dozens of filming projects; Food is purchased at our local grocery stores and restaurants; food trucks have been hired to come to many sets including Modern Family.

Transportation

Crews need transportation to and from the filming locations, which can include renting cars, buses, trucks, or even chartering flights for larger productions as well as gasoline and automotive repairs.

- Film crews have transportation departments, and they purchase their gasoline at local gas stations to fuel all the vehicles while on location; Enterprise Rental Car in Placerville (as well as others) have provided these services for film crews in the county; private owners frequently rent motorhomes and specialty vehicles to film crews.

Local Vendors and Supplies

Film productions often buy or rent items locally for costumes, props, and set dressing, as well as specialized equipment or materials. This can include anything from lumber for building sets to fabric for costumes.

- While filming Christmas Bloody Christmas the production company hired a local traffic control business based in El Dorado Hills for the majority of the time they were here on location; some of the vendors frequently used are Ables Rentals, Wilkinson's Portables and EID Waste Dumpsters; Maverick: Top Gun built a set that required tens of thousands of dollars in materials alone bought from local building supply companies

Labor and Hiring Local Talent

Productions hire local workers in various capacities, such as drivers, construction workers, office workers, studio teachers, drone operators, makeup and art department artists, production assistants and even extras for crowd scenes.

- On most projects film, television, and commercial production companies will hire production assistants, and other crew positions locally; local California Highway Patrol officers are hired for traffic control on all state and county road within El Dorado County; True Lies hired local workers from the local construction workers union to complete their build.

Location Fees and Permits

Film crews often need to pay location fees to film in certain areas (like state parks, EID managed land, private property). They also need permits for various specific filming activities, which can be a significant expense.

- On the movie Memoirs of a Geisha the production company paid \$6,000 a day in permit location fees to the American River Conservancy; on the movie Traffik the production company paid location fees to a truck stop in Pacific house and also purchased food and snack items from their deli; for the movie City of Angels Warner Bos. Paid \$10,000 a day for their filming location a private residence on Fallen Leaf Lake; the television show Modern Family rented a yacht and many support boats for the episode "Lake Life;" on the movie Fear the production company rented the entire Strawberry Lodge for nearly a month.

Marketing and Promotion

Some production companies and reality shows do product placement and as a result of this, the local businesses involved benefits from being featured with a notable positive impact on their business.

- Some of the restaurants that participated in the "Best Bites in Town, Placerville Episode" have seen significant increases (one restaurant owner has said 300%) in their business from the attention their business received from being highlighted in the show; a local embroidery company was hired to make t-shirts for Maverick: Top Gun.

Entertainment and Miscellaneous Spending

Often crew members are given a travel per diem, and while it varies in amount per employee, it results in discretionary income that is generally spent on food and snacks, clothing, entertainment and miscellaneous items in local shops and community.

- Film crews have enjoyed going to South Tahoe, or wine tasting or white water rafting on their days off; Downtown Placerville and other area stores have reported film crews coming in and spending thousands of dollars for weather friendly attire and souvenirs of the area.

Role of El Dorado Lake Tahoe Film & Media Executive Director (Film Commissioner)

Staff evaluated the possibility of bringing film activities "in house" or developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit interest, however it was determined that these options were not favorable due to the specialized knowledge and skills, scope of work, and familiarity with the film industry that is necessary to be successful. This includes:

- Permitting coordination with over 75 agencies within the county.

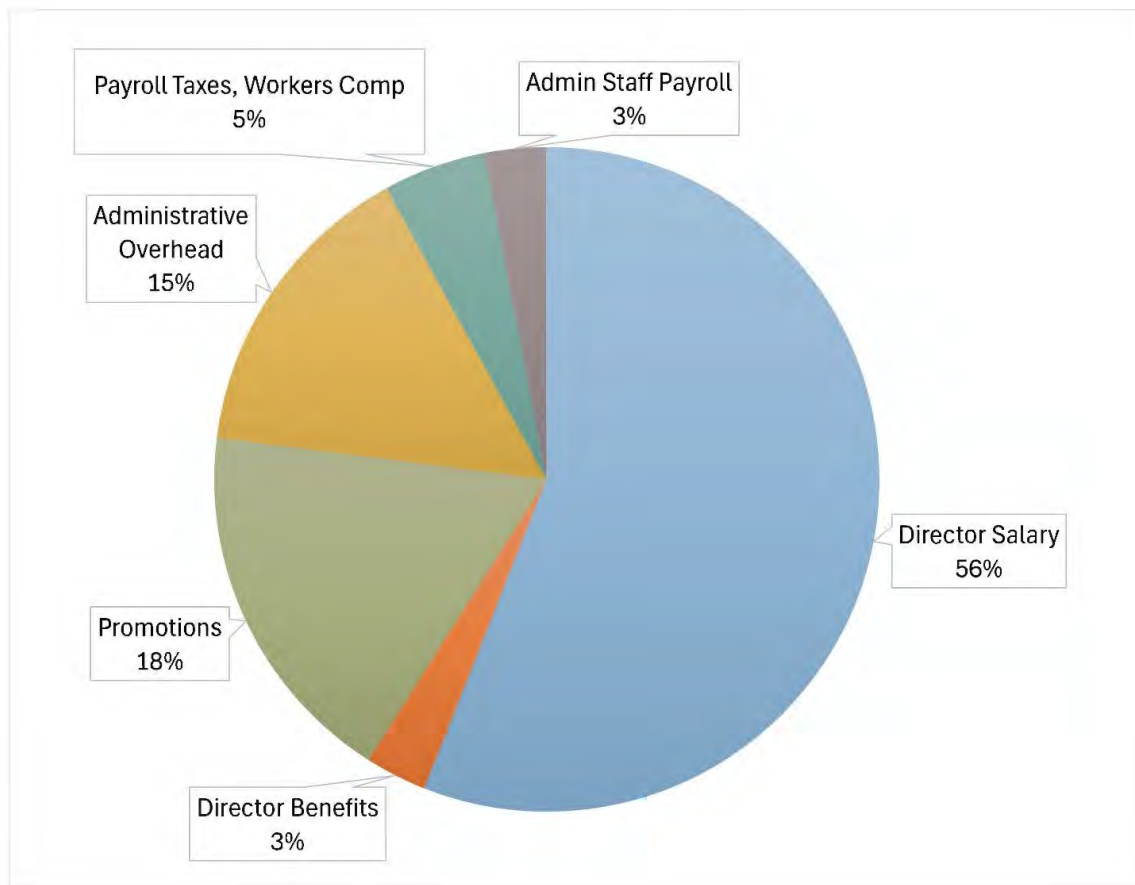
- Knowledge of available properties to match client needs including relationship with property owners.
- Relationships with local businesses and knowledge of their services that may be used for productions.
- Review of insurance documents to ensure requirements met.
- Data collection and tracking on projects and their economic impact.
- In-depth knowledge of film, TV, commercial and print media operations and needs.
- Availability for client calls on a 24 hour/7 days a week basis.
- Working with the California Film Commission on legislative issues.
- Attendance at industry related events.
- Ability to host clients and industry events with giveaways and promotional items.
- Social media platforms specific to the El Dorado Lake Tahoe Film & Media office.
- On location assistance, trouble-shooting, and problem-solving.
- Provide local referrals and act as a liaison between local business, government agencies, County residents, landowners and individuals and the film/television production companies.
- Strong relationships with other Film Commissioners and various film and trade organizations.
- Attend career events, business and philanthropic organizations and provide information on the film industry and economic impacts to the County.
- Philanthropic support such as donating film items to El Dorado County charities for silent auctions and fund raising.
- Positive relationship with film/television companies to generate leads. Respond to inquiries by providing information and location pictures to film/television companies.
- Generate media releases and articles to stimulate local interest and cooperation in providing information on locations, services available and talent/extras available.
- Working with emerging filmmakers on new TV, short and feature film productions.
- Working with producers in creating local content for cable and network television.
- Working with production companies during filming to maximize promotion of El Dorado County brands and labels through “product placement” ventures.

Currently, there is no one on the County staff with this knowledge and skillset. Realistically, it would take years for a person to gain such knowledge. Furthermore, the work would take a significant amount of time, particularly when there is an active production in the County. It is unlikely an existing staff person has the capacity to adequately address even the most basic of film/television production activities.

The RFP process would take at least 4-6 months to complete. It would be very challenging to develop a detailed and adequate scope of work for the RFP since staff is not familiar with the film/television production process making it difficult to review and analyze proposals. Furthermore, there is a relatively small pool of qualified candidates given the specialized nature of the work. The most prudent path seems to be restructuring the agreement for film commission services so that the County can continue to benefit from a highly qualified professional who is intimately familiar with the County, while also developing a more sustainable funding source for the work.

Comparisons

For the past five years, the County has funded the Film Office at \$150,750 annually. The breakdown of how this funding is spent is as follows:



The Director's salary is approximately \$84,420. Statewide, the average annual salary for a county-employed film commissioner is \$110,000, not including benefits.

52 of 58 California counties have a film commission. Of these:

- 35 counties have dedicated employees handling film commission duties.
- 17 counties use outside agencies.
- 6 counties do not have a film commission.
- Regional Models: Yuba & Sutter share a commission, and Riverside & San Bernadino also share a commission. No other counties run a regional commission.

Additionally, 44 counties charge for permits or monitoring fees. Alpine, Amador, and Sacramento counties charge permit fees based on production costs or a flat rate, while Placer County does not charge for permits but does require a monitoring fee for County staff present on-site.

It should be noted that many cities also have film commissions. Larger cities, such as the City of Sacramento, often have their own film office similar to County film offices, whereas small and medium sized cities may largely delegate film permitting and activities to the County film office.

Proposed Restructuring

In considering a new structure, the following objectives were considered:

- Financial stability/minimal reliance on County of El Dorado funding
- Retain experienced staffing

- More robust reporting on financial impacts including TOT and sales tax
- Regular updates between Film Officer and County Economic Development staff
- Preserve independence and flexibility of Film Officer role to best meet the needs of the film industry
- Ongoing dialogue between County, Chamber and Film Office to stay updated and encourage new ideas, services, incentives, etc. to respond to current needs.

To achieve these objectives, the El Dorado Tahoe Film + Media Office and the Economic Development Division of the Planning and Building Department have proposed:

1. Film Office and County staff work together to establish fees for projects.
 - a. Consider sliding scale to accommodate smaller to larger projects.
 - b. Goal of covering cost of film office personnel and activities.
 - c. Upfront funding will be necessary for at least Year One. The County will collect fees over the course of a year for each production to offset the upfront funding.
2. Track room nights booked for projects.
 - a. Coordinate with County staff to determine TOT generated. For VHRs rented, coordinate with staff to ensure VHRs are permitted.
 - b. Collect data and include summaries in the Planning and Building Department's quarterly reports and submit annual reports to the Board.
3. Account for number of crew members in each project to establish what estimated per diem is spent in the county.
 - a. Coordinate with County staff to estimate sales tax generated.
 - b. Collect data and include summaries in the Planning and Building Department's quarterly reports and submit annual reports to the Board.
4. Track estimated number of meals/caterings accommodated on each project.
 - a. Collect data and include summaries in the Planning and Building Department's quarterly reports and submit annual reports to the Board.
5. Film Office and County staff work together to update the 1990 film resolution.
 - a. Use State's Model Film Ordinance as basis
 - b. Develop an MOU between the County and the Film Office outlining roles and responsibilities, funding, data collection and reporting and any other necessary details.
 - c. Update any other applications and forms as needed.

Proposed Updates to the County Film Permit Process Resolution

Staff recommends rescinding Resolution 86-90 and adopting the state's model film ordinance. This ordinance is written to ensure uniform film ordinances and permit processes throughout the State. The ordinance is broadly written and high level.

Legistar Attachment B is the state's model film ordinance. Staff suggests one addition to provide flexibility in updating the film application as needed.

- IV. Applicants and Issuance – adding #10 "Other information as deemed necessary by the County or Film Officer."

Staff recommends that in addition to the ordinance, a MOU between the County and the Film Office be adopted by the Board that details the roles and responsibilities of each party, funding structure including application fees, reporting requirements and a more detailed permit process. Including these details in the MOU rather than the ordinance provides the necessary flexibility and ability to update in a timely manner. Legistar Attachment E list staff's suggested agreement points.

Next Steps

- Submit model film ordinance to the California Film Commission at least 30 days prior to adoption by the County per Government Code 14999.21.
- Return to the Board with the film ordinance, MOU and fee schedule for adoption.
- Authorize the Planning and Building Director to pay the El Dorado Chamber the first quarter of costs (\$37,687.50) for Film Officer services on or after July 1, 2025. These funds will be covered by the Planning and Building Department's FY 2025-26 budget. Quarterly payments will be made at the beginning of each fiscal quarter.

Legistar Attachments

- B. Resolution 86-90
- C. State of California Model Film Ordinance
- D. Yearly projects and financial impact
- E. Draft MOU Agreement Points
- F. Draft Fee Schedule

