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L.A.'s retooled EIDC means business

Dayan elected to replace Rawlins as chair

By [BASHIRAH MUTTALIB](#)

L.A.-based Entertainment Industry Development Corp. has finished its first full year of operation after a complete restructuring that included new corporate and financial controls.

Steve MacDonald, a 15-year City Hall veteran, was appointed prexy of the EIDC.

"We had to create an organization governed by a strong and involved board that would run like a business, with profit and loss statements and cost centers," said Lisa Rawlins, Warner Bros. senior VP of studio and production affairs, and EIDC's outgoing board of directors chairwoman. She will remain an EIDC board member.

Steve Dayan was elected to replace Rawlins as chair. Dayan, an official with Teamsters Local 399, previously chaired the board's operations committee and helped streamline EIDC's complex permitting system.

During the past year, EIDC's contract with Los Angeles was amended to clarify its role as a private nonprofit corporation funded solely by the permit processing fees paid by production companies. "While EIDC provides a one-stop resource for handling on-location permitting needs, the city retains authority over the issuance of all permits," Rawlins said.

Maintaining standards

However, even with the amended contract, the board is concerned over being able to continue to provide the level of service required by the city, and expected by the film industry and communities where shooting occurs.

"The board contends that raising EIDC's fees in order to fund the services required under our city contract is not a viable option, particularly at a time when other regions are doing the complete opposite by offering very lucrative incentives to lure production," Rawlins said.

Rawlins cited the strong efforts of fellow board member Roberto Barragan, executive director of the Valley Economic Development Corp., who chaired the finance committee and, with the help of staff, turned around EIDC finances.

EIDC had its busiest year ever, despite restructuring, belt-tightening and ongoing contention with the city over rules and responsibilities, coordinating approximately

53,000 filming days in 2004 -- the most in its 10-year history.

The new board includes 26 representatives from local communities, independent production companies, entertainment industry unions and vendors. This is in contrast with the old composition of mainly elected officials from the city and county.

"Pilot season is beginning, but with our staff realignment and a more consummate approach to dealing with neighborhoods, I'm optimistic," Rawlins said.

"We're working to build on the momentum created during 2004," Dayan said. "EIDC's house is in order; and now we must clearly define what services can be provided within our new business model. I am confident that the board has the commitment and staff resources to take this crucial next step."

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Nevada is celebrating a five-year run in which film revenue growth exceeded the \$100 million mark.

Rev for calendar year 2004 totaled more than \$116 million, said Lt. Gov. Lorraine T. Hunt, chair of the Nevada Commission on Economic Development, which oversees the Nevada Film Office.

"Quite a few states have seen their revenues decrease due to runaway production and diminished location shooting throughout the country," Hunt said. "But we are most gratified to see Nevada holding steady and continuing to attract diverse productions of all kinds, including a high percentage of television programming."

To that end, television represented the lion's share of Nevada 2004 production activity -- approximately 65%. Commercials, feature films, still photography, musicvideos and other media complete the revenue stream.

In what may serve as a call for other states to rally their legislative forces as well as their filming resources, NFO director Charles Geocarlis boasted that "the additional \$12 million increase is more than many states earn in total filming revenues for an entire year."

Advantage, Nevada

Geocarlis listed a number of advantages the state has in helping to insulate it against declines in location production and, therefore, the decreased revenue faced by other states. "Nevada is fortunate in that we are uniquely branded, diverse geographically, have little or no red tape and are affordable with excellent weather," he said.

News of the revenue boost shared a platform with Hunt's official launch of the 2005 Nevada Production Directory (which can be viewed online at www.nevadafilm.com), and awards to winners of the 2004 Nevada Screenwriters Competition were handed out.

Event was hosted by Planet Hollywood at Las Vegas' Aladdin Resort and Casino, which was also the site for the annual Assn. of Film Commissioners Intl. Cineposium Conference, a first for the state.

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