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S.A. "Sam" Jernigan

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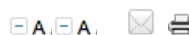
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Nevada County's first film office is no more

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In wanting to avoid the cost of transporting a crew of 55-plus to Vermont where "The Christmas Card" was originally set, Nevada City became the recipient of a \$2 million lucky fluke as the film's producer, Lincoln Lageson, knew our area because his parents were raised here. While he initially sought a local film office, he nevertheless made do without one as the cost savings of filming on the West Coast for the LA-based production company was significant.

However, that was why Mr. Lageson has actively participated on the Advisory Board of the Northeast CA Counties Film Commission (www.FilmNortheastCACounties.com) as it's usually a nonstarter for a production company to work in a locale without a film office to service their specialized needs.

Although a "hidden" arena, there are over 60 film offices statewide, many dating back decades. Every major metro area has its own film office, as do all 50 states, as well as virtually every country around the globe, even small island nations.

So when I uncovered this missing economic development puzzle piece in January 2012, it seemed like an ideal opportunity, especially as I had engaged in new business development inside the entertainment industry in recent years (brokering multiple celebrity endorsement contracts); in fact, it was a celebrity makeup artist client of mine in Los Angeles who made me aware of the business of on-location filming.

After first exploring the viability of a Nevada County film office, the decision was made in the fall of 2012 that a multi-county regional film office was the only viable option for our rural area. In launching a nonprofit 501(c)3 film office, we were also following a well-established model in use in California, as well as elsewhere in the U.S.

The Board of Supervisors appointed our organization to officially represent Nevada County in December of 2012.

Our film commission subsequently:

- Added another seasoned filmmaker to our Advisory Board -- Deborah Moore, formerly the Executive Vice President of New Line Cinema, now heading her own production company, IPE Films.
- Obtained letters of support from Chambers of Commerce, cities, and the Tourism Council for Plumas County, as well as from both of our advisory filmmakers.
- Facilitated filming of six small-by-industry-standards projects in three of the four counties, resulting in \$172,810 in revenue for our region — \$155,450 here in Nevada County, which went to businesses, property owners (via location fees) and municipal coffers from the resulting hotel (TOT) and sales tax revenue. In fact, the hotel bill alone was over \$55,000 for a TV commercial crew working for a week in Truckee recently.
- Procured TV projects planning to film in our region in 2014, with other more formative projects in the pipeline. (Each of the advisory filmmakers expressed interest in bringing projects here, admittedly their motivation for providing us support).
- Interacted with a concentrically expanding pool of 150 contacts within the four-county region (not including production /location professionals), working to secure the primary funding needed from each county to establish the base operating capital for our organization in following the model of other nonprofit film offices — especially as all film office services are provided to the production companies and location scouts/managers they're designed to serve free of charge as is the industry norm. This required in-person meetings, presentations, memos, phone conferences, letters and supplying detailed proposals to each of the four counties (Butte, Plumas, Sierra and Nevada) in early spring. All told, more than 2,600 emails were sent in advancing this economic development enterprise regionally.

However, after 16-plus months of this good faith, full-throttle effort, I'm announcing the demise of the film commission as our organization has been unsuccessful in securing the primary funding necessary to help underwrite this economic development mission. Placer County employs the more typical government-sponsored model, spending \$164,000 annually on their full-time film office — thereby hosting 35 feature films there over the past 14-plus years — yet we were unable to secure the \$20,000 annually to provide this commensurate service to Nevada County. We encountered similar difficulties in the other counties as well.

And while our nonprofit obtained tax-exempt status from California early on, our application has been languishing in an IRS backlog for 14 months now, so we've received no outside funding whatsoever. All start-up/operating costs were paid by yours truly. Of the \$172,810 generated for our region in 2013, not one dime came to the film commission for services rendered in facilitating these projects.

Moreover, coming from the private sector, the protracted nature of these interactions was wholly unanticipated. And, frankly, working full time for more than a year with no income finally took its toll on my limited resources, so I'm now returning to my freelance marketing/business development (Renaissance Consultations, www.MarketingAndPR.com). By the way, we elected not to engage in social media as the industry simply doesn't utilize it, and the project itself was already all-consuming.

Sorry this arduous effort didn't bear long-term fruit, Nevada County, but I assure you it wasn't for lack of trying. We'll now be asking the Board of Supervisors to rescind our appointment.

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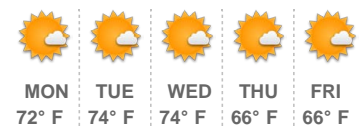
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S.A. "Sam" Jernigan is the former film commissioner in Grass Valley.

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