



April 14, 2026

401 E. Pratt Street, 17th Floor Conference Room, Baltimore, Maryland 21202

1:00pm – 3:00 p.m.

Minutes

Members in Attendance:

Meryam Bouadjemi, Chair
Harry Coker Jr., Secretary
Andy Forssell
David O’Ferrall
Renard Jenkins
Portia Wu (Ashley Sharp), Secretary

Office of the Governor
Department of Commerce
Business Executive
IASTE Local 487
Hollywood Professional Association
Department of Labor

Commerce Staff in Attendance:

Catherine Batavick
Afiya Bey
Mark Corbin
Cori Duggins
Mary Hanley
Princess Hester
Mayank Kapur
Stephen Rice
Steven Skerritt-Davis
Judy L. Smith
Emily Sollenberger

Guests in Attendance:

Leonard Applefeld
Alyssa Barns
Sarah Fales
Alissa Ferguson
Freya Goldbach
Ryan Hastings
Mario Minor
Nikki Powell
Nancy Proctor
Tressa Smallwood
Steve Saada
Lauren Scott
Erica Spear

Amanda Wagner
Wendy Walker
Roger Wood
Tiffany Zappulla

I. Meeting called to Order

Chair Meryam Bouadjemi called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m.

II. Action Item Review and Status

Ms. Afiya Bey reviewed the status of action items from the January 15, 2026 meeting.

III. Review and Approval of January 15, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting minutes from January 15, 2026 were approved.

IV. Chair's Report

Chair Bouadjemi commenced by welcoming attendees and special guests. She noted that the 2025 MEIC Annual Report had been officially submitted and provided an update on a recent meeting with film community member, David Simon. Mr. Simon voiced support for recent legislative challenges and offered his advocacy should it be required.

Chair Bouadjemi also announced that this would officially be her last meeting as Chair, although she plans to continue supporting the work as a member of the Council. She offered sincere gratitude to council members, department representatives, and the arts community. She specifically acknowledged Commerce's leadership, which she credited with establishing a strong foundation for the Council.

V. Secretary's Report

Secretary Coker provided an update on several topics, including the progress regarding the recommendations the Department of Commerce received in July 2025 from SAG-AFTRA and IATSE, Local 487.

- The 2025 MEIC Annual Report was formally submitted in January. A copy of the report can be found on the Council's webpage.
- Commerce held a meeting in February with producer David Simon to discuss the Maryland film industry and tax incentives. Specifically, the discussion centered on the elimination of the per production cap in the Film Production Activity Tax Credit Program.
- The session concluded the previous night and the DECADE act passed. Key points regarding the film tax credit included:
 - The per-production cap remains at \$10 million.
 - The aggregate limit remains in place at \$12 million per year
 - A new reporting requirement has been added:
 - Commerce to produce a report by Dec. 1, 2026 with recommendations for reform:

- how the tax credit could be improved or streamlined, including potential reforms to:
 - the list of eligible production activities;
 - the small or independent film entity eligibility requirements, including hiring requirements, and designated funding levels;
 - the minimum in-State spending requirements for larger film production entities; and
 - the qualifying costs, including whether qualifying costs would be better defined by administrative regulation.

SAG-AFTRA and IATSE, Local 487 Recommendations and Updates:

1. Fill vacancies within the Maryland Film Office
 - **Update:** Commerce is in the final stages of the selection process and will be able to share a decision by April 30th.
2. Update and modernize the Maryland Film Office website and develop promotional materials to attract productions to Maryland.
 - **Update:** This is complete and the new website was launched at the end of 2025. The updated page is strategically designed to fulfill two primary objectives:
 - **Business Attraction:** To prominently feature Maryland as an ideal location for film and media companies to invest and expand, positioning the sector alongside other high-priority industries such as Life Sciences and Cybersecurity.
 - **Industry Resource Hub:** To continue providing essential information and resources for filmmakers and production crews, including details on permitting, available locations, and incentive programs.
3. Compile a List of State Owned Resources
 - **Update:** This is actively underway and included as a task within the FY26 Implementation plan.
4. Proactively Market Maryland at events and in industry and publications.
 - **Update:** This is actively underway currently, and The new Film Director will be a member of the team to review and provide feedback on the engagement plan, ensuring that the Film community's voice is heard to targeted outreach and engagement strategies.
 - An example of this focused approach is the recent Commerce mission trip to Los Angeles for the Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI) Studio Summit to showcase Maryland's film assets.

Participants discussed their collective disappointment that the \$10 million cap was maintained. The upcoming report, due in December, is considered a key opportunity to emphasize the industry's economic benefits to the state.

VI. Maryland Arts Council (MSAC) Update

Steven Skerritt-Davis, the Executive Director of the Maryland Arts Council (MSAC), provided the Council with an update on the MSAC's grant programs. He reported that all programs are now closed for the year. Notifications for grants for artists are expected by the end of the month, and final notifications for creativity grants, professional development opportunity grants, and touring grants will follow in mid-May.

The Arts Council will award almost \$32 million in grant making this year, but the creativity grant program is oversubscribed, seeing an 8% increase in applications.

The Arts Council's general funds will slightly increase next year, keeping the total budget, including federal funds, near \$35 million. Staff are creating policy recommendations for May/June meetings to address high demand and ensure equitable distribution of state grant funding, as current support does not meet demand.

VII. Moonshot Update

Ms. Judy L. Smith shared that Commerce is moving forward with its Moonshots Initiative and outlined the concept of Moonshots as big, bold, innovative ideas requiring a minimum investment of \$100 million and private investment. Moonshot initiatives are defined by Commerce as large-scale projects, \$100 million or greater, requiring private and philanthropic capital, and aiming for a five times greater return on investment than the status quo. Current Moonshot ideas include an all-encompassing art facility, an emerging immersive campus experience, and unlocking Maryland's potential through integrated initiatives.

VIII. Discussion - Moonshot Exercise

An interactive brainstorming session, led by Ms. Smith, focused on defining and prioritizing Moonshots. The goal was to make the concepts clear to investors and align them with state and Commerce strategies, using attractiveness as a key criteria for prioritization. Small groups were tasked with further developing four existing Moonshot concepts submitted by MEIC stakeholders. These ideas were recorded on Moonshot concept sheets and used for report-out documents to elevate the concepts.

- **Action:** Ms. Smith will reach out with next steps for teams to conduct follow-up work before the next meeting to highlight and prioritize the Moonshot projects for final decision-making.

IX. Good of the Order

- Mr. Steve Saada requested to present an all-encompassing downstage rehearsal project at a future meeting. He reported that the project has been in development for three to four

months, and a full investor pitch, including financial figures, is expected within the next two months.

- Ms. Nikki Powell, from the Baltimore Film Office, mentioned that she is eager for the open position at the film office to be filled. She also has a small independent filmmaker needing assistance from Commerce with various processes and will forward information to Ms. Catherine Batavick, Judy L. Smith, and Deputy Secretary Stephen Rice.
- Members of the council thanked Chair Bouadjemi for her leadership.

X. Summary of Key Decisions and Actions

Ms. Smith summarized a series of action items that resulted from the meeting.

Action items for follow-up:

- Nikki Powell will send the names of interested filmmakers to Catherine Batavick, copying Judy L. Smith and Stephen Rice.
- Judy L. Smith will share the necessary instructions for the Moonshot concept teams to complete before the next meeting and will work with the groups on these next steps.

XI. Adjournment

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 3:31 p.m.