

Altadena Filming Committee

Consultative Meeting with Representatives of Department of Public Works

September 28, 2016, 2:00 pm
Altadena Community Center

Minutes

1. Call to order 2:05 p.m.
2. Attendees were introduced.
AFC: Jennifer Lee, Kenneth Meyer, Patricia Sutherlen, Anne Chomyn
DPW: Greg Graham, John Lovrensky
Town Council: Diane Marcussen
3. Kenneth Meyer gave background.
4. Greg Graham, DPW, Supervisor of Contract Construction, talked about his department's role in filming permitting. G. Graham introduced John Lovrensky.
5. John Lovrensky, DPW Head Inspector, spoke on DPW policy on Parking and Traffic Management Requirements on Film Shoots.
6. Filming Committee reports on relevant complaints from residents
7. Discussion.
8. Information on Resources (telephone numbers to call).
9. Adjournment 3:48 p.m.

Appendix A

Detailed Report of September 28 2016 Consultative Meeting Role of Department of Public Works in the Filming Permitting Process; enforcement of filming permitting conditions

The Altadena Filming Committee met with two representatives of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works Land Development Division, Greg Graham and John Lovrensky. The mandate of the Land Development Division, to protect public safety and convenience, guides the staff as they review applications and issue permits for construction, filming, encroachment, excavations, tree work, flood control work, traffic signal upgrades, and other work that takes place in the public right of way. The Division serves all the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County (LAC). In addition, they also have contracted to provide services for a few cities in the County.

Filming related activities represent about 10% of the Division's effort. All Altadena filming permits and riders are approved by Lovrensky, the Head Inspector in the DPW's Permit Office #1, which is in Baldwin Park. The Baldwin Park office is responsible for West San Gabriel Valley. Most of the filming in unincorporated LAC is focused in this area.

Recently, Graham and Lovrensky have been developing standard traffic management conditions for Altadena. For example, for streets less than a certain width, they now routinely require posting No Parking signs on *both* sides of the street for a film shoot. This is to allow the smooth flow of traffic when film vehicles are present. (The convention is that, although No Parking signs are posted on both sides of the street, the filming permit allows filming equipment and service vehicles, including shuttles, to park on one side of the street.) On wide streets No Parking signs might be posted on only one side of the street, to reserve parking space for film equipment vehicles and shuttles. DPW will be extending these standards to all parts of LAC that are within DPW's jurisdiction.

In answer to a question from Filming Committee member Kenny Meyer, Graham agreed that a greater allowance should be made for streets with open culverts instead of curbs when establishing rules based on the width of the street.

In deciding how signage should be placed, and what information is provided on posted signs, the DPW refers to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). They expect that film production companies, construction companies, and others applying for permits to work in the public right of way be familiar with the MUTCD and follow the Manual in placing traffic control signage. Furthermore, DPW requires that each filming permit include a standard set of conditions, for example, compliance with the MUTCD, and no unhoused cables running across the street.

Graham spoke briefly about the new permitting system that will be launched online next year. Different permit types (construction, encroachment, etc.) will be issued with attachments, specific to the permit type, that list ordinances and other relevant

information, much of which will be related to traffic control. The MUTCD will continue to be the basis for setting conditions related to traffic.

Graham meets regularly with all five Head Inspectors from across the County on filming related matters. He observes that the problems seen in Altadena are common throughout the County. For the most part production companies follow the rules, i.e., the permit conditions. The worst problems occur when an out-of-town or single-project company ignores the rules because they don't intend to continue to work in LAC or will dissolve the company after that one production has been completed.

On some film shoots, the production companies have been hiring traffic control specialists – the same type of specialists used by the utility companies. These specialists typically help with signage and sometimes direct traffic. One important exception: drive up scenes, and running or shooting scenes require oversight by law officers. DPW has been trying to promote the use of the traffic specialist companies to increase actual compliance with permit conditions, as opposed to perceived compliance.

Graham explained that if directing traffic was needed, it should not be conducted by the film crew, but by law officers or traffic safety specialists. However, he did point out that if the traffic control signage is correct, someone directing traffic is seldom needed.

Graham and Lovrensky have taken a two-pronged approach to improving compliance with permit conditions by film production companies working in Altadena. First, Lovrensky now personally determines whether No Parking signs should be posted on one or both sides of the street. More often he will specify that the permit require No Parking signage on both sides of the street. Previously the decision as to whether to post No Parking signs on one side or two sides of the street was left up to the film company.

The second prong is enforcement. They are very concerned and actively interested in the enforcement of filming permit conditions. They see communication as an important strategy toward achieving compliance. The DPW is actively engaged with the LA County Sheriff's Department to encourage proactive enforcement of permit conditions. In addition, the DPW itself has an active permit enforcement activity: it has an inspection staff that visits each film shoot in Altadena, meets with the location manager and with the law enforcement officer on duty, and ensures that the filming company has complied with the conditions on the filming permit. The inspector is there to ensure that *all* conditions, MUTCD conditions plus additional permit conditions, are being met. The enforcement of cast and crew parking restrictions (no parking on area streets) is a major focus of DPW efforts. Cast and crew street parking is a common complaint in all areas managed by DPW.

Typically, inspections occur at the beginning of the permitted shoot time, however, inspections by the DPW inspector may occur later in the day. It's worth noting that the DPW inspectors cannot issue a parking ticket, they can only issue notices of violation that have no impact on a short duration filming permit.

According to Lovrensky, the stepped up enforcement is having a positive impact. Filming companies are now requesting modifications to their permits when they realize that the requested parking is insufficient. He also clarified that the permitted parking is only for production vehicles. This includes the crew shuttle. Shuttle pick-ups must occur on the same side of the street that is permitted for production vehicles. Cast and crew are not allowed to park their personal vehicles in posted areas or on any other area streets.

If a community member sees a problem with traffic safety or compliance with permit parking conditions, they are encouraged to contact John Lovrensky at 626-338-9515 Cell: 626-607-7582 or DPW via the County Help Line at 626-458-4357. This line is available 24/7. This is a hotline, a dispatch, also to be used for any other County issue. Callers should say the word “permit” to help direct their calls. (Note: Whereas some of the parking restrictions may appear on the door hanger, the complete conditions for a filming permit are available at the location from the location manager and may be inspected on request by the public. Alternatively, FilmLA can be called and asked for the permit information.)

The Filming Committee presented residents’ issues such as blocked views on entering a busy street when large filming trucks are parked near the intersection, or near driveways. Some would like to see a flagman or the law officer on duty help by directing traffic on busy streets to increase safety and to keep the traffic moving. Graham said they would look into restricting parking of large vehicles so as to avoid blocked views of cross traffic.

Some residents asked that signs be posted at the periphery of the filming area so as to allow drivers to take a detour if they so choose. DPW is aware that busy streets like NY Drive and Altadena Drive require special consideration and is looking into the use of various traffic control techniques and permit conditions to alleviate problems.

The Committee presented one resident’s concern that bottlenecks on narrow streets created by vehicles parked on both sides might be a safety issue. That problem is being addressed by DPW’s increasingly posting no parking signs on both sides of the street. The particular side, north or south, east or west, is specified on the filming permit and may be indicated as well on the door hanger. The information provided on posted signs is determined by the conventions described in the MUTCD.

The Committee raised the issue of how the special needs of certain community members might receive consideration when a filming permit is issued for their street. For example, a disabled person might request that the filming permit ensure that a film shoot allows them to keep their car parked in front of their home, i.e., allows them to have access to their home when a shoot is permitted on their street. Currently, there is no mechanism for a community member to request that a filming permit include this kind of special condition. Graham declared his willingness to work with FilmLA on implementing some sort of accommodation in such special cases.

In the case where a production truck damages public property, like a curb, DPW should be notified quickly so that the damage can be properly attributed to the correct company so that the damage can be remedied.

In response to hearing the Committee's report that location filming has been done in Altadena in the absence of a law officer, Lovrensky was adamant that any filming permit application that comes to him will be subject to the DPW policy requiring that a law officer be on the set.

Regarding the permitted hours of operation, Graham made it very clear that arrival prior to or after permitted hours is prohibited. For example production vehicles are not allowed to arrive at the location prior to the permitted hours. Similarly the entire production operation must be completely gone ("tail lights down the road") when the permitted hours have expired. The permitted hours are usually 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. or 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. For example, a production company may not leave porta potties or lighting cables after the permit has expired. DPW is very concerned about enforcement in these cases. They strongly urge community members to contact them if the production company violates permitted time conditions.

The issue of overnight parking was raised, as, occasionally, filming vehicles had been observed to be parking on Altadena streets overnight. The question was whether Altadena has a ban on overnight parking. Pat Sutherlen mentioned the ban on parking oversized vehicles on Altadena streets unless the owner has obtained a permit from the Sheriff's station. Graham mentioned that filming vehicles parked overnight may not be a violation, because sometimes filming permits are issued that allow filming vehicles to remain on the street overnight between two consecutive filming days.

In the case of gross violations, DPW does not have the authority to shut down a shoot, however, they would collaborate with FilmLA, who does have that authority.