

**Altadena Filming Committee**  
Consultative meeting with Los Angeles County Law Enforcement

Data: February 8, 2017

Time: 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Place: Altadena Community Center

**Present:**

Altadena Filming Committee: Patricia Sutherlen, Jennifer Lee, Kenny Meyer, Anne Chomyn

Law Enforcement: Sgt. Waterman, Officer Cardoza, Officer Ulloa, Officer Vega

From the Industry: Russ Fega

**Agenda**

1. Goals of this meeting:

To understand issues where community, law enforcement, and industry personnel intersect, and look for solutions.

2. Success. Complaint from resident Jan 25, 2017 and resolution regarding NY Drive: the LA County Department of Public Works and FilmLA have established a requirement that any part of NY Drive, between Lake and Allen that is  $\leq 36$  feet wide be posted No Parking on both sides of street.

3. Chief complaints from the Community regarding Location Filming: parking, traffic. 114 emails were received in September and October, 2016 in response to request for community feedback. The issues raised were parking (22%), traffic (16%), law enforcement personnel (7%), and safety (2%).

4. Location manager's point of view.

5. LA Neighborhood Councils Filming Town Hall Jan 26, 2017 attended by A.C., K.M.  
Parking is #1 complaint  
Traffic and parking management by retired LAPD officers  
Ticketing, towing by DoT  
LAPD Film Unit

6. No consequences for permit violations in Altadena: early arrival, cast and crew parking on area streets.

7. Solutions?

8. Adjourn

## Meeting Notes

### Discussion

In the opening remarks, the Committee learned the Sheriff's Department has held discussions with representatives from the LA County Department of Public Works to address filming-related traffic concerns on Altadena streets. In particular, the Altadena Sheriff's Deputies have been informed of the newly established policy that, for locations shoots on the narrow parts of New York Drive between Lake Avenue and Sinaloa, temporary No Parking signs must be posted on both sides of the street. Similarly, they have discussed safety-related concerns when shoots occur on the narrow portions of Altadena Drive.

After opening remarks, the Committee addressed a series of questions that have come up during previous consultative meetings. Here's a summary of the questions and responses.

Question: Could you please clarify the role of the on-site law officer? Do they work for the film company or the community?

On-site law officers have the following responsibilities: enforcement of the filming permit, ensuring public safety, helping to park large trucks, and traffic control, which includes stopping traffic as needed for either production or safety purposes.

Question: Can an on-site law officer give a ticket or tow away a vehicle that is parked in a posted No Parking area?

On-site law officers can ticket a car that is parked in a posted "No Parking" zone. As a matter of practice, every effort is made to contact the owner of the illegally parked vehicle and ticketing and/or towing are seldom issued.

Question: FilmLA includes the following condition on all Altadena filming permits: "No cast or crew parking on area streets." The provision is frequently ignored by film companies. Can the onsite law officer enforce that condition by ticketing cast and crew cars parked on neighborhood streets?

On-site law officers can issue tickets only where "No Parking" signs are posted. They cannot issue a ticket to a crew or cast member who has parked in an area street that is not posted "No Parking."

One law enforcement representative pointed out that the "no cast or crew parking on area streets" condition, as stated on the FilmLA permits, is not enforceable because the term "area streets" is too vague for law enforcement to act on. He would prefer that a limit, or perimeter, be defined.

With regard to monitoring parking, Russ Fega suggested to the Officers and Deputies that they meet with the Location Manager and the First Assistant Director first thing in the morning to discuss the scope of the shoot. If the Officers and Deputies have a question or issue during the shoot, the best person to speak with is the Location Manager.

Question: On occasion, film production vehicles create a disturbance by appearing at the location prior to the permitted arrival time and leaving after the permitted departure time. If that occurs, should a community member report the permit violation to the Sheriff's Department? If so, what would the Sheriff do?

Community members are always encouraged to contact the Sheriff when there's a concern. However, in this case, law enforcement has no grounds for action. The Sheriff would simply contact FilmLA.

FilmLA is the county service responsible for enforcing permit conditions describing arrival and departure times. FilmLA has two possible remedies for early arrival or late departure: 1) write a rider to the existing permit that allows an early arrival time or delayed departure 2) revoke the filming permit. FilmLA will typically work with the production company to address the issue.

The Committee was told by the law enforcement representatives that FilmLA maintains a record of filming companies who are indifferent to permitted arrival and departure times. It was their understanding that repeat violators may be subjected to a "cooling off period" before being able to obtain a new filming permit. *[Note: The filming committee has not yet identified a case where a filming company was refused a permit for prior violations.]*

Question: There is a perception that law officers just sit in their patrol cars and do not actively enforce permit conditions or address safety concerns like production vehicles that obstruct cross traffic at intersections or at a driveway.

The law enforcement representatives were quite insistent that, in fact, their personnel are professional and diligent. Officers are required to be responsive to both the film company and the community. In fact, the law enforcement representatives wanted to encourage community members to talk to the on-site law officer.

Law enforcement supervisors hold a high standard and prefer to assign officers who have demonstrated good skills relating to both film companies and community members. If a supervising officer receives a complaint about an onsite officer, the offending onsite officer will be admonished and possibly be excluded from further film assignments. Consequently, if there is concern about an on-site officer, community members or film crew members are encouraged to contact the Altadena CHP office and ask for the Supervisor, or if unable to speak with the Supervisor, to call Officer Kristi Cardoza. If the officer on duty is a Sheriff's Deputy, the resident or film crew member should call Sgt. Waterman at the Altadena Sheriff's station. [Telephone numbers are given below]

It was pointed out that officers are often required to sit in their cars in order to be able to receive radio requests for traffic control or other needs of the filming company. And it should be noted that it is unreasonable to expect an officer to stand outside the patrol car for the entire shoot day.

During the general discussion, the Committee learned that at times the Altadena Sheriff's Station may not have a local Deputy available to staff a film shoot. In these cases, Deputies are recruited from other areas in the County or from CHP. The Committee also learned that the CHP hears a disproportionately high number of complaints from Altadena.

Question: If a neighbor interferes with a permitted filming activity, can a law officer ticket or otherwise restrain the disruptive neighbor?

Unless the offending neighbor is breaking a law, the law officer has no authority to ticket or restrain the neighbor. However, if the neighbor is breaking the law, the officer must first obtain the proper legal authority prior to acting so there may be a lengthy delay before the officer may take action against a disruptive neighbor.

The preferred method that film production companies use is to talk with the disruptive neighbor—often this results in a cash payment. All admitted this created a very bad precedent, but no other method has proven as effective.

In the following discussion, the law-enforcement representatives made it clear, that “some people are just unreasonable,” and that “it is impossible to make everyone happy.” In these cases, there was little option but to simply ignore the complaints.

Question: Is a law officer always required for every film shoot?

All FilmLA filming permits are required to be reviewed by the Information Bureau's Film and Media Projects office of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. That office determines if law officers are required to be on the set. Additional requirements for a law officer may be added by the Department of Public Works. Finally, the production company may voluntarily hire law enforcement.

As a general rule, at least one law officer is present at most film shoots in Altadena. However, no officer is required when the film shoot (including the parking of all production vehicles) takes place entirely on private property. If there happens to be a concern about a shoot where no officer is present, it is recommended that community members contact FilmLA.

In the discussion that followed, the law enforcement representatives mentioned that unpermitted shooting was frequent in Altadena. If an unpermitted shoot is suspected, or an unsafe condition is observed, Sgt. Waterman suggested we or the community members call him. He will go out to the site and ask to see the permit.

Question: What are the consequences for violations of permit conditions?

The shoot can be shut down. This is rarely done.

Question: You have been answering questions and listening to complaints from the community. Is there anything you would like to share with the community or suggest?

Communicate pleasantly with the law officer and do talk to him or her.

### Action items

A few items came up during the discussion that require follow-up:

- Obtain the name of the law enforcement office that approves filming permits. (Kenny-done)
- Discuss with FilmLA the need to develop a more specific description for the “area streets” term.
- Ask FilmLA for a description of what action they take if a production company arrives before the permitted arrival time or leaves after the permitted departure time.
- Ask FilmLA if they maintain a record of production companies that violate arrival and departure conditions. Is there a cooling-off period for production companies?” Ask for a clarification of the remedies they provide.

### Contacts

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