

TO: **Members of the Common Council**

FROM: Wayne J. Shepperd, Director of Economic Development

RE: **Connecticut Film Festival**

The Connecticut Film Festival has taken a significant number of positive steps in preparing for our May 20-25 event in Danbury.

Founder Tom Carruthers has submitted the attached document identifying his action steps, community interactions and intangible benefits.

The intangibles, as I see it from my chair, are significantly important to our future development of this event and the core of our city.

Beyond what Tom has written, I have been contacted by two movie companies. They are attracted to Danbury for three reasons: (1) our state's tax credit program, (2) our proximity to New York City where many of their staffers reside and (3) recognition that Danbury specifically is conscious of its industry as exemplified by our hosting of the Connecticut Film Festival.

The first company, Disney, conducted a full day of filming at Borders and brought 150 of their staffers to a catered meal at the Portuguese Cultural Center.

The second is an independent film production company. Roxbury's Rebecca Miller, wife of last week's Oscar winner Daniel Day-Lewis and daughter of Arthur Miller, is the director. This company is interested in a three-month stay in our city if we can locate the necessary buildings. They will film "The Private Lives of Pippalee."

The scouts that I have dealt with all suggest that the interest in our city from their industry will likely continue with consistency.

Thanks for your time in listening. Tom's report and a copy of the Fairfield County Business Journal story about the Danbury's Connecticut Film Festival are attached.

# Danbury gives film fest two thumbs up

By BOB CHUVALA



The Connecticut Film Festival has found a home after shopping around Fairfield County for the past year or so for a headquarters city from which to operate the statewide festival. Earlier this month the Danbury Common Council voted 20-1 to give the festival \$75,000 to promote its main event this May in downtown Danbury, along with getting a guarantee from the festival's organizer, Tom Carruthers, to keep the festival in the city should it prove successful.

Carruthers has no doubt of the festival's long-term success in Danbury and around the state, and of the economic impact the festival will have on the city. "Opportunity is written all over it during the course of the next 10 years," he said. "I'll get it off the ground, but I want this thing to be around here long after I'm gone."

What he sees long term is quite sweeping in scope and includes carving out an economic niche for Danbury as a center for film production and post-production; a renewed downtown with shops, restaurants, businesses and professionals to serve the film center; and public schools, the technical school and Western Connecticut State University all creating courses and studies "to raise industry people from the ground up, so that right out of high school and college they'd be able to assimilate into the industry," he said.

The result could be creation of an arts and cultural center in the city of which the film festival will be only one part. Anchoring all that would be the 80-year-old, 2,000-seat Palace Theater on Main Street, in the initial stages of restoration. "This could be the beginning of an infrastructure for a renaissance of arts and music and a new industry that dovetails with the state's new Hollywood East film industry in Connecticut," Carruthers said.

## Conservative numbers

In the short term, Carruthers thinks the 3-year-old festival will draw at least 5,000 people to Danbury's downtown CityCenter during the six-day event in May, generating close to \$1 million for the economy. "Those are pretty conservative numbers, based on the ticket sales we did the previous years, but they are good, solid numbers," he said of the potential attendance. "With the current expansion model we have in mind over the course of three years, this could blow up into the next Danbury Fair." The century-old fair drew thousands of visitors each October until it was sold to the developers of the Danbury Fair Mall some 20 years ago.

Jim Whitney, director of the Northwest Connecticut Convention and Visitors Bureau in Waterbury, did a preliminary economic impact analysis for the Danbury portion of the festival, suggesting that if 5,000 attendees spend the U.S. average of \$106 per person – "the U.S. average for people who attend these types of events" – they would spend about \$530,000 in direct spending for everything from a hamburger to gasoline to tickets, which will result in an "induced impact" of about \$420,000 as that money moves through the economy, for a total of \$959,300.

"The question is whether Danbury will be above or below the average, and we won't know that until we do a real-life study," Whitney said. "We may be surprised. (Carruthers) may get his 5,000 people but they may spend 150 bucks." In any event, "you can't even go to the movies for 50 bucks," so even that spending level would have an impact of about \$452,500 for the city, he said.

Whitney's higher estimates may prove fairly accurate. The Kent Film Festival about 30 miles north of Danbury in Litchfield County did a survey about the economic impact of the 1,500 people the festival drew last year. "The four-day event brought more than \$270,000 into the area," said Frank Galterio, festival founder and director. That's about \$180 a person. "Everybody spends money on everything from ATM machines to gasoline to meals. Even the person who serves hamburgers makes money through tips. It goes on and on."

Over in Rhode Island, the 12-year-old statewide Rhode Island Film Festival in Providence – which drew 24,000 people last year – hasn't done a formal economic survey, but "we can judge from the feedback from restaurants and hotels and merchants" about the festival's impact, said Adam Short, producing director of the festival. "Every year they want to do more with us because they see the difference."

In fact, Short said, last year the festival started putting together travel packages offering discounts on hotel rooms, restaurants, festival ticket, car rentals and even Amtrak tickets. "The city of Providence was working with a public relations firm out of New York, pushing the festival in New York and Connecticut for regional travel," he said.

## Exciting opportunity

As for Danbury, if the film festival develops along with the state's fledgling film industry which is being spurred by generous tax credits, "and Danbury can be identified as a film industry area, we face a very exciting economic opportunity," said Andrea Gartner, manager of CityCenter, Danbury's downtown special services district.

She foresees the possibility of the downtown retail mix changing to include coffee shops, bookstores, clothing stores and other retailers "centered around film, music and culture," she said. "The additional component of the restored Palace Theater being opened will help create a dynamic downtown."

The May festival in Danbury will offer screenings, special events, networking opportunities, receptions and workshops concentrated downtown, including events on the midtown WestConn campus. "We've been talking back and forth with Tom about how many events we might have here and where they would be," said Paul Steinmetz, director of university relations.

"It's a good way for WestConn to part of a good event, and a good way to connect our students with people in the film industry. We're very interested in that." As the university builds its communication and film program, Steinmetz said, "the film festival could be a larger part of the university and our program."

The film festival should also boost the economies of other communities around the state, including several in lower Fairfield County. The event began as the Bethel Film Festival in 2005 that attracted 3,000 people, spread to eight cities and towns around the state in 2006 that attracted 4,500 people, and began a nine-month run last September, with a series of weeknight and weekend screening events that are

attracting about 500 people each weekend, Carruthers said. "We expected between 10,000 and 12,000 people the whole season," including the screenings in Danbury. "I'm really driven to make a difference in the community."

## 2008 February Expenses

Accnt Nbr	Account Title	Totals for Feb-08	Feb-08 detail	Totals for Mar-08	Mar-08 detail	2008 YTD
<b>1000</b>	<b>Staffing</b>	<b>\$ 500</b>		<b>\$ -</b>		<b>\$ 500</b>
1010	Administrative-staff		\$ -		\$ -	
1011	Programming Director		\$ 500		\$ -	
1012	Educational Director		\$ -		\$ -	
1015	Administrative-staff, support		\$ -		\$ -	
1020	Event Staff - Security		\$ -		\$ -	
1022	Event Staff - Production		\$ -		\$ -	
<b>2000</b>	<b>Administration</b>	<b>\$ 1,040</b>		<b>\$ -</b>		<b>\$ 1,040</b>
2010	Travel and Entertainment for Artistic Director		\$ -		\$ -	
2012	Travel and Entertainment Exec. Director		\$ -		\$ -	
2020	Telephone, Supplies, Postage, Copying		\$ -		\$ -	
2030	Insurance		\$ 1,040		\$ -	
<b>3000</b>	<b>Promotion &amp; Marketing</b>	<b>\$ 12,699</b>		<b>\$ -</b>		<b>\$ 12,699</b>
3010	PR Director		\$ -		\$ -	
3020	Local Advertising - Print		\$ 400		\$ -	
3022	Local Advertising - Radio		\$ 2,000		\$ -	
3024	Regional Advertising		\$ 299		\$ -	
3030	Website / Web 2.0 Marketing Development		\$ 10,000		\$ -	
3035	Internet Advertising		\$ -		\$ -	
3040	Direct Mail and Other		\$ -		\$ -	
3042	Printing		\$ -		\$ -	
3080	All Other		\$ -		\$ -	
<b>4000</b>	<b>Ops &amp; Production</b>	<b>\$ -</b>		<b>\$ -</b>		<b>\$ -</b>
4010	Film Rentals		\$ -		\$ -	
4020	Screener duplication		\$ -		\$ -	
4015	Facility Rentals		\$ -		\$ -	
4030	Artist Honoraria		\$ -		\$ -	
4032	Artist Travel, Lodging and Hospitality		\$ -		\$ -	
4060	Production		\$ -		\$ -	
4065	Shipping		\$ -		\$ -	
4070	Program Printing		\$ -		\$ -	
4080	Ticketing		\$ -		\$ -	
4085	Cost of Merchandise		\$ -		\$ -	
4090	Party Costs - Catering, Labor		\$ -		\$ -	
4092	Party Costs - Décor		\$ -		\$ -	
<b>5000</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>
5000	Misc. Other		\$ -		\$ -	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 14,239</b>	<b>\$ 14,239</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 14,239</b>



2/24/08

Wayne Shepperd  
City Of Danbury  
155 Deer Hill Avenue  
Danbury, CT. 06810

Re: Connecticut Film Festival  
February Report

In the last 17 days the Connecticut Film Festival has made great strides in securing and confirming availability of facilities and generating community excitement and spirit among the downtown area stakeholders for May 20-25, 2008. Two downtown screening facilities are confirmed at this time and we have commandeered the schedules of several downtown venues as locations for workshops, panel discussions and symposiums. Additionally, we are finalizing the use and staffing of WCSU facilities in the coming weeks.

The festival is finalizing all details of the agreement and insurance requirements with the city's corporation counsel and assistant director of finance and expects to sign a contract early this week.

The festival received a significant increase (over 70) in the number of film submissions in the last 17 days as a result of a nation wide media blast on February 7<sup>th</sup> announcing the May 20-25 dates in Danbury CT.

Since the local, regional and national press announcements, the festival has received an increased number of inquiries for volunteering and potential community partnerships and sponsorships.

**Action steps taken:**

- Secured Opening Night Theater & Reception location
- Secured Friday Night Industry Reception location
- Secured Sunday Morning Awards Brunch location

**Community interactions:**

- Organizing a faculty committee for WCSU integration into festival
- Organizing an Independent Music Committee with community music stakeholders
- Finalizing WCSU venues for May 20-25
- Discussed possible integration of festival
- The Women's Center
- Danbury Museum & Historical Society
- Escape To The Arts
- Danbury Train Museum

**Intangible benefits:**

- Generated articles in Fairfield County Business Journal on CTFF and Palace Theater
- Tailoring International category's programming to meet the specific cultural needs of Danbury's diverse population
- Scheduled TV Interview at Palace Theater - Fox 61 – postponed because of inclement weather

**Short list of phone conferences and face-to-face meetings:**

**Event Locations:**

- WCSU – Paul Steinmetz, John Murphy, Helen Bouchard, Betsy Mcdonough
- All Nations Baptist Church - Ophir de Barros
- Elk's Club – Randy Wallace
- Palace Theater – Joe DaSilva
- Heirloom Arts Theater – Jay LaPierre
- Danbury Public Library – Mark Hasskarl, Maryellen DeJong, Darlene Garrison
- Women's Center – Pat Zackman
- Empress Professional Building – John Farley
- St James Episcopal Church – Bunny Jacobson and Janet Brown
- Danbury Museum and Historical Society – Brigid Guertin
- Danbury Train Museum – Jeff Heyel
- Danbury Ice Arena – Bob Garcia
- Escape To The Arts – Deborah McCuin-Channing
- Tuxedo Junction – Al

**City Of Danbury:**

- Office of Economic Development – Wayne Shepperd
- Corporation Counsel – Robin Edwards
- Assistant Director of Finance – Dan Garrick

**Media Meetings:**

- Tribuna CT – Emanuella Lima
- Journal Register Newspapers – Paula Walsh, Doug Clement & Ray Filbert
- Cox Communications – Star 99.9 – Michelle Grand
- WSHU – Lori Miller
- Mass Media Publications– Sean Hitchcock and Peter Uus
- Media News Group – David Dear

**Services:**

- Maron Hotel & Suites – John Brown & Mary Elizabeth Salame
- Sheraton Danbury Hotel – Marie Risk
- The Amber Room – Jennifer Putnam
- Tarrywile Mansion – Sandy Moy
- Two Steps Restaurant – Tom Devine
- Bella Luna – John Akici
- Nico's - George

**Music Committee:**

- Jay LaPierre – Heirloom Arts Theater - Confirmed
- Justin Mazzerini – WXCI Radio - Confirmed
- Pete Walrath – Hat City Entertainment - Confirmed
- David Friedman – News-Times Music Critic - Invited
- Tony Yacobellis – Cousin Larry's – Invited
- Frank Herbert – WCSU Theater Arts Dept. - Invited
- Darryl Orte – Declined invite

Wayne, please let me know if you need any more details. 203-247-4273

Regards



Tom Carruthers  
Connecticut Film Festival

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