

Directors endorse film festival for Manchester

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Journal Inquirer

Published: Wednesday, January 7, 2009 11:53 AM EST

MANCHESTER — A local film company, Cool Hand Pictures LLC, went before the Board of Directors on Tuesday to unveil plans for the Silk City Flick Fest, running Thursday to Sunday, Oct. 8 to 11.

After listening to the presentation and asking a few pointed questions, the entire board exuberantly got behind the venture.

Not asking for money helped.

Justin Morales, a former Manchester High student who is now a New York filmmaker, and his partner Manchester businessman John V. Ramaglia, told the directors that they weren't looking for money — only support in the form of an endorsement from town leaders.

The festival could mean a boost for local businesses over the long Columbus Day weekend. The setting, which encompasses historic Main Street and Cheney Brothers buildings, is perfect, Morales said.

There will be multiple venues for viewing films, including Cheney Hall, the Parkade cinema, and Manchester Community College, he said.

A selection committee of film experts would choose the movies. Exploitative or phonographic material would not be accepted for the listings, and a detailed synopsis would be provided for each showing so families could judge if the material is appropriate for themselves and their children, Morales said.

Much like other film festivals, the event will kick off with an opening day gala, and end with the films being judged by an expert jury.

There would also be industry-related panel discussions — maybe with a celebrity or two — peppered throughout the festival that aspiring film students could benefit from, Morales said. The University of Connecticut and MCC could also showcase their art and film programs, he added.

Most of the volunteers have been lined up, Ramaglia said, and vans would be provided to cart festival-goers around town from hotels to venues to restaurants and shopping.

The event could be a big draw as festivals like this typically see on average about 1,500

attending, the pair said.

As for accountability, Ramaglia, who is in the insurance business, says organizers would cover the event and the town would not be liable for any accidents or ill-fated results.

And 10 percent of all proceeds would go directly to a local charity, Morales said.

Morales and Ramaglia have the local Chamber of Commerce, downtown businesses, and the Cheney Brothers Historic District Commission on board and excited about their plans. They say they also have a number of sponsors lined up to help with financing the venture.

“You’ve really done your homework,” Republican Director Mark Tweedie told the pair, giving his support to the project.

Kevin Zingler, a Democratic director, suggested that the town could help by hanging a banner across Main Street as is done for other events.

“Anything we can do to bring people into our town for four days to eat in our restaurants, shop in our stores, and see some films would be great,” Zingler said.

Democratic Director Lisa O’Neill suggested that for their busing needs the pair use fuel-cell powered or hybrid engine vans from local businesses to highlight alternative transportation sources.

“I agree,” Morales said, adding “That sort of thing is very attractive to artists and celebrities.”

As for hauling Hollywood types, Republican Mayor Louis Spadaccini said he could easily be pressed into service.

“If you get a celebrity, I’ll pick him up at the airport — I’ll even wear a chauffeur hat and everything,” Spadaccini beamed.

“I think this is an excellent idea and the town should be behind it,” he said, adding with more seriousness that “we really have the necessary elements to make this a success: historic downtown, Cheney Hall, and MCC, the state’s showcase community college.”

For details, visit

www.silkcityflickfest.com