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Macomb County cities' goal is to green-light movie money

BY AMBER HUNT
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

When Hollywood comes knocking, area municipalities have more to look forward to than celebrity sightings.

Translation? Ka-ching.

So said Anthony Wenson, chief operating officer of the Michigan Film Office, who was one of several speakers at Making Movies in Macomb. The Friday gathering of officials from state film groups and Macomb municipalities was designed to prepare the county for potential Hollywood inquiries.

The meeting, held at the Macomb Intermediate School District auditorium in Clinton Township, comes as more and more movies are being filmed in Michigan, thanks to hefty incentives passed by the state Legislature.

In 2008, 27 films were completed in the state with a \$167-million price tag, Wenson said. The incentives -- which are refundable tax credits of up to 42% of a production company's expenditures in producing a film -- have drawn Hollywood heavyweights such as Clint Eastwood, Sigourney Weaver and Drew Barrymore to metro Detroit.

"I don't think anybody knew it would take off the way that it did," Wenson said, adding that the state is now attracting movies with \$100-million budgets.

"We're at \$100 million, and we're not even a year old," he said.

In 2007, when film rebate incentives were between 12% and 20% -- far less than the current 40% to 42% -- just three movies were made in Michigan with \$3.5 million spent.

Mark Adler, cofounder of Film Friendly Michigan LLC, said that not only do area businesses see increased traffic thanks to film crews, but other subindustries have huge growth potential as well -- including set design and digital technology.

Contact **AMBER HUNT** at 586-826-7267 or alhunt@freepress.com.
