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Sorvino seeks more financial backing from investors for 'The Trouble With Cali'

GRETCHEN M. WINTERMANTEL

Published: July 22, 2008

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"The Trouble With Cali" is facing some trouble of its own, and it's not even close to being seen by movie critics.

The movie has run out of funding — shy about \$300,000 of its \$1.3 million budget — and actor/director Paul Sorvino is trying to raise that money. Lackawanna County has invested \$500,000 in the project, which was filmed largely in and around Scranton in 2006.

Sorvino said Monday he is negotiating with several companies, including a group of investors called Hudson

Atlantic that already invested \$300,000 in the film.

Majority County Commissioners Mike Washo and Corey O'Brien have requested a meeting with Sorvino to discuss the movie's status, including a timetable for a return on the county's investment.

Sorvino said the county will get back its investment if the film returns a profit — plus a bonus of 20 percent of the film's \$1.3 million budget.

After the initial investments are paid back to all investors, profits would be doled out according to the percentage of each investment. This is laid out in a "signed investment agreement" with the county, he said.

However, Washo and O'Brien said they had never heard of such an agreement, and for months have believed that no contract existed. Sorvino said his attorney will send the agreement to the commissioners directly.

By making the county a partner in the film, Sorvino said he was just trying to do something beneficial that would allow the county to make money. Over the past several months, that's become more of a headache for him.

"If I had enough money, I'd buy out the county if it would make them happy," Sorvino said. Reached by phone in Los Angeles, Sorvino said he has a rough cut of the film finished, but post-production is ongoing. Several scenes need to be reshot, and Sorvino hopes to shoot them in Scranton sometime in the next several months.

"That's where the movie was born, and that's where I'd like to finish it," he said.

The majority commissioners also asked Sorvino to remove former Commissioner Robert C. Cordaro from his credit as executive producer, replacing it with "The People of Lackawanna County."

"The \$500,000 is taxpayers' funds, not Bob Cordaro's," O'Brien said.

Sorvino said the majority commissioners are "overstepping their bounds" and refuses to do that, pointing out that Cordaro won't make money from the title.

"As far as them determining who does what in the movie, that's not their business," Sorvino said. "That's my call."

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Sorvino: Film still in works

GRETCHEN M. WINTERMANTEL

Published: December 2, 2008

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Paul Sorvino met the majority county commissioners Monday on Courthouse Square before the unveiling of the Jason Miller bust. But they did not ask him about the county's investment in his film, he said.

"Why would they? The answer is I'm in post-production," Mr. Sorvino said. "I am hoping that within four or five months the movie will come out, but that I have no control over.

"The picture will be finished within several months."

Lackawanna County invested \$500,000 in "The Trouble With Cali," which was filmed in and around Scranton in 2006.

The county is now seeking a way to recoup its investment.

Commissioner Corey O'Brien said the county is "reviewing all of our options with respect to Mr. Sorvino and this movie project," though he would not elaborate.

Meanwhile, Mr. Sorvino said the proposed film production studio in the former Corning Inc. plant in Benton Twp., for which he was seeking \$6 million in funding, is dead.

"The Republicans have apparently killed it," Mr. Sorvino said Monday. "I wanted to do it, and it got tied up in politics, and you know, life is too short."

Reached later by phone, state Sen. Bob Mellow, D-22, refuted Mr. Sorvino's claim.

"It's unfortunate Mr. Sorvino would say that," Mr. Mellow said. "It was not one party versus another. There was never a follow-through on their behalf."

Mr. Sorvino said "it got beat to death apparently in the halls of the legislative body, and that's the end of it."

"It's sad because I had so many plans. I did so much preparation. I did so much work on it," Mr. Sorvino said.

Mr. Mellow had a different recollection and called Mr. Sorvino's statements "disingenuous."

"He couldn't be any more inaccurate," said Mr. Mellow, who requested funding for the project in the state's capital budget in April. "He said he had a plan in his head, and he was going to come back to us with plans on paper, and how he was going to find the matching funds."

Mr. Sorvino never did that, Mr. Mellow said.

"There were no concrete plans," Mr. Mellow said.

As for "The Trouble With Cali," Mr. Sorvino said he is still seeking investors for the film, which was initially expected to cost \$3 million. In an attempt to keep costs down, the budget was cut to about \$1.3 million, but the movie is short about \$300,000.

In July, Mr. Sorvino said he was seeking more funding from Hudson Atlantic, a group that had already invested \$300,000 in the film. Mr. Sorvino has invested at least \$175,000 of his own money.

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Mr. Sorvino on Monday said the film is in post-production.

"I'm working on the second cut, a rough cut, and then post-production, and hopefully it'll be out in four to five months."

In February, Mr. Sorvino told The Times-Tribune he had a rough cut and projected a final cut could be completed "in two to five months."

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