

Burn Notice set for fourth season at Coconut Grove center

By JACQUELYN WEINER

USA Network's hit television series *Burn Notice*, shot on location in Miami, will continue to film locally for a fourth season.

Currently on hiatus, *Burn Notice* staff should return in January or February to begin filming season four by March, said Robert Parente, director of the City of Miami Office of Film and Cultural Affairs.

"Their lease [at its city-owned set] is in full course," he said. "They pay every month."

Questions as to whether the series would be allowed to continue filming at its Coconut Grove Convention Center set — which is City of Miami property — came up in May when Miami commissioners discussed moving forward with plans to demolish the center.

The Coconut Grove Waterfront Master Plan, commissioned by the city for \$600,000, calls for demolition of the cen-

ter to make way for a park and an amphitheater.

The city commission ultimately resolved to extend the lease, which now allows the show to be filmed at the convention center through Sept. 1, 2010, Mr. Parente said.

Commissioners said they weren't keen on booting out the show because of the publicity it brings the city.

In addition, the legislation points out that the show generates jobs and pumps money into the local economy.

Network executives have said they estimate that upwards of \$50 million has been spent in Miami in conjunction with the show.

However, the \$20,000 a month the lease generates is to be funneled toward Coconut Grove waterfront redevelopment, according to the resolution.

The resolution also states that the city commission remains "firmly committed to ultimately razing the Coconut Grove Ex-



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position Center and creating parkland once the building is no longer used for film or television production."

Meanwhile, the city's film office is making adjustments after the last round of budget cuts for fiscal year 2010, which eliminated the entire budget of about \$245,000 for the Mayor's Office of Film and Cultural Affairs.

Now, former director Robert Parente and a part-time staffer are

operating under the city manager's office as the city's Office of Film and Cultural Affairs.

Mr. Parente said that while he plans to "meet with the new administration [Mayor Tomas Regalado's office] to get an idea of their vision," cultural affairs has already taken a back seat to film.

"It's not that one is more important than the other," Mr. Parente said. "Art galleries and events don't have to apply for

permits. Filming is an everyday thing."

He also said the city wouldn't know whether the *Burn Notice* lease would be renewed after 2010 until the middle of next year but that future ratings would probably influence the decision.

The show has become the best-performing series in the history of USA Network, with its most recent finale generating 9.1 million viewers, according to the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Mr. Parente said that lease extensions probably would be worked out well in advance of the end of the current lease in September.

"Given the fact that we've gone through some very serious financial issues of late, I would say that the way things work is you don't wait until August," he said. "Right now, the first thing that has to happen is that they have to express an interest in coming back."