

Film crew transforms State House for 'House of Cards'

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Summer starts this week, but Randall Fisher has pulled out his overcoat, scarf and gloves.

The Annapolis attorney will wear a dark suit, perhaps a winter hat, and hope for air conditioning when he arrives at the State House on Monday for his film debut.

Some Annapolis residents, including Fisher, will appear as extras in a winter scene to be filmed Monday and Tuesday for the Netflix series “House of Cards,” a saga of Washington double-dealing that stars Kevin Spacey.

Crews worked Friday to transform the Maryland House of Delegates chamber into the U.S. Senate chamber, hanging dark curtains and 10-foot panels of blue and gold, and putting up fake marble.

Filming is forbidden in the actual U.S. Senate, according to the show’s art director, Halina Gebarowicz. Using a substitute locale like the State House is “just enough to tell the story,” she said. “You get caught up in the dialogue and all this becomes peripheral.”

Fisher was picked as an extra during a casting call last month in West Annapolis. His only instructions: Dress like it’s winter.

The Rev. Henry Green of Heritage Baptist Church in Annapolis also received a callback.

“It’s good for Annapolis, with all the crew and everybody coming in to shed light on our beautiful city,” Green said.

About 100 crew members, 60 extras and six principal cast members will participate in the filming, according to a permit filed with the city.

The production office did not return messages Friday. So it remains unclear if Spacey will be one of those principals.

Spacey portrays a ranking congressman embroiled in political warfare. The actor is known to frequent Metropolitan Kitchen & Lounge on West Street.

“He comes in for lunch sometimes,” general manager Tom Hanna said. “Our staff pretty much leaves him alone.”

Film crews will begin work at 5 a.m. and finish by 9 p.m., according to the permit.

All filming is expected to take place in the State House, which will be closed both days to the public.

It’s the first filming there since Chris Rock’s 2003 comedy, “Head of State,” according to Jack Gerbes,

director of The Maryland Film Office.

Gerbes said production companies have shown more interest in filming in Maryland. He credits a program providing tax credits to companies that film locally. That program was expanded by lawmakers this year.

“Better Living through Chemistry,” starring Sam Rockwell and Ray Liotta, was filmed last year at a shop on the corner of Maryland Avenue and State Circle.

That filming lasted several weeks and the cast and crew bought from 170 city businesses and 45 others throughout the county, Gerbes said.

During the “House of Cards” filming, traffic will be restricted on North Street near State Circle. City police officers will direct traffic and parking for film trucks.

The city will be reimbursed for all expenses, an estimated \$4,487 for parking and police overtime, according to city Special Projects Coordinator Michelle LeFurge.

Among those hired as extras was Annapolis insurance agent Joanne DeLoache. She promised to act professional, despite a crush on Spacey.

“I wouldn’t ask for an autograph. I’m not a groupie,” she said, laughing. “Though, it would be so cool to have a picture with him on my Facebook page.”