

Austin Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission  
February 13, 2008 Regular Meeting  
<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/telcommission>

**Minutes**

**This is a summary of the activities at this meeting. To view the full meeting on DVD please visit the Austin History Center, 810 Guadalupe Street, Austin, TX, Phone 974-7480**

**All items are for discussion and possible action:**

1. Call to order.

Commission Chair Chip Rosenthal called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. Commissioners in attendance were Chip Rosenthal, Wendell Ramsey, Jim Howerton, Kedron Touvell, Pilar Sanchez, Chad Williams and Lemuel Williams. Commissioners John Green and Arthur Sampson had an excused absence. Staff in attendance was Rondella Hawkins, Sheena Harden and Jane Reina.

2. Adoption of agenda.

**Motion to adopt the agenda was made by Commissioner Chad Williams; seconded by Commissioner Lemuel Williams. Vote 7-0. (Commissioners John Green and Arthur Sampson had excused absence.)**

3. General citizen communications. (3 minutes to speak)

Eustacio Martinez a public access producer stated he was accused of breaking a VTR at the public access studios by getting one of his video tapes caught in it. Public Access Community Television (PACT) is stating Mr. Martinez owes \$375.00 for the repair of the machine but in fact the VTR broke his tape. Currently Mr. Martinez is indefinitely suspended from being a producer at PACT due to this incident. He attempted to use the grievance process at PACT but was treated with an attitude that was authoritarian and dictatorial. He stated the administration violated the grievance policy.

Nick Papatonis aired an audio tape of Ms. Linda Litowsky, Executive Director of PACT banning him from the public access studios. He feels this Commission should investigate this because PACT is braking their own policies and procedures and violating federal law of his civil rights and free speech at the public access center.

Ruth Epstein stated she was present when Mr. Papatonis called Ms. Litowsky incompetent and therefore was banned by Ms. Litowsky from PACT. Ms. Epstein stated that the word incompetent is an opinion and it is hardly an obscenity for which Mr. Papatonis could be banned. Ms. Epstein requested the Commission to help restore Mr. Papatonis' rights to be a producer.

Lorraine DeNardis, a volunteer at PACT stated she does not think that Mr. Papatonis should be banned from the public access studios for calling Ms. Litowsky incompetent.

Gary Johnson, a host and public access producer, stated he wants the Commission to do something about Mr. Papatonis being expelled from PACT.

Sue Ann Campbell, a public access producer, stated that the new policies and procedures at PACT are putting road blocks up for producers.

4. Approval of minutes from the January 9, 2008 Commission regular meeting

**Motion to approve minutes from the January 9, 2008 regular meeting of this Commission was made by Commissioner Pilar Sanchez; seconded by Commissioner Jim Howerton. Vote 5-0-2. (Commissions Chad Williams and Chip Rosenthal abstained. Commissioners John Green and Arthur Sampson had excused absence.)**

5. Presentation from the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce on grant received for workforce development training. (wp5)

Andy Martinez, Executive Director of the Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (GAHCC) stated their mission is to promote, develop and improve conditions of the Hispanic community in Austin; to provide technology and other training to the community and small business, and to address the "Digital Divide". The GAHCC received a grant from the Governor's Office called Wagner-Pizer that is administered through the Texas Workforce Commission. This grant will help the chamber support job seekers and employed workers with 7,300 workforce training hours within a year and help 100 clients. They have computer labs that teach intro to technology, operation systems like Window Vista and Windows XP, Software to increase skills and productivity like Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, E-mail and accessing the Internet. There is no charge for these classes. For more information: [www.gahcc.org](http://www.gahcc.org) or contact Mr. Martinez at 512-476-7502

6. Discussion and possible action on 2008 GTOPs Review Board grant recommendations. (wp2)

**Motion to recommend approval of the 2008 Grant for Technology Opportunities Program (GTOPs) Review Board grant recommendations as: 4-H Capital Project (\$20,000); Austin Groups for the Elderly (\$9,000); Breakthrough (\$10,800); Computers for Learning (\$9,500); Easter Seals Central Texas (\$12,800); El Buen Samaritano Episcopal Mission (\$13,900); Housing Authority of the City of Austin (\$20,000); Knowbility (\$20,000); Skillpoint Alliance (\$14,000); Veteran Tutors (\$20,000) was made by Commissioner Wendell Ramsey; seconded by Commissioner Lemuel Williams. Vote 6-0-0. Vote for was noted as: Commissioners Lemuel Williams, Chip Rosenthal, Wendell Ramsey, Kedron Touvell, Jim Howerton and Chad Williams. Commissioner Pilar Sanchez recused herself from the vote. Commissioners John Green and Arthur Sampson had excused absence.**

Commissioner Chad Williams thanked the 2008 Review Board for their volunteer hour put towards the review of these grants.

Commissioner Touvell stated there needs to be a GTOPs day at City Council.

7. Telecommunications and Regulatory Affairs Office Report. (Rondella Hawkins)

Rondella Hawkins, Manager of the City of Austin, Office of Telecommunications & Regulatory Affairs reported that the TARA office will be scheduling a press conference to announce the GTOPs awardees.

Council approved the agreement of the initial contract term with Austin Free-Net for 44 month with two twelve month extension options for a total of 56 months. The initial term will end September 30, 2010. The 3.5% contract increase was approved so their annual contract amount \$53,816.

Time Warner Cable (TWC) will handle the purchase of a \$200,000 equipment package for the public access studios. There will be some cabling done at the studios through the City's cabling contractor and this will be reimbursed by TWC. A software upgrade for the studios is also in the process that will also be reimbursed by TWC.

Commissioner Rosenthal requested a list of equipment being order by TWC for the studios.

The effective competition resolution that this Commission passed back in December will accompany a letter from the Mayor that will be sent to the FCC and our Congressional representatives. As soon as TARA gets an executed copy of the letter they will forward it to the Commission.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court ruled that the Cable Association can litigate SB5 in Federal Court. The cable companies want to terminate their franchises and apply for a state franchise.

8. Grant for Technology Opportunities Program (GTOPs) report. (Sheena Harden) (wp2)

Sheena Harden, Program Coordinator, City of Austin, Telecommunications & Regulatory Affairs, stated all the present grants are on track.

The TARA office just received the approval from the City's Law Department for the 2008 GTOPs contract. Staff sends this to the Law Department for review every year to make sure we are meeting all the appropriate statues.

9. Discussion and possible action on standardization of Austin Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission Bylaws.

**Motion to table the item "Discussion and possible action on standardization of Austin Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission Bylaws" was made by Commissioner Chad Williams; seconded by Commissioner Wendell Ramsey. Vote 7-0-0. Commissioners John Green and Arthur Sampson had excused absence.**

The Commission is waiting on some clarifying questions from the City Clerk's Office on the new Boards and Commission Ordinance so this item was tabled.

10. City Website Re-design Task Force update. (Rosenthal)(wp5)

Commissioner Rosenthal stated that the goal of this task force is to offer recommendations to the City to ensure that its new web site is accessible, usable, and functional for all members of the community.

The task force plans to achieve this goal by documenting a list of recommendations and presenting them to the City's CIO. He anticipates this document will be ready at the March commission meeting. Action will be required at that time to ensure the Commission's input can be accommodated in the web site design process. He has received an invitation from the CIO to meet and present the Commission's recommendations.

The task force met and began an initial list of recommendations. He requested that the Commission please forward him any input, and we'll get this finalized over the next few weeks.

The City currently is conducting a series of town hall meetings on the project. Mr. Rosenthal attended the February 12th meeting at the Ruiz Library. There are upcoming meetings on February 21 and 25. He urged all interested commissioners and citizens to attend. More information at [www.austingo.org](http://www.austingo.org).

11. Technology Ascertainment Study Task Force and Possible Co-sponsoring Partners report. (Howerton) (wp3)

**Motion to accept the resolution requesting funding from Council for a Technology Ascertainment Study was made by Commissioner Chad Williams; seconded by Commissioner Lemuel Williams. Vote 7-0-0. (Commissioners John Green and Arthur Sampson had excused absence.) The resolution reads as follows:**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Austin is committed to promoting and maintaining a leadership role in emerging technologies and telecommunications for its residents, businesses and visitors; and

**WHEREAS**, it is a goal of the City of Austin to promote technology availability and access to its residents, businesses and visitors; and

**WHEREAS**, it is a goal of the City of Austin to eliminate the digital divide that exists within the Austin community; and

**WHEREAS**, it is important that the City of Austin understand fully the community's level of technical literacy and education; and

**WHEREAS**, it is important that the City of Austin understand fully the changes in emerging technology and telecommunications and how those changes affect residents, businesses and visitors; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Austin has not formally studied the needs, desires and availability of communications technology in the Austin community since 1996; and

**WHEREAS**, the technological landscape has dramatically changed locally and globally over the last twelve years;

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE AUSTIN COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION:**

To recommend to Austin City Council to approve the funds necessary to conduct and support a technology ascertainment study to be administered through the City's Office of Telecommunications and Regulatory Affairs (TARA) to better understand community technological needs and desires.

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Commissioner Chad Williams stated that a good start for Council to get behind this effort is to present it to the Emerging Tech Council Sub-Committee.

12. Community Forum Task Force update.(wp4)

Commissioner Kedron Touvell stated this committee met on January 22, 2008 to discuss preparations for a series of four different community forums to be held throughout the year 2008. The subject of each of these forums will be the incoming switch over to digital TV broadcast over the airwaves that will occur early next year. The first forum will be Sunday, March 30, 2008 at the Conley-Guerrero Senior Activity Center from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. This task force will be working with private sponsorships and Council regarding off setting the fees being charged for the use of this facility.

Commissioner Kedron Touvell, Arthur Sampson, John Green, Wendell Ramsey are the members of this task force.

13. Update reports on networking relationships with other boards/commissions and groups, citywide and Austin Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission information items.

Commissioner Rosenthal reported to the Emerging Tech Council Sub-Committee on:

- GTOPs
- SXSW resolution
- Time Warner Cable rate increase, effective competition resolution
- Austin Free-Net contract renewal
- Overview of Commission's workplan and task forces

He also reported there will be a free community media summit on March 1<sup>st</sup> here in Austin. For more information you can go to: [www.texascommuntymedia.org](http://www.texascommuntymedia.org).

14. Future agenda items for the Austin Community Technology & Telecommunications Commission next meeting scheduled for March 12, 2008.

**Proposed agenda items for the March 12, 2008 meeting:**

- Discussion and possible action on standardization of Austin Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission Bylaws.
- Election of Commission Officers.
- Public Access Producers Council Update and public hearing.
- Provide clarification on PACT grievance process in TARA report.
- Community Forum Task Force update.(wp4)

- City Website Re-design Task Force update. (Rosenthal)(wp5)

The Commission thanks Commission Pilar Sanchez for time on the Austin Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission. She is resigning.

15. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

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