

POSTMARKS

serve him well in his stated goal of raising the college's profile and polishing an image tarnished after several years of snafu and scandal. At a time when ACC's greatest challenge is finding the resources to serve a growing and increasingly majority-minority student body, we were convinced that Ahart's particular skills and experience will better enable him to woo Austin's neighbors into the ACC taxing district and to recruit the business community to fill a larger role in the funding puzzle. We hope McGuffee gives it yet another go – but this year in Place 8 our endorsement goes to Ahart.

Place 9: Allen Kaplan

With 12 years of service already under his belt, incumbent Allen Kaplan gives us little reason to doubt his experience or commitment to another six years of unpaid work shaping ACC policy. We also like the fact that he's been an architect of ACC's living-wage policy. Challenger Ana Mejia-Deitche has strengths of her own: A lawyer who has worked in a host of nonprofit and advocacy positions, Ana has hands-on experience helping the kind of people ACC serves. She is a former grant-writer for ACC and currently directs a Skillpoint Alliance program that helps nontraditional students into health careers. Mejia-Deitche has racked up a slew of endorsements from Austin progressive groups, while Kaplan has the support of the unions, and each is fully engaged with the ACC community, to the degree that we wish there were a seat available for both. Were Kaplan not the incumbent the choice would have been harder, but we were ultimately swayed by his experience and the stability he will bring to the board.

Dear SOSAnista Board

Dear SOSAnista board,

Your *Chron*/PR letter reminds me of poison ivy, so pretty to see and so impossible to live with ["Postmarks," April 14]. Truthfully, your clique views the COA as a weapon of mass development.

"You have a secret – Chapter 245 committee that makes every single call about what development is grandfathered and what development isn't. ... You look at your own calendars, tons of meetings where you're doing city business. ... We ask for your calendars, we look in there, the overriding, prevailing characteristic is there's nothing there" – statement of SOSA executive director Bill Bunch, March 9.

Office calendars are not meeting notes, so like President W., SOSA's looking for something that doesn't exist. SOSA believes nothing can overcome the SOS ordinance, but 245 was designed as bulletproof anti-SOS state law. State law supersedes local law, and Texas isn't pro-environment, so SOSA dredges COA office calendars for conspiratorial "insight" and proposes Big Brother "open" government.

How will Austin negotiate when all its thoughts are public and none of its adversaries'? What successful negotiation was ever made when everything was subject to constant cyberspace sniping at every stage? Who would negotiate under the conditions the amendments propose? The COA negotiated the Intel/CSC/Silicon Lab structures off the watershed area but could lose that ability

should your candyass "clean water" amendment be adopted. A state court could legally rationalize such a result, which is why there's an office complex adjacent to Barton Springs when there shouldn't be. SOSA's positions don't advance; their city candidates don't win. So a *gangrenous* coup is staged by IR proxy, and everyone must fear 20,000 signatures. Didn't Griffith have about 20,000 signatures but less than 11,000 votes? Your "victory" is anything but assured.

Sincerely,
Ricky Bird

The Nuances of Privacy

Dear Editor,

As a privacy advocate, I would like to correct a basic mistake made in the discussion about Prop 1. At the special meeting to redraft council's previous (and illegal) ballot language, city attorneys boldly stated that "corporations have privacy rights" when trying to continue to justify labeling the OGO "privacy invasive" after the judge made clear that all state and federal privacy protection law will still apply. They were referring to the waiver requirements in the OGO to open up tax-giveaway discussions.

The *Chronicle* repeated this idea in its summary of the amendment at 9) ["An Honest Ballot," News, April 21]. "9) Any person or company 'seeking to engage' in economic development negotiations with the city must waive all rights to privacy concerning those negotiations."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR must be signed with full name and include daytime phone number, full address, or e-mail address. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. We reserve the right to edit all submissions. Letters may not be edited, added to, or changed by sender once we receive them.

This letter is not the place for a long legal memo on the issue of corporate "personhood," or on the long list of laws guaranteeing your privacy. Suffice to say, corporations aren't people, and any right these legal fictions may have to privacy is far from clear. But I don't have to go into the details of "corporate privacy" to refute the above mistake, because the economic development section of the Open Government Amendment isn't about individual privacy but about the information a company should share with the community when it asks for tax breaks – information about the type of business and type of jobs a corporation wants to bring, its history of environmental compliance and good corporate citizenship, its history staying in a jurisdiction after the tax breaks run out, and other items of fundamental interest to the public.

Companies can now claim confidentiality for virtually anything about their business, including expected traffic impact and the results of environmental studies. The legal secrecy around tax abatement negotiations is used to hide a great deal of important information from the community and can only be overcome by a mandatory waiver. When Proposition 1 passes, companies will still get tax breaks, but they must accept our open process as the starting condition for negotiations.

The city doesn't need to know – and wouldn't ask for – the formula for Coca-Cola in order to entice a bottler to move to Austin. Companies shouldn't be given money by the city with one hand and allowed to hide information crucial to the community with the other.

Jordan S. Hatcher
Board member
EFF-Austin

[News Editor Michael King responds: The charter amendment provision to which Jordan Hatcher of EFF-Austin refers is as follows: "The City must

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