



Office of Public Communications
City of College Station
College Station, Texas 77482
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Texas Associated Press Broadcasters
Contest Judges
2014-15 Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas Award

Feb. 26, 2015

Dear Contest Judges:

It is my sincere pleasure to encourage your consideration of WTAW-AM for the prestigious 2014-15 Texas AP Broadcasters/Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas Award.

As communications director for the City of College Station, my staff and I routinely work with the news staff in an effort to provide them reliable information and sources. That work might fall within typical business hours, but quite often extends late into the night and even during the weekend. My point is, there is no off-switch for the WTAW newsroom, which is rare in terms of local government coverage in a market this size.

Fifteen years ago, I vacated the WTAW news director position, so I have enormous appreciation for the work produced by that newsroom. It's no secret within City Hall that news director Bill Oliver asks the sharpest questions and spots important issues on meeting agendas that other newsrooms and reporters don't. I have shared this simple message numerous times with my elected officials and city management: If you're hoping WTAW won't notice a potentially controversial item, that's a pretty lousy strategy — the newsroom will notice. And WTAW listeners are better for it.

In terms of accessing information from the City of College Station, my office works very hard to answer the station's questions and provide the documents requested. Those requests are fair and we work hard to comply quickly. Occasionally, a request rises to the level of an official open records request, and I believe the city has a good track record of complying with those requests in a timely manner.

Separate, but related, to the newsroom's efforts are the regularly scheduled live interviews of College Station officials on the WTAW morning show. Host Scott Delucia coordinates relevant questions and issues with Bill Oliver, then conducts extremely in-depth interviews with our mayor and city council members, our top city staff, and even our lower-level staffers. These

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long-form interviews — usually chopped up later for a day’s worth of newscasts — frequently drive the news agenda of the market’s other media outlets.

Let me lay aside the compliments and briefly explain how WTAW makes my job more difficult. Bill faithfully covers all city council meetings, but artfully spreads out his reporting on them over a two-week period — until the next round of meetings take place. So, an item that should have made the news cycle a day or two following the meetings actually appear in the WTAW newscasts 10 days later. The local TV stations that did not cover the meetings hear those reports and are convinced something new happened. That’s when I get a fresh round of calls, emails and texts requesting information and interviews. Thanks a lot, WTAW.

Bottom line, WTAW still does news the right way. They strike a fair balance between community service and probing beyond our talking points. As a former newsman and a current communications director, I can’t complain about that. In fact, I’m thankful.

Thank you for considering WTAW-AM for this important award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay Socol". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Jay" is written with a large, sweeping initial "J" that extends downwards. The last name "Socol" is written in a similar cursive style, with the "S" being particularly large and looping.

Jay G. Socol
Communications Director