

ALABAMA EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION COMMISSION

MINUTES

July 29, 2025

10:00 a.m.

*Alabama Public Television, Birmingham Conference Room
2112 11th Avenue S., Suite 400, Birmingham, Alabama 35205*

PRIOR NOTICE

Sufficient Prior Notice was given as required by the Alabama Open Meetings Act, the FCC, the CPB, and the policies of the AETC, as reported by APT Executive Director, Wayne Reid.

ROLL CALL (VERBAL)

A verbal roll call was conducted by Mr. J. Holland, Secretary.

AETC Commissioners Present:

Mr. Ferris Stephens, Chairman

Mrs. Bebe Williams, Vice Chairwoman

Mr. J. Holland, Secretary

Mr. Les Barnett

Mr. Pete Conroy

The Alabama Educational Television Commission consists of seven members. Mrs. Tijuanna Adetunji and Mr. William A. Green, Jr. were absent, and a quorum was present, and official business could be conducted.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m. by Chairman Ferris Stephens.

REVIEW OF MINUTES

Minutes of the April 22, 2025 meeting had been provided in writing prior to the meeting for review by the Commissioners. No corrections or modifications were requested.

Motion by: Commissioner Les Barnett to approve the April 22, 2025 minutes

Second by: Commissioner J. Holland

Discussion: No discussion

Motion Passed Unanimously

SETTING OF OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Ferris Stephens noted that the meeting would be in recess after the item on the agenda scheduling the next meeting and re-convene after the Alabama Educational Television Foundation Authority meeting. This was to take up a matter that would probably require an executive session. The anticipated executive session of the AETC, in accordance with the Alabama Open Meetings Act, would be to discuss an offer made to exchange its property, namely its WLRH station in Huntsville.

OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Ferris Stephens noted that there is no old business to be discussed.

NEW BUSINESS

EXECUTIVE REVIEW

Chairman Stephens asked Executive Director Wayne Reid to provide his report.

Update of APT Activities – Wayne Reid

Executive Director Wayne Reid provided an update on Alabama Public Television (APT) activities. He introduced Kevin Cornell ("Mr. C"), host of the award-winning STEM education program *DIY Science Time*. Mr. Cornell described the show's impact on kids, including its reach of over 2.4 million live streams across three seasons and nationwide distribution through 22 PBS stations. Plans for a fourth season are underway, featuring new STEM career-focused episodes. Mr. Cornell also led a hands-on science demonstration with commissioners and staff.

Director Reid further reported progress on studio upgrades in Montgomery, which will allow greater production flexibility and potential revenue from studio rentals. He also previewed a new APT multi-platform educational series, *Yellowhammer Nature Hunt*, designed to highlight Alabama's natural sciences and incorporate teacher advisory input. Commissioner Pete Conroy recommended incorporating existing statewide initiatives such as BioBlitz.

Engineering and Infrastructure Update

Director Reid reported on major engineering projects. Work at the Madison Avenue studio is progressing with new lighting and set design underway. At Mt. Cheaha,

demolition and construction of new facilities are pending coordination with state parks' water plant upgrades. The WLRH transmitter installations are complete, and work on the Winfield Tower is progressing with a goal to be operational by the end of the year. The Next Generation Warning System grant, supported by CPB, remains uncertain pending release of frozen funds.

Programming and Outreach

APT's statewide reach now extends to nearly 600,000 households monthly, maintaining a significant advantage over competitors. Governor Kay Ivey has recorded promotional announcements for APT's Thursday night high school football broadcasts beginning August 21. Additional promotional videos and vignettes are in development.

APT is also producing 75 vignettes for the America 250 commemoration, including profiles of all Declaration of Independence signers. A six-night Ken Burns' PBS series, *Revolution*, will premiere on November 16, with community screenings scheduled across Alabama.

CPB Funding and PBS Membership

Executive Director Wayne Reid and CFO Melissa Austin reported on the anticipated \$2.8 million reduction in CPB funding, compounded by the loss of \$400,000 in COVID Relief funds. WLRH in Huntsville will discontinue NPR programming and begin work towards locally produced shows, including weather, traffic, and music in order to better serve the community. APT leadership is evaluating options as to what role PBS membership might have in light of ongoing federal funding cuts and resulting budget uncertainties. This includes taking into consideration state funding implications relating to PBS' NewsHour as well as its other news shows.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner J. Holland and Commissioner Les Barnett raised questions about alternatives to PBS programming and potential partnerships with universities, local producers, and historic sites for additional programming. Commissioner Barnett emphasized the need to develop more Alabama-centered programming and outlined several potential approaches to diversify content and reduce reliance on PBS. He also suggested reaching out directly to the producers of PBS programs APT might want to keep and purchasing them straight from the source. For example, he mentioned NOVA, which is produced by GBH, and recommended contacting them directly for access.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

The Commissioners discussed the scheduling date for the next meeting. After a brief discussion, there was a motion to set the next AETC meeting for Tuesday, October 21, 2025, in the Birmingham office.

Motion by: Commissioner Les Barnett to approve October 21, 2025, as the date of the next meeting

Seconded by: Commissioner Bebe Williams

Motion Passed Unanimously

Chairman Stephens noted that except for the matter about WLRH, and the related executive session, there at that time was no further business on the agenda and that the meeting would be in recess until after the Alabama Educational Television Foundation Authority meeting. The meeting went into recess at 11:25 a.m. to allow time for the lunch meal and for the subsequent AETFFA meeting to be convened afterward.

Return from Recess

Chairman Ferris Stephens called the meeting back to order at 12:35 p.m.

Rescheduling of the next ATEC Meeting

Since the Commission realized during the AETFFA meeting that Commissioner Conroy was not able to attend the next quarterly meeting that was initially scheduled for Tuesday, October 21, 2025, Vice Chairwoman Bebe Williams made a motion that the date of the next ATEC Commission Meeting be moved to Tuesday, October 28, 2025.

Motion By: Commissioner Bebe Williams to approve October 28, 2025 as the revised date of the next meeting.

Seconded by: Commissioner Pete Conroy

Discussion: No discussion

Motion Passed Unanimously

Executive Session

Chairman Stephens noted for the record that there continued to exist a quorum of the Alabama Educational Television Commission.

Motion by: Commissioner Pete Conroy that the Commission enter into executive session for the purpose of discussing the above described offer for WLRH. The purpose of the executive session was, in accordance with the Alabama Open Meetings Act Code of Alabama 1975 Section 36-25A-7 (a) (6), “[t]o discuss the consideration the governmental body is willing to offer or accept when considering the purchase, sale, exchange, lease, or market value of real property.”)

Seconded by: Commissioner J. Holland

Discussion: No discussion

In a recorded vote, the motion passed

Commissioner Ferris Stephens voted Yay

Commissioner Bebe Williams voted Yay

Commissioner Les Barnett voted Yay

Commissioner J. Holland voted Yay

Commissioner Pete Conroy voted Yay

Chairman Stephens stated on the record he expected to reconvene after the executive session in approximately an hour; there was no one present at the time he stated this other than commissioners and staff members who would be present at the executive session.

The Executive Session began at 12:40 p.m.

Executive Session ended at 1:07 p.m.

Quarterly Meeting reconvened

The ATEC Commission Meeting was reconvened from executive session at 1:07 p.m. by Chairman Ferris Stephens.

Motion by: Commissioner Les Barnett to “Thank the University of Alabama for their offer on WLRH but No Thank You”; the AETC will not part with the WLRH radio station in Huntsville.

Seconded by: Commissioner J. Holland

Discussion: Commissioner Pete Conroy expressed his concern, saying “I think this is a mistake by the Commission and I am worried about the long-term consequences.”

No other discussion took place.

Motion Passed 4-1

Commissioner Ferris Stephens voted Yay

Commissioner Bebe Williams voted Yay

Commissioner Les Barnett voted Yay
Commissioner J. Holland voted Yay
Commissioner Pete Conroy voted Nay
Commissioners William Green and Tijuanna Adetunji were not present for the vote.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by: Commissioner J. Holland
Second by: Commissioner Pete Conroy
Motion Passed Unanimously
The meeting was adjourned at 1:12 p.m.

Chairman Stephens had planned to and did remain until 1:45 p.m. in case a member of the public should arrive to ask what took place when the Commission reconvened after the executive session; however, no one appeared.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lorraine Fancher
Recording Secretary

APPROVED – DATE:

Mr. Ferris Stephens
Chairman

Mr. J. Holland
Secretary