

Communication from Public

Name:

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Comments for Public Posting: **Subject / Item 3 Written Public Comment — ITA and the Squadron Transition** Dear Council President and Honorable Councilmembers, Thank you for placing Item 3 on Wednesday's agenda and for giving the public an opportunity to address the Information Technology Agency's handling of the LA CityView Channel 35 contractor transition. I am a long-term Channel 35 contractor. For years, contractors have provided the production, editing, studio, field, broadcast, and public-information services that allow the City to televise Council and commission meetings, communicate public information, and operate Channel 35. The transition to Squadron has created serious uncertainty for the approximately 41 contractors who have performed this essential work. I respectfully ask the Council to listen closely to the contractors who speak during public comment and to ask ITA the questions the contractors are raising. Those questions are crucial to getting to the truth about how this contract was developed, why the existing contractor structure is being ended, how workers were notified, why only some workers have received proposed agreements, and how the City will protect both the workforce and continuity of public programming. Actions have already been taken. Contractors have requested an investigation by the California Labor Commissioner concerning potential worker-classification issues; notified City officials of these concerns; submitted a complaint to the City Controller concerning potential fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement; sought legal advice; and begun organizing collectively to protect their rights and preserve stable Channel 35 operations. I myself have filed an individual complaint with the California Department of industrial relations for unpaid overtime due to misclassification. A file number will be forthcoming. The proposed arrangement raises concerns because City direction appears to remain central to assignments, scheduling, locations, equipment, editorial revisions, and removal from projects, while workers may lose protections and take on more financial risk. The City's own contracts describe these workers' services as essential to Channel 35's continuing operation. Please ask the hard questions, require complete answers from ITA, and ensure that the Council has a full and transparent record before any further irreversible action is taken. Attached are some crucial questions that ITA needs to answer.

Thank you again for your attention to the contractors, the City's legal obligations, and the public service that Channel 35 provides to Los Angeles.

1. Council Is Our Ally

Good morning. We are LA CityView Channel 35 contractors, production professionals, taxpayers, and small business owners.

We are here as allies of City Council.

We believe Council was not given the full picture of what the contract with Squadron would mean for the people actually performing this work.

For years, we have helped document Council events, City programs, community stories, press conferences, and public information for the residents of Los Angeles.

We are not here because we want Channel 35 to fail. We are here because we want it protected.

Council approved this contract based on information provided by ITA. Now that the actual consequences are becoming clear, we are asking you to look again.

Listen to the contractors who actually perform this work.

Look at the City contract.

Look at Squadron's subcontract.

Look at what has happened during this transition.

We believe you were not given the full picture.

We are asking you to help us fix it.

2. We Want Channel 35 to Succeed

We enjoyed working for Channel 35.

That needs to be understood.

Many of us have spent years building relationships with City departments, Council offices, communities, and one another.

We know how this operation works because we have been doing the work.

Channel 35 is not simply another production company. It is a public service. Its purpose is to communicate **what the City is doing for the people who live here.**

That work matters.

We are fighting because we believe decisions being made now threaten the workforce, institutional knowledge, production quality, and continuity of that service.

We did not ask for this fight.

We would much rather be talking about the work we are proud of producing.

But when a transition threatens the viability of the businesses performing that work, remaining silent is not an option.

We are asking Council to protect Channel 35 **by protecting the people** who have helped make it function.

3. The Squadron Subcontract

Squadron's subcontract is predatory toward small production businesses.

Under our current workflow, field crews receive an eight-hour minimum.

Under the new structure, that minimum becomes four hours.

The subcontract also places transportation, parking, computers, software, tools, equipment, and other operating expenses on contractors unless specifically provided otherwise in writing.

Think about what that means for a freelancer.

A **four-hour** City assignment can prevent someone from accepting an eight or ten hour production job somewhere else.

Yet that contractor may also be expected to absorb additional costs simply to perform the City assignment.

These are not large corporations absorbing overhead.

These are individual professionals and small businesses.

The City says it supports local production and small business.

Then the contracts used to perform City production should reflect those values.

This one does not.

We are asking Council to reject this model.

4. Required Work Must Be Paid

Production does not begin when somebody presses record.

A field crew may have to report to City Hall, gather equipment, pack it, load it, transport it to a location, perform the assignment, return to City Hall, unload, and return the equipment.

Under our existing workflow, those responsibilities are part of the production day.

Under the new structure, billing for location work begins at the designated location and designated call time and ends at the time determined at that location.

That does not clearly protect payment for required equipment pickup, loading, transportation, unloading, and return when those duties fall outside that billing window.

Those duties are not favors.

They are not personal errands.

They are required production work performed for the City.

If the City requires work to be performed, that work should be clearly compensated.

There should be no ambiguity about that.

Council should demand that this be corrected.

5. Financial and Legal Risk

The four-hour minimum is only part of the problem.

Squadron's subcontract contains pay when paid terms. If the City delays or disputes payment under certain circumstances, payment to the contractor can also be delayed.

The subcontract contains broad indemnification obligations.

It requires mediation and binding arbitration.

It restricts remedies available to contractors.

It substantially limits Squadron's liability.

And its hourly rate schedule is marked "[To be completed.]" while other rates appear elsewhere on the same page.

Council should ask a basic question:

Who benefits financially from this arrangement, how much is Squadron retaining from the City's labor rates, and how much additional risk is being transferred to the individual contractor?

We are the people doing the production work.

We should not carry the greatest financial and legal risk while having the least power in the relationship.

Council should examine the numbers and decide whether this is a responsible use of public money.

6. Minority Businesses and Los Angeles Production

Many of us are minority owned small businesses.

We are also taxpayers.

This is Los Angeles.

Production is part of this City's identity and economy. This is also a union town.

City leaders regularly speak about bringing production back to Los Angeles, protecting workers, supporting local businesses, and creating opportunities for communities that have historically had fewer of them.

Those principles have to apply when the City itself purchases production services.

We cannot promote local production publicly while creating City contracts that make production work less sustainable privately.

We cannot champion small businesses while transferring additional costs and financial risk onto those businesses.

And we should not use taxpayer dollars to create that contradiction.

We are not asking for special treatment.

We are asking for a structure that recognizes what professional production actually costs and what is required to do the work properly.

If Los Angeles wants to champion production, it should start with the production professionals working for Los Angeles.

7. Who Designed This?

City departments exist to provide public service.

Administrative convenience should not come at the expense of workers, small businesses, production quality, or continuity of service.

So we want Council to ask some basic questions.

Who negotiated the operational terms of the ITA and Squadron contract?

Who decided that a four-hour minimum made sense for field production?

Who evaluated transportation, equipment logistics, parking, crew availability, and the realities of freelance production?

What professional production experience informed those decisions?

What analysis showed that this structure would improve Channel 35?

And who is accountable if it does not?

Replacing 41 individual contractors with one vendor may make contract administration look simpler on paper.

But if the same production work still has to be performed by individual professionals, administrative convenience alone does not make the underlying production realities disappear.

Council should determine how these decisions were made, who made them, and whether they actually serve the public interest.

8. Investigate Management

We are asking for a thorough, independent investigation of ITA and LA CityView Channel 35 management.

Specifically, we are asking that the conduct and decisions be examined.

Contractors have documented concerns involving intimidation, abuse of authority, mismanagement, transparency, and the handling of this transition.

We are not asking Council to assume anyone is guilty.

We are asking Council to investigate.

Examine the emails.

Examine the meetings.

Examine the contractor communications.

Examine how decisions were made.

Examine what contractors were told and when they were told it.

And examine whether contractor concerns were treated appropriately.

These questions should not simply be reviewed internally by the same management structure being questioned.

Independent oversight is necessary.

If the investigation finds that our concerns are substantiated, then appropriate accountability should follow.

That is what responsible public administration requires.

9. Channel 35 Needs Oversight

Look at where we are.

Forty-one contractors are facing the end of the existing structure while major questions about staffing, operations, compensation, and the future of Channel 35 remain.

That alone should tell Council that stronger oversight is necessary.

We are asking for clear Council oversight of Channel 35 contracting, finances, staffing, production operations, programming decisions, and management.

Channel 35 belongs to the public.

Its purpose is not simply to generate social media engagement.

Its purpose is to communicate City government, public services, Council activity, community events, and important information to Los Angeles residents.

Contractors and former staff have information about what has changed inside this operation.

We are available to testify.

We are available to provide documentation.

We are available to explain how production actually works.

Do not evaluate Channel 35 only through reports prepared by the people managing it.

Talk to the people who have been doing the work.

Oversight should begin with listening to us.

10. We Had to Seek Outside Oversight

We have raised our concerns with the Los Angeles City Controller, the Mayor's Office, and the California Labor Commissioner.

We did that because the internal process did not resolve our concerns.

Contractors submitted direct written questions about this transition.

Instead of direct written answers to those questions, management relied on an evolving FAQ and group meetings.

An FAQ is not a substitute for answering specific questions about people's businesses and livelihoods.

When contractors seek clarity about who controls their future assignments, how they will be selected, what they will be paid, what expenses they must absorb, and what happens after August 31, those questions deserve clear answers.

This is public administration funded by taxpayers.

We should not have to chase basic accountability through multiple agencies simply to understand how a City funded transition affecting our businesses is being implemented.

Council can change that.

Require transparency.

Require written answers.

Require accountability.

And require management to answer directly for the decisions that brought us here.

11. Squadron Should Lose This Contract

Squadron should lose this contract.

We ask Council to read the subcontract being presented to the professionals expected to perform this City work.

Four-hour minimum.

Contractor paid expenses.

Pay when paid.

Broad indemnification.

Mandatory arbitration.

Restricted remedies.

Limited liability for Squadron.

And an hourly rate schedule marked “[To be completed.]”

Contractors were not invited to negotiate these terms individually.

This was the framework presented for continuing under the new system.

A company receiving taxpayer funded business should be held to a higher standard when dealing with the small businesses actually performing that work.

We are asking the City to terminate its contract with Squadron and pursue a structure that protects the existing workforce and maintains Channel 35 as a functioning public service.

We also believe these contracting practices should be examined before Squadron receives additional taxpayer funded work in Los Angeles.

Public contracts should **strengthen** local businesses.

They should not *exploit their vulnerability!*

12. The Ask

Council already has our documentation.

What we need now is action.

None of us wanted this situation.

We have watched members of this Council champion small businesses, immigrant communities, working families, creative professionals, and people simply trying to build stable lives in Los Angeles.

We are asking you to champion us too.

We are production professionals.

We are small businesses.

We are taxpayers.

And we have spent years helping this City communicate with the public.

We are asking you to do four things.

Terminate the City's contract with Squadron.

Protect the existing workforce while a workable alternative is developed.

Require independent, thorough investigation of ITA and LA CityView management regarding the concerns we have documented.

Establish meaningful Council oversight of Channel 35 so this does not happen again.

We are proud of the services we provide for the City, its departments, and our elected officials.

We want Channel 35 to succeed.

We believe this City Council can help make that happen.

Please, stand with us.