



news

Headlines

- › Results from three town halls gauging citizen reaction to proposed **budget cuts** are now available. New or increased fees for the Trail of Lights, South by Southwest security services, parking fines, and development permitting were all widely accepted, along with a controversial proposal to close older pools. Soundly rejected: eliminating supervised summer playground programs, with only 21% acceptance. The data's online at www.cityofaustin.org/budget; see "Summary of Voting Results at Town Hall Budget Cut Meetings," p.15.
- › Austin Police officers will vote on whether they should forgo their **2010 pay raises** and instead lock in a 3% raise in 2012. The plan is slated to go to **Austin Police Association** members later this month; the city's **EMS union** will be voting on a deferral of raises as well. The proposals, which also need final council approval, would save the city roughly \$5 million next year – about the same cost of a police cadet academy the police union wants to salvage.
- › The **City Council** continues its summer hiatus, not to return to the dais until July 23, when City Manager Marc Ott presents his proposed 2010 budget.
- › On Monday, electricity use in Austin hit its third all-time peak-use record in a week – and it was only June. **Austin Energy** recommends reducing your kilowatt consumption between 3pm and 7pm to avoid any further energy overdosing – it looks like a long, hot summer ahead. 
- › The **Supreme Court's** 5-4 ruling Monday finding that white firefighters in New Haven, Conn., were unfairly passed over for promotion may have local reverberations; fire union President **Stephen Truesdell** says firefighters not tapped for assistant chief in recent appointments may complain to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, according to *In Fact Daily*.
- › The Texas Legislature is back for the **special session**, but while the Sunset extension bill to extend the lives of five agencies – including the Texas Department of Transportation – is moving fast, lawmakers are worried about new funds for road construction and extending exemptions to the toll road moratorium; see "Special Session Could End in Fireworks," p.20.
- › Sen. **John Cornyn** held a lunch Wednesday with the Mexican American Legislative Caucus and was quizzed by Council Member **Mike Martinez** on whether he would oppose the Supreme Court nomination of Judge **Sonia Sotomayor** (Cornyn said he was undecided).
- › A **raid on a gay bar** in Fort Worth last weekend – on the anniversary, no less, of the Stonewall riots that kicked off the gay rights movement 40 years ago – has attracted national attention and calls for a full investigation; see "Gay Place," p.55.
- › As in life, so in death: **Michael Jackson** died at the age of 50, both eclipsing the celebrity deaths of **Farrah Fawcett** and infomercial-pitchman **Billy Mays** and unleashing a final torrent of tabloid speculation that plagued the entertainer his entire life. 

'point austin'

WILL BE BACK IN TWO WEEKS.

'city hall hustle'

WILL RETURN NEXT WEEK.



JANA BIRCHUM

Michael Scott, center, with wife Jeannine, takes in his newfound freedom after he and co-defendant Robert Springsteen were released from jail June 24. The two are awaiting a retrial in the 1991 murder of four girls at a North Austin yogurt shop. Defense attorneys Tony Diaz (l) and Carlos Garcia talk to reporters.

Expect the Unexpected

Summertime and the living is ... frenzied

BY AMY SMITH

News Editor Michael King and his weekly "Point Austin" column are on a well-deserved vacation this week and next. Before cutting himself loose, Michael spent some time trying to square his holiday schedule with a half-dozen other schedules. He consulted with far-flung family members and considered the staff vacation calendar, the list of upcoming stories, and the City Council's summer break to try to gauge a reasonably calm period of time to slip out of town without ambivalence. It's hard to tear Michael away from work. He took one story with him to edit, a poignant, must-read piece about Roxanne Paltauf, a young woman on the brink of adulthood, who vanished in 2006. "All That Remains," by Jordan Smith, appears in this issue on p.22.

Of course, it's difficult to plan a summer getaway at a time when news stories are hemorrhaging all over town. Austin is coming into its own as a big city. We're well past the days when summers passed in long, syrupy drawls of sweet insignificance. And if last week's news cycle is any indication, it's going to be a sizzling, spluttering season of revelations here and ... just about everywhere else, it seems. To recap, there were a couple of things that hit us unexpectedly on press day here at *Chronicle* headquarters: On Wednesday, June 24, the day Michael

boarded a plane headed out of Texas, the two men convicted in a gruesome 1991 murder case were released from custody after prosecutors conceded they wouldn't be ready to retry the case by July 6, particularly in light of DNA evidence that bolsters the defense. Fortunately for us, District Judge Mike Lynch handed down his decision early enough in the day for Jordan to put a new top on her story, which by then was already in production (see "Yogurt Shop Murder Defendants Set Free," June 26). Usually judges wait until after we go to press to make their rulings (that's our view, anyway), so the fact that we were able to cash in on this piece of late-breaking news was pretty special. Photographer Jana Birchum stationed herself outside the county jail complex Downtown to capture Michael Scott and Robert Springsteen as they walked out of jail and into the blinding shock of triple-digit daylight and a din of TV cameras (see photo, above).

Even with the last-minute turn of events that day, officemate Nora Ankrum (watch for her feature story next week!) and I were still betting we'd be getting out of the office at a "reasonable" hour, for a Wednesday. No sooner had we said that than Wells Dunbar spotted something curious in the layout of

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QUOTE of the WEEK



JOHN ANDERSON

"In my 27 years in this business, and in all the places I've been, I've never seen as hard a demographic line [as I-35]."

– City Manager Marc Ott, speaking on the issue of race. See "Ott Tackles Austin's Racial Divide," p.19.