

**From:** Hiott, Debbie <[dhiott@kut.org](mailto:dhiott@kut.org)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, April 29, 2026 9:33 PM

**To:** Cochran-McCall, Amanda J <[Amanda.Cochran@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:Amanda.Cochran@austin.utexas.edu)>

**Cc:** Vangelisti, Anita L <[vangelisti@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:vangelisti@austin.utexas.edu)>; Davis, Jim <[Jim.Davis@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:Jim.Davis@austin.utexas.edu)>; Inboden, William <[inboden@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:inboden@austin.utexas.edu)>

**Subject:** KUT Festival

Dear Ms. Cochran-McCall,

I am responding to your letter sent this evening at 6:33 p.m. While I appreciate finally receiving something outlining specific concerns in your letter — for the first time since I heard the tower was raising questions about our festival last Wednesday -- there are some points I'd like to make, respectfully, about your summary.

While it is true that KUT and its production team had many meetings with the university over the past several months, KUT was never informed at any point until Friday's cancellation that there were any university concerns that threatened the viability of the festival. Even after seeing your letter today, the first written communication detailing such concerns, I remain confused that the university chose to cancel a major portion of the festival without significant discussion or warning in the last week before the event.

KUT and our experienced production company responded to recommendations, held frequent update meetings, received UTPD signoff on security plans April 10 and April 22 in the walkthrough, and remained up until the last moment attentive to any issues raised.

With respect to your individual points:

**Police Staffing.** Please share with me the communication or meeting date where the KUT team refused recommendation for additional staffing. When UTPD asked us to add additional officers or private security, our production company agreed. In fact, we had a proposal for additional security staffing from Stadium People that we planned to implement. And that UTPD staffing request was based on estimates for a much higher crowd — 7,000 — at a time when RSVPs for the event were less than 2,000.

**Youth protection measures.** When the KUT planning team was asked about the child reunification plan for the music area on April 20, they incorporated the same plan routinely deployed at Rock the Park, the outdoor music event we hold six times a year at Mueller. The protocol was added to the [Information Handbook](#) to be distributed to staff working at that station on the lawn. Details were to be included in the Main Stage run of show, but this step wasn't completed because the outdoor portion was canceled before the run of show was written. We asked to utilize the signage from Rock the Park, which would have been placed on the main stage. We would also have deployed this at the Texas Science & Natural History Museum, a much more contained and fenced space, as we understood the process to be necessary in both spaces.

**Emergency medical response.** Jay Swann told me Friday (after we received notification of the cancellation of the outdoor portion of the event) that he had heard concern from his team about licensing of our medical service provider. This company had been hired and a part of our plan since February, but Swann said the team didn't think they were actually licensed. On Monday April 27, Derek Trabon sent me and Panacea an email requesting info on the company, South West Emergency Action Team because he had "searched with the Department of State Health Services and (was) unable to locate anything under their name or DBA." Thirty minutes later Trabon responded that he had found the company in the licensing database, but asked if we would forward the licensing information from the company. We did. Trabon said that was "very helpful." So apparently there never had been a problem, unless there is something else that has not been shared.

**Crowd control staffing.** The team was asked about additional crowd control staffing for the first time on April 20. UT recommended 15 crowd management staffers and our production company added them to the Stadium Security order. We were not aware we needed to do something beyond what was requested.

**Inclement weather plan.** The production company developed this [emergency plan](#) and it was shared on screen at one of the stakeholder meetings. Derek Trabon indicated that the inclement weather plan was insufficient, basing his assessment on a much larger turnout (7,000) than we were expecting (~2,000). The KUT team requested additional university locations that would be available for sheltering in place, but by April 20 neither Trabon nor any other UT officials had shared the locations to use for the plan. The emergency plan was included in the staffing handbook but we had to alert volunteers at the April 20 orientation that it was subject to revision and we would send a note on April 30th with any updates. The outdoor portion of the festival was canceled before there was any opportunity to make any additional changes.

**UAV Overwatch.** The team was asked in the April 20 stakeholder meeting if they would be doing UAV drone flights, and told if they were they would need to have a permit. The KUT team responded

that we had no planned drone flights, and no one in that meeting, which included UTPD, raised a concern about that. The production company we hired does the Texas Tribune Festival, which brings in dozens of elected officials every year. Drone surveillance flights are not a component of that much larger event.

There is no question that KUT prioritizes safety and security. We hold successful community events throughout the year with crowds of up to 2,000 attendees, and we would not compromise the safety of our community. It is unfortunate that, for reasons that are unclear to me, the university was not willing to work with us on an event that would have benefited us all. From my Oct. 23 meeting in Dean Vangelisti's office with Kelly Soucy of Student Affairs and Jody Hughes of your office to my Nov. 5 email to President Davis outlining the festival and inviting him to participate, my intention had always been that this would be something both KUT and UT could do together for the community. We wanted to work with the university. So I'm disappointed too.

Sincerely,

Debbie

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