



February 9, 2001

Mr. Lance Vanzant  
Hayes, Coffey & Berry, P.C.  
P. O. Box 50149  
Denton, Texas 76206

OR2001-0496

Dear Mr. Vanzant:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 143800.

The Town of Trophy Club (the "town"), which you represent, received an open records request from Robert Harry. You state that responsive information has been released with the exception of the submitted document. You claim that the submitted document is excepted under section 552.107 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Pursuant to section 552.301(e)(1), a governmental body is required to submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving an open records request (1) written comments stating the reasons why the stated exceptions apply that would allow the information to be withheld, (2) a copy of the written request for information, (3) a signed statement or sufficient evidence showing the date the governmental body received the written request, and (4) a copy of the specific information requested or representative samples, labeled to indicate which exceptions apply to which parts of the documents. Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(A)-(D). Although you have submitted a copy of the document that you wish to withhold, you have blacked out the information that you wish to withhold. In order for this office to make a determination, you must submit an unredacted copy of the requested information so that we may evaluate whether the exception applies. Further, you have not submitted a copy of the request for information. Because you have submitted a redacted copy and failed to submit the request for information, you have failed to request a decision as required by section 552.301(e).

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with section 552.301(e) results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released unless the governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.302; *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.--Austin 1990,

no writ) (governmental body must make compelling demonstration to overcome presumption of openness pursuant to statutory predecessor to Gov't Code § 552.302); Open Records Decision No. 319 (1982). You argue that the redacted portions of the submitted information are excepted under section 552.107 of the Government Code. Section 552.107 is a discretionary exception and does not provide a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness. *See* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Therefore, you must release the requested information.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

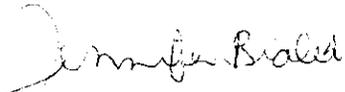
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the General Services Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Bialek  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JHB/er

Ref: ID# 144098

Encl. Submitted document

cc: Robert Harry  
5401 Sun Meadow  
Flower Mound, Texas 75022  
(w/o enclosures)