



May 1, 2002

Ms. Janice Mullenix
Associate General Counsel
Texas Department of Transportation
125 East 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701-2483

OR2002-2281

Dear Ms. Mullenix:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 162164.

The Texas Department of Transportation (the "department") received a request for information relating to Job Vacancy Notice 1328 and a named department employee. You state that the department will provide most of the responsive information to the requestor. You claim, however, that the portions of the submitted application as well as specific interview questions and their answers are excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.117, 552.122, and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, you have marked information that you claim must be withheld from disclosure pursuant to sections 552.117(1) and 552.130 of the Government Code. Section 552.117 excepts from disclosure the home addresses and telephone numbers, social security numbers, and family member information of current or former officials or employees of a governmental body who request that this information be kept confidential under section 552.024 of the Government Code. You state, and provide documentation showing, that the department employee referenced in the request elected to keep this information confidential. Section 552.130 excepts Texas motor vehicle license and registration information from public disclosure. Based on your representations, we agree that the information you have marked in Exhibit C must be withheld pursuant to sections 552.117(1) and 552.130.¹

¹ You claim that the social security number you have marked may be excepted from public disclosure under section 552.101. As we determine this social security number is confidential under section 552.117(1), we do not address your section 552.101 claim.

Section 552.122(b) excepts from disclosure test items developed by a licensing agency or governmental body. In Open Records Decision No. 626 (1994), this office determined that the term "test item" in section 552.122 includes any standard means by which an individual's or group's knowledge or ability in a particular area is evaluated, but does not encompass evaluations of an employee's overall job performance or suitability. Whether information falls within the section 552.122 exception must be determined on a case-by-case basis. Open Records Decision No. 626 at 6 (1994). Traditionally, this office has applied section 552.122 where release of "test items" might compromise the effectiveness of future examinations. *Id.* at 4-5; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 118 (1976). Additionally, when answers to test questions might reveal the questions themselves, the answers may be withheld under section 552.122(b). *See* Open Records Decision No. 626 at 8 (1994).

You contend that the interview questions, preferred answers, and candidate's answers in Exhibit B are excepted from disclosure under section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. After reviewing the submitted information, we agree that interview questions 2, 3, 4 and 7 constitute "test items" as contemplated by section 552.122(b). Accordingly, the department may withhold questions 2, 3, 4 and 7, their preferred answers, and candidate's answers pursuant to section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. Interview question 10, however, along with its preferred answer and candidate's answer, does not satisfy the section 552.122 criteria and must be released.

In summary, the department must withhold the employee personal information marked in Exhibit C. The department may withhold interview questions 2, 3, 4 and 7, with their preferred answers and candidate's answers. The remainder of the submitted information must be released to the requestor.

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 Texas Building and Procurement 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. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. 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,



David R. Saldivar
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

DRS/sdk

Ref: ID# 162164

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. Joey Oestrick
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(w/o enclosures)