



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 15, 2005

Ms. YuShan Chang
Assistant City Attorney
City of Houston Legal Department
P.O. Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

OR2005-05265

Dear Ms. Chang:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 226039.

The Houston Police Department (the "department") received a request for six categories of information related to the use of force by and against department officers. The department then received a second request for a copy of the department's Use of Force Policy. You state that you have provided the first requestor with information responsive to item six of her request. You further state that you have no responsive information regarding items one through four of the first request. We note that the Act does not require a governmental body to disclose information that did not exist at the time the request was received. *Econ. Opportunities Dev. Corp. v. Bustamante*, 562 S.W.2d 266 (Tex.Civ.App.—San Antonio 1978, writ dismissed); Open Records Decision No. 452 at 3 (1986). You claim that the requested Use of Force Policy is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

We note that the information at issue is identical to information that was the subject of a previous ruling from this office. In Open Records Letter No. 2004-10595 (2004), the department received a request for any information regarding the department's use of force policy. We concluded that the department may withhold portions of the information submitted in that instance under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Therefore,

assuming that the four criteria for a “previous determination” established by this office in Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001) have been met, we conclude that the department must continue to rely on our decision in Open Records Letter No. 2004-10595 with respect to the requested information.¹ See Gov’t Code § 552.301(f); Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001).

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, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, 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

¹ The four criteria for this type of “previous determination” are 1) the records or information at issue are precisely the same records or information that were previously submitted to this office pursuant to section 552.301(e)(1)(D) of the Government Code; 2) the governmental body which received the request for the records or information is the same governmental body that previously requested and received a ruling from the attorney general; 3) the attorney general’s prior ruling concluded that the precise records or information are or are not excepted from disclosure under the Act; and 4) the law, facts, and circumstances on which the prior attorney general ruling was based have not changed since the issuance of the ruling. See Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001).

body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Tex. Dep't of Pub. 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,



Lauren E. Kleine
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LEK/jev

Ref: ID# 226039

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Anette Deler
197-01 89th Road
Hollis, New York 11423
(w/o enclosures)

Ms. Roma Khanna
Houston Chronicle
801 Texas Avenue
Houston, Texas 77002
(w/o enclosures)