



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

July 12, 2005

Mr. Joe Hairston
Walsh, Anderson, Brown, Schulze & Aldridge, P.C.
P. O. Box 2156
Austin, Texas 78768-2156

OR2005-06136

Dear Mr. Hairston:

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# 227927.

The Marion Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received four requests for a copy of correspondence from the district's board of trustees to the district's superintendent that was discussed at an April 20, 2005 board of trustees meeting. You claim that the submitted correspondence is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes. Section 21.355 of the Education Code provides, "A document evaluating the performance of a teacher or administrator is confidential." This office interpreted this section to apply to any document that evaluates, as that term is commonly understood, the performance of a teacher or administrator. Open Records Decision No. 643 (1996). In that opinion, this office also concluded that a teacher is someone who is required to hold and does hold a certificate or permit required under chapter 21 of the Education Code and is teaching at the time of his or her evaluation. *Id.* Similarly, an administrator is someone who is required to hold and does hold a certificate required under chapter 21 of the Education Code and is administering at the time of his or her evaluation. *Id.* You indicate the district superintendent was an administrator for

purposes of section 21.355 at the time the submitted correspondence was created. However, upon review, we find that the submitted correspondence is a reprimand for a specific incident and is not the type of record made confidential by section 21.355 of the Education Code.

However, we note the submitted correspondence includes a private e-mail address. Section 552.137 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “an e-mail address of a member of the public that is provided for the purpose of communicating electronically with a governmental body” unless the member of the public consents to its release or the e-mail address is of a type specifically excluded by subsection (c). *See* Gov’t Code § 552.137(a)-(c). We note that section 552.137 does not apply to a government employee’s work e-mail address. The e-mail address we have marked is not of a type specifically excluded by section 552.137(c). Therefore, the district must withhold this e-mail address in accordance with section 552.137 unless the district receives consent for its release. The remaining submitted information must be released.

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

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,



Ramsey A. Abarca
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

RAA/jev

Ref: ID# 227927

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Darren Dunn
KWED/Seguin Daily News
609 East Court Street
Seguin, Texas 78155
(w/o enclosures)

Ms. Janet Grafe
Seguin Gazette-Enterprise
P.O. Box 1200
Seguin, Texas 78156
(w/o enclosures)

Ms. Maryellen Hiti
P.O. Box 625
Marion, Texas 78124
(w/o enclosures)

Ms. Kathy Dittrich
322 Verbena
Kyle, Texas 78640
(w/o enclosures)