ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

September 26, 2006

Mr. John P. Danner
Assistant City Attorney
City of San Antonio
P.O. Box 839966
San Antonio, Texas 78283

OR2006-11165

Dear Mr. Danner:

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# 260161.

The City of San Antonio (the "city") received a request for information relating to or referencing any environmental services employees injured from 2004 until the present. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.103, 552.107, 552.111, 552.117, and 552.137 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim.

The Act imposes a duty on a governmental body seeking an open records decision to submit the following information within fifteen business days of receiving the written request: (1) general 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). The city did not, however, submit arguments to this office explaining the applicability of its claimed exceptions, nor did it submit a copy or representative samples of the information at issue or a copy of the request for information. Thus, the city failed to comply with the requirements of section 552.301(e).

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to submit to this office the information required in section 552.301(e) results in the legal

presumption that the information is public and must be released. Information that is presumed public must be released unless a governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information to overcome this presumption. *See 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). Sections 552.103, 552.107, and 552.111 are discretionary exceptions to disclosure that protect the governmental body's interests and may be waived by the governmental body. Thus, these exceptions do not demonstrate a compelling reason to withhold information from the public. *See Dallas Area Rapid Transit v. Dallas Morning News*, 4 S.W.3d 469 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1999, no pet.) (governmental body may waive section 552.103); Open Records Decision Nos. 630 at 4-5 (1994) (governmental body may waive statutory predecessor to section 552.107), 473 (1987) (governmental body may waive section 552.111); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally). Because you have not submitted any responsive information or written comments explaining why your claimed exceptions would allow the information to be withheld, we determine that the city has waived its claims under sections 552.103, 552.107, and 552.111 of the Government Code. We note that the city also raises sections 552.101, 552.117, and 552.137 of the Government Code. The applicability of these exceptions can provide compelling reasons for non-disclosure under section 552.302. In this instance, however, you have not submitted any of the responsive information, and we thus have no basis to conclude that these exceptions are applicable. We therefore conclude that the city must release the requested information to the requestor. If you believe the information is confidential and may not lawfully be released, you must challenge this ruling in court as outlined below.

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); *Texas 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 Office of the Attorney General 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,

L. Joseph James

L. Joseph James
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LJJ/dh

Ref: ID# 260161

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Mandi Johnston
Director of Special Projects
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(w/o enclosures)