



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

March 5, 2007

Mr. William M. Buechler
Buechler and Associates
3660 Stoneridge Road, Suite D-101
Austin, Texas 78746

OR2007-02476

Dear Mr. Buechler:

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 #275844.

The Crowley Independent School District ("the district"), which you represent, received a request for the audiotape and transcript of an executive session of the district's board of trustees on January 25, 2007. You state that you have provided the requestor with a portion of the requested information. You claim that the remaining information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim.

Section 552.101 excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This exception encompasses information that is made confidential by statute. You raise section 552.101 in conjunction with section 551.104 of the Open Meetings Act, chapter 551 of the Government Code. Section 551.104 provides in part that "[t]he certified agenda or tape of a closed meeting is available for public inspection and copying only under a court order issued under Subsection (b)(3)." *Id.* § 551.104(c). Thus, such information cannot be released to a member of the public in response to an open records request. Section 551.146 of the Open Meetings Act makes it a criminal offense to disclose a certified agenda or tape recording of a lawfully closed meeting to a member of the public. *See id.* § 551.146(a)-(b); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 495 at 4 (1988) (attorney general lacks authority to

review certified agendas or tapes of executive sessions to determine whether governmental body may withhold such information under statutory predecessor to Gov't Code § 552.101).

You inform us that the information at issue is an audio recording made in a closed session of the board of trustees. Based on your representations, we agree that the district must withhold that information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 551.104 of the Government Code.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Reg Hargrove". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Reg Hargrove
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

RJH/eb

Ref: ID# 275844

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Darin K. Boone
1324 Daventry Drive
DeSoto, Texas 75115
(w/o enclosures)