



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

March 7, 2007

Mr. Robert E. Reyna
Assistant City Attorney
City of San Antonio
Post Office Box 839966
San Antonio, Texas 78283-3966

OR2007-02588

Dear Mr. Reyna:

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 #275955.

The San Antonio Police Department (the "department") received a request for a specified offense report. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note that the department was untimely in its request for an attorney general decision. Pursuant to section 552.301(b) of the Government Code, a governmental body must ask for the attorney general's decision and state the exceptions that apply within ten business days after receiving the request. Gov't Code § 552.301(a), (b). Under section 552.301(e), a governmental body is required to submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving an open records 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). In this instance, the department received the request for information on December 29, 2006. However, you did not request a ruling or submit the requested information for our review until February 9, 2007. Consequently, we find that the department failed to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released unless the governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *See id.* at § 552.302; *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 section 552.302); Open Records Decision No. 319 (1982). A compelling reason for non-disclosure exists where some other source of law makes the information confidential or where third party interests are at stake. Open Records Decision No. 150 at 2 (1977). Section 552.101 of the Government Code is a mandatory exception that constitutes a compelling reason sufficient to overcome the presumption of openness caused by the failure to comply with section 552.301. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.007, .352. Therefore, we will address your argument under this exception.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision," and encompasses information made confidential by other statutes. Gov't Code § 552.101. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides as follows:

The following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may be disclosed only for purposes consistent with this code and applicable federal or state law or under rules adopted by an investigating agency:

- (1) a report of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect made under this chapter and the identity of the person making the report; and
- (2) except as otherwise provided in this section, the files, reports, records, communications, and working papers used or developed in an investigation under this chapter or in providing services as a result of an investigation.

Fam. Code § 261.201(a). We have reviewed the submitted information and have determined that it relates to an investigation of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect and is therefore subject to section 261.201. We conclude that the submitted information is confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code and therefore must be withheld in its entirety pursuant to section 552.101.

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/jb

Ref: ID# 275955

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Lisa M. Rodriguez
2006 Canteen Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78227
(w/o enclosures)