



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

GREG ABBOTT

July 29, 2009

Ms. Michelle L. Villareal
Assistant City Attorney
City of Waco - Legal Services
P.O. Box 2570
Waco, Texas 76702-2570

OR2009-10476

Dear Ms. Villareal:

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# 350458 (City of Waco Reference #: LGL-09-478).

The City of Waco (the "city") received a request for information.¹ You claim that the submitted information is exempted from disclosure under sections 552.101 through 552.142 of the Government Code. We have considered your claims.

Section 552.301 of the Government Code prescribes the procedures that a governmental body must follow in asking this office to decide whether requested information is exempted from public disclosure. Pursuant to section 552.301 of the Government Code, the governmental body is required to submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving the 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). You inform us that the city received this request on May 7, 2009. However, as of the date of this letter, you have not submitted to this office any of the information required by section 552.301(e). Consequently, we find that the city 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 the requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the

¹As you have not submitted the request for information to our office nor described the request for information in your request for a ruling to this office, we are unable to describe the request.

requested information is public and must be released unless the governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.302; *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ); Open Records Decision No. 319 (1982). A compelling reason exists when third-party interests are at stake or when information is confidential by law. Open Records Decision No. 150 (1977). By failing to comply with the procedural requirements of the Act, the city waived its discretionary claims against disclosure. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 663 at 5 (1999) (untimely request for a decision resulted in waiver of discretionary exceptions). Further, although the city also raises mandatory exceptions to disclosure that may not be waived, you have not submitted any information for our review. Therefore, we have no basis for finding any information confidential. Thus, we have no choice but to order the city to release the requested information. If you believe the information is confidential and may not lawfully be released, you must challenge this ruling in court pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information 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 information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

Sincerely,



Christina Alvarado
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CA/rl

Ref: ID# 350458

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)