



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

September 11, 2009

Mr. David M. Swope
Assistant County Attorney
Harris County Attorney's Office
1019 Congress, 15th Floor
Houston, Texas 77002

OR2009-12880

Dear Mr. Swope:

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# 355014 (C. A. File No. 09GEN1065).

The Office of Harris County Financial Services (the "county") received a request for all proposal information submitted by a named entity regarding four specified requests for proposals.¹ You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.110 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim.

We must address the county's obligations under the Act. Pursuant to section 552.301(e) 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. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e). As of the date of this letter, you have not submitted to this office comments explaining why the stated exceptions apply, a copy of the written request for information, or a copy or representative sample of the requested information at issue. Consequently, we find the county failed to comply with the requirements of section 552.301.

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

¹As you have not submitted a copy of the request, we take our description from your brief.

presumption the requested 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 *City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 279 S.W.3d 806, 811 (Tex. App.—2007, pet. granted); *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *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 of the Government Code); see also Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Generally, a governmental body may demonstrate a compelling reason to withhold information by showing the information is made confidential by another source of law or affects third party interests. See ORD 630. Although you claim the information at issue is excepted under sections 552.101 and 552.110 of the Government Code, which can provide compelling reasons to withhold information, because you have not submitted the requested information for our review, we have no basis for finding any of the information confidential by law. We, therefore, conclude the county must release the requested information to the requestor pursuant to section 552.302. 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, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Leah B. Wingerson
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LBW/dls

Ref: ID# 355014

c: Requestor