



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

March 29, 2011

Ms. Angela L. Hammonds  
Assistant District Attorney  
Wood County  
P.O. Box 689  
Quitman, Texas 75783

OR2011-04276

Dear Ms. Hammonds:

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# 413057.

The Wood County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff") received a request for the complete personnel file of a named officer. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.102, 552.117, and 552.1175 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim.

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 excepted from public disclosure. Pursuant to section 552.301(e), a governmental body that receives a request for information it wishes to withhold under an exception to disclosure 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). The sheriff received the request for information on January 18, 2011. Thus, the sheriff was required to submit the information required by section 552.301(e) by February 8, 2011. As of the date of this letter, the sheriff has not submitted a copy or representative sample of the specific information requested. Consequently, we find the sheriff has 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 comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 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* Gov't Code § 552.302; *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 (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. 630 (1994). Normally, a compelling reason exists when third-party interests are at stake or when information is confidential under other law. Open Records Decision No. 150 (1977).

The sheriff raises sections 552.102, 552.117, and 552.1175 of the Government Code, which are mandatory exceptions to disclosure. However, because you have not submitted a copy or representative sample of the information at issue for our review, we have no basis for finding any of the requested information confidential by law. Therefore, we must order the sheriff to release the information at issue pursuant to section 552.302.<sup>1</sup> If you believe this 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.

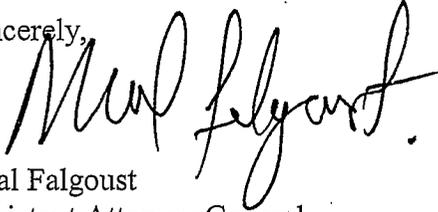
This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at [http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index\\_orl.php](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php), 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

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<sup>1</sup>We note this office has issued Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009), a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold ten categories of information without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision. We also note a governmental body may withhold a peace officer's home address and telephone number, personal cell phone and pager numbers, social security number, and family member information under section 552.117(a)(2) without requesting a decision from this office. *See* Open Records Decision No. 670 (2001); Gov't Code § 552.147(b).

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neal Falgoust". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "N" and a long, sweeping underline.

Neal Falgoust  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

NF/dls

Ref: ID# 413057

No submitted documents

c: Requestor