



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

April 22, 2013

Mr. Stephen L. Mitchell  
Culberson County Attorney  
Culberson County Courthouse  
P. O. Box 276  
Van Horn, Texas 79855

OR2013-06516

Dear Mr. Mitchell:

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# 489214.

The Culberson County Justice of the Peace for Precinct 1 (the "justice of the peace") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. You claim that the requested information is not subject to the Act. We have considered your arguments.

We note the Act is applicable to information "collected, assembled, or maintained under a law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by a governmental body." Gov't Code § 552.002(a)(1). However, the Act's definition of "governmental body" "does not include the judiciary." *Id.* § 552.003(1)(B). Information "collected, assembled, or maintained by or for the judiciary" is not subject to the Act but instead is "governed by rules adopted by the Supreme Court of Texas or by other applicable laws and rules." *Id.* § 552.0035; Tex. R. Jud. Admin. 12 (public access to judicial records). A justice of the peace is a member of the judiciary. Therefore, we conclude the requested information is not subject to the Act and need not be released in response to this request for information.<sup>1</sup>

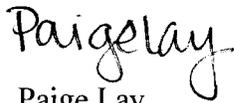
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<sup>1</sup>We note records of the judiciary may be public under other sources of law. *See* Gov't Code § 27.004 (all papers filed in case in justice court are subject to inspection of any interested party at reasonable times); Loc. Gov't Code § 191.006 (records belonging to office of county clerk shall be open to public unless access restricted by law or court order); *see also Star-Telegram, Inc. v. Walker*, 834 S.W.2d 54, 57 (Tex. 1992) (documents filed with courts are generally considered public and must be released); Attorney General Opinions DM-166 (1992) at 2-3 (public has general right to inspect and copy judicial records), H-826 (1976); Open Records Decision No. 25 (1974).

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 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,



Paige Lay  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

PL/bhf

Ref: ID# 489214

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor