



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

May 19, 2015

Mr. Herb Hancock  
Karnes County Attorney  
210 West Calvert Avenue, Suite 110  
Karnes City, Texas 78118

OR2015-09751

Dear Mr. Hancock:

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# 564166.

The Karnes County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for all information related to an incident at a specified address on a specified date. The sheriff's office claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.102, 552.108, 552.1085, 552.117, 552.1175, 552.130, 552.132, 552.1325, 552.147, and 552.152 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exceptions.

We must address the procedural obligations of the sheriff's office under section 552.301 of the Government Code when requesting a decision from this office under the Act. Pursuant to section 552.301(e), a governmental body must submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving an open records request (1) 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). The sheriff's office states it received the request for information on February 26, 2015. However, as of the date of this letter, the sheriff's office has not submitted for our review written comments stating the reasons why the stated exceptions apply, a copy of the written request for information, or a copy or representative sample of the information requested. Consequently, we find the sheriff's office failed to comply with section 552.301 of the Government Code.

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 the requested information is public and must be released unless a compelling reason exists to withhold the information

from disclosure. *See id.* § 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, 381-82 (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); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Generally, a compelling reason to withhold information 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). Because the sheriff's office has failed to comply with the procedural requirements of the Act, it has waived all of its claimed discretionary exceptions to disclosure. *See* Open Records Decision No. 663 at 5 (1999) (untimely request for decision resulted in waiver of discretionary exceptions). Although the sheriff's office also raises mandatory exceptions to disclosure, because the sheriff's office has not submitted the requested information for our review, we have no basis for finding any of the information is excepted from disclosure or confidential by law. Thus, we have no choice but to order the sheriff's office to release the requested information pursuant to section 552.302. If the sheriff's office believes the information is confidential and may not lawfully be released, it 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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl\\_ruling\\_info.shtml](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml), 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Rustam Abedinzadeh  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

RA/dls

Ref: ID# 564166

c: Requestor