



September 7, 2000

Ms. Pamela Smith
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Public Safety
P.O. Box 4087
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

OR2000-3454

Dear Ms. Smith:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 138674.

The Texas Department of Public Safety (the "department") received a request for all documents relating to the Driver's License Division Promotional Examination given on June 6, 2000. You state that you have released copies of all the requests to take the exam, individual interview ratings sheets, and a summary table showing all of the applicants' scores. You claim that the actual examination, answer key, test sheets, and a list of interview questions along with the preferred answers are excepted from disclosure under section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information and the sample examination answer sheet.¹

Section 552.122(b) excepts from disclosure test items developed by a licensing agency or governmental body. In Open Records Decision No. 626 (1994), this office determined that the term "test item" in section 552.122 includes any standard means by which the knowledge or ability of an individual or group in a particular area is evaluated, but does not encompass evaluations of an employee's overall job performance or suitability. Whether information falls within the section 552.122 exception must be determined on a case-by-case basis. Open Records Decision No. 626 at 6 (1994). Traditionally, this office has applied section 552.122

¹In reaching our conclusion here, we assume that the "sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. See Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

where release of “test items” might compromise the effectiveness of future examinations. *Id.* at 4-5; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 118 (1976).

After reviewing the submitted information, we conclude that two of the interview questions evaluate the candidate’s overall suitability for the position rather than his or her knowledge or ability to perform the assigned work. We have marked the two questions which you may not withhold under section 552.122(b) and must release. However, we conclude that the actual examination and the remaining interview questions evaluate the knowledge or ability of an individual or a group in a particular area and may be withheld as “test items” under section 552.122(b). Because the preferred answers tend to reveal the questions, the department may also withhold the preferred answers to the interview questions under section 552.122(b). However, the answer key does not tend to reveal the questions and must be released. In conclusion, you must release to the requestor the marked information but may withhold the remaining information.

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

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov’t Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body’s intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general’s Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to the General Services Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Bialek
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JHB\er

Ref: ID# 138674

Encl: Marked documents

cc: Mr. Johnny E. Anderson
4545 Dacoma Street
Houston, Texas 77092
(w/o enclosures)