Office of the Attorney General · State of Texas
John Cornyn

March 14, 2001

Ms. Dianne Eagleton
Supervisor
Records Division
City of North Richland Hills Police Department
P.O. Box 820609
North Richland Hills, Texas 76182-0609

OR2001-1003

Dear Ms. Eagleton:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 144966.

The North Richland Hills Police Department (the "department") received a written request for all records pertaining to a robbery that occurred on May 20, 1999. You contend that the department is not required to release the requested information pursuant to section 552.028 of the Government Code, which provides:

> (a) A governmental body is not required to accept or comply with a request for information from:
>
> > (1) an individual who is imprisoned or confined in a correctional facility; or
> >
> > (2) an agent of that individual, other than that individual's attorney when the attorney is requesting information that is subject to disclosure under this chapter.
>
> (b) This section does not prohibit a governmental body from disclosing to an individual described by Subsection (a)(1), or that individual's agent, information held by the governmental body pertaining to that individual.

We infer from your request that you contend that the requestor, in requesting the records at issue, is acting as an agent of a criminal defendant, who, you explain, is "now in the penitentiary." Given that inference, we agree that the department is not required to comply with the records request under section 552.028 of the Government Code. Accordingly, the department may withhold the requested records in their entirety. *See Hickman v. Moya*, 976 S.W.2d 360 (Tex. App.--Waco 1998, pet. denied); *Moore v. Henry*, 960 S.W.2d 82 (Tex. App.--Houston [1st Dist.] 1996, no writ); Open Records Decision No. 656 (1997) (construing statutory predecessor).

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).

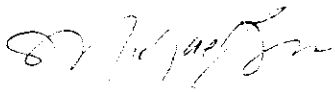
If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

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 Hadassah Schloss at 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,



Michael J. Burns
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MJB/RWP/seg

Ref: ID# 144966

cc: Ms. Grace Munoz
3001 East Avenue K #246
Grand Prairie, Texas 75050