



October 24, 2002

Ms. JoAnn S. Wright  
Walsh, Anderson, Brown, Schulze & Aldridge  
P.O. Box 168046  
Irving, Texas 75016-8046

OR2002-6044

Dear Ms. Wright:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 173470.

The Mansfield Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received a request for a written copy of the district board's decision regarding a Level III complaint hearing and a copy of the tape recording of the board meeting in which the complaint was heard. You state that the district has released the audio tape recording of the open portion of the meeting and you claim that a tape recording of a closed meeting is confidential under the Texas Open Meetings Act, chapter 551 of the Government Code, and thus must be withheld from the public pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

We begin by noting that you have not submitted a written copy of the district board's decision regarding the Level III complaint hearing. Further, you have not indicated that such information does not exist or that you wish to withhold any such information from disclosure. Therefore, to the extent information responsive to this aspect of the request exists, we assume that you have released it to the requestor. If you have not released any such information, you must release it to the requestor at this time. See Gov't Code §§ 552.301(a), .302.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code protects "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Section 551.104(c) of the Government Code provides that "[t]he certified agenda or tape of a closed meeting is available for public inspection and copying *only under a court order issued under Subsection (b)(3).*" (Emphasis added.) Thus, such information cannot be released to a member of the

public in response to an open records request. *See* Open Records Decision No. 495 (1988). You state that the complaint was heard during the closed session of the meeting and that the request is for a tape recording of a closed meeting. The district, therefore, must withhold the tape recording at issue from public disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 551.104(c) of the Government Code.

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 Texas Building and Procurement 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. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heather Ross".

Heather Pendleton Ross  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

HPR/sdk

Ref: ID# 173470

c: Mr. John Deming  
Ms. Joyce Deming  
809 Xavier Drive  
Mansfield, Texas 76063