



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

August 11, 2003

Ms. Mia Settle-Vinson  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Houston  
P.O. Box 1562  
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

OR2003-5577

Dear Ms. Settle-Vinson:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 185656.

The City of Houston (the "city") received a written request for the following information:

a list of names of the top 20 debtors to the Library Department, in addition to what they owe and how many items remain outstanding. I also would like a breakdown of replacement cost, processing fees and overdue fines.

You have submitted to this office information responsive to the request, portions of which you contend are exempted from required disclosure pursuant to section 552.124 of the Government Code. We have also received correspondence from a representative of the requestor as to why the requested information should be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.304.

Section 552.124 of the Government Code makes confidential, with certain exceptions which are not applicable here, "[a] record of a library or library system, supported in whole or in part by public funds, that identifies or serves to identify a person who requested, obtained, or used a library material or service." Section 552.124 requires withholding only the names, addresses, and other information specifically identifying library patrons. *See, e.g.,* Open Records Decision No. 649 at 3 (1996) (confidentiality provisions strictly construed). We have reviewed the information at issue and have marked the portions that the city must withhold pursuant to section 552.124. The remaining submitted information must be released to the requestor.

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 Dep't of Pub. 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 "Christen Sorrell".

Christen Sorrell  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CHS/RWP/sdk

Ref: ID# 185656

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. Joseph R. Larsen  
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(w/o enclosures)