ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

GREG ABBOTT

March 18, 2004

Ms. Carol Longoria
The University of Texas System
201 West Seventh Street
Austin, Texas 78701-2902

OR2004-2054

Dear Ms. Longoria:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 197733.

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (the "university") received a request for all memoranda to or from several named individuals for a specified time period. You state that some information has been released to the requestor. You claim that the remaining requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.107, 552.111, 552.116, and 552.136 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information. We have also considered comments submitted by the requestor's attorney. *See* Gov't Code § 552.304 (providing that interested party may submit comments stating why information should or should not be released).

Because your claim under section 552.116 is broadest, we address it first. In Senate Bill 1581, which became effective on June 18, 2003, the Seventy-eighth Legislature amended section 552.116 of the Government Code. As amended, section 552.116 provides as follows:

> (a) An audit working paper of an audit of the state auditor or the auditor of a state agency or institution of higher education as defined by Section 61.003, Education Code, a county, or a municipality is excepted from [public disclosure]. If information in an audit working paper is also maintained in another record, that other record is not excepted from [public disclosure] by this section.

(b) In this section:

(1) "Audit" means an audit authorized or required by a statute of this state or the United States and includes an investigation.

(2) "Audit working paper" includes all information, documentary or otherwise, prepared or maintained in conducting an audit or preparing an audit report, including:

(A) intra-agency and interagency communications; and

(B) drafts of the audit report or portions of those drafts.

Gov't Code § 552.116. You state that the submitted information relates to audits "undertaken by an internal auditor of UT-Houston and/or The University of Texas System pursuant to *Texas Government Code*, Chapter 2102, 'Internal Auditing.'" *See* Gov't Code §§ 321.0134, 321.0136, 2102.007. You also state that "[f]inal audit reports that do not contain information that may be otherwise excepted from disclosure have already been released to the requestor." Based on your representations, we conclude that the submitted information constitutes audit working papers under section 552.116 of the Government Code, and it may be withheld on that basis. Because our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments.

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

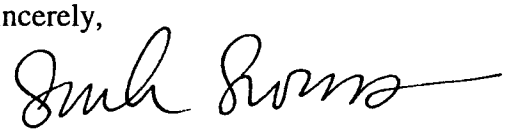
provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to 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,



Sarah I. Swanson
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

SIS/lmt

Ref: ID# 197733

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Todd Ackerman
The Houston Chronicle
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(w/o enclosures)