ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

December 21, 2005

Mr. R. John Cullar
Mills, Cullar & McLeod, L.L.P.
City Attorney, City of Lorena
801 Washington Tower, Suite 217
Waco, Texas 76701

OR2005-11503

Dear Mr. Cullar:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 241824.

The Lorena Municipal Court (the "court"), which you represent, received a request for "information on individuals who have been granted authorization to complete a driving safety course[.]" You claim that the requested information is not subject to disclosure under the Act. We have considered your arguments and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.[1]

The Act does not apply to records of the judiciary. Gov't Code § 552.003(1)(B). Consequently, these records need not be released under the Act. Attorney General Opinion DM-166 (1992). As records of the judiciary, however, we note that the information may be

[1]We assume that the "representative 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.

public by other sources of law. *See* Attorney General Opinions DM-166 at 2-3 1992) (public has general right to inspect and copy judicial records), H-826 (1976); Open Records Decision No. 25 (1974); *see Star Telegram, Inc. v. Walker*, 834 S.W.2d 54, 57 (Tex. 1992) (documents filed with courts are generally considered public and must be released).

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 ten 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, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, 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 Office of the Attorney General 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 ten calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

Robert B. Rapfogel
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

RBR/krl

Ref: ID# 241824

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Michelle Pumphrey
TicketStop, L.P. CP600
335 Pennbright Drive, Suite 104
Houston, Texas 77090
(w/o enclosures)