



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

January 26, 2006

Mr. John T. Patterson
Assistant City Attorney
City of Waco
Legal Services
P. O. Box 2570
Waco, Texas 76702-2570

OR2006-00882

Dear Mr. Patterson:

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# 241035.

The City of Waco (the "city") received a request for "[a] documented list of current internal affair investigations, complete with names of those being investigated and why." You inform us that the city is providing part of the requested information to the requestor but claim that some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

First, you inform us that some of the submitted information, which you have highlighted in green, is not responsive to this request for information. We do not address the public availability of this non-responsive information, and the city need not release it to the requestor.

Next, section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information made confidential by other statutes. You contend that the information at issue is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code. You state that the city is a civil service city under chapter 143 of the Local Government Code. Section 143.089 contemplates two different types of personnel files, a police officer's civil service file that the civil service director is required to maintain, and an internal file that the police department may maintain for its own use. Local Gov't Code § 143.089(a), (g). In cases in which a police department investigates an officer's misconduct and takes

disciplinary action against the officer, it is required by section 143.089(a)(2) to place all investigatory records relating to the investigation and disciplinary action, including background documents such as complaints, witness statements, and documents of like nature from individuals who were not in a supervisory capacity, in the officer's civil service file maintained under section 143.089(a). *Abbott v. Corpus Christi*, 109 S.W.3d 113, 122 (Tex. App.—Austin 2003, no pet.). All investigatory materials in a case resulting in disciplinary action are “from the employing department” when they are held by or in possession of the department because of its investigation into a police officer's misconduct, and the department must forward them to the civil service commission for placement in the civil service personnel file. *Id.* at 120, 122. Such records are subject to release under the Act. *See* Local Gov't Code § 143.089(f); Open Records Decision No. 562 at 6 (1990). However, information maintained in a police department's internal file pursuant to section 143.089(g) is confidential and must not be released. *City of San Antonio v. Tex. Attorney Gen.*, 851 S.W.2d 946, 949 (Tex. App.—Austin 1993, writ denied).

The information that you seek to withhold is included in a “2005 Internal Affairs Log.” This information lists, among other things, the names of city police officers who are the subjects of pending internal affairs investigations and the nature of the alleged violations. You state that this information is maintained in the police department's personnel file. Further, as this information relates to pending investigations that have not concluded, we understand that none of this information relates to investigations that have resulted in disciplinary action being taken against any of the officers. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude that the city must withhold this information, which you have highlighted in pink, pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code. The remaining responsive information 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# 241035

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Bianca Castro
KWTX-TV
6700 American Plaza
Waco, Texas 76710
(w/o enclosures)