



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

August 13, 2007

Mr. Gary A. Scott  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Conroe  
P.O. Box 3066  
Conroe, Texas 77305

OR2007-10345

Dear Mr. Scott:

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# 286584.

The Conroe Police Department (the "department") received a request for information related to a department officer. You state that some responsive information has been released to the requestor. You claim that some of the requested 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.

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 protected by other statutes, such as section 143.089 of the Local Government Code. We understand that the City of Conroe 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 a city's 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 a police officer's misconduct and takes disciplinary action against an 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 police officer's civil service file maintained under section 143.089(a).<sup>1</sup> *Abbott v. City of 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.* Such records are subject to release under the Act. *See id.* § 143.089(f); Open Records Decision No. 562 at 6 (1990).

However, a document relating to a police officer's alleged misconduct may not be placed in his civil service personnel file if there is insufficient evidence to sustain the charge of misconduct. Local Gov't Code § 143.089(b). Information that reasonably relates to a police officer's employment relationship with the police department and that is 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. San Antonio Express-News*, 47 S.W.3d 556 (Tex. App.—San Antonio 2000, pet. denied); *City of San Antonio v. Tex. Attorney General*, 851 S.W.2d 946, 949 (Tex. App.—Austin 1993, writ denied).

You inform us that the information submitted as Exhibit A is maintained in the department's internal files concerning the officer at issue. Most of this information, however, relates to charges of misconduct that resulted in the suspension of the officer at issue. Therefore, this information is subject to section 143.089(a)(2).<sup>2</sup> Consequently, this information must also be placed in the officer's civil service file. However, we agree that the submitted information in Exhibit A, which is maintained in the department's internal files, is confidential under section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code and must be withheld from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code.

We now turn to the information in Exhibit B, which you indicate is maintained in the officer's civil service file. We note that some of the information in Exhibit B is subject to section 552.117 of the Government Code. Section 552.117(a)(2) excepts from disclosure the home address, home telephone number, social security number, and family member information of a peace officer, regardless of whether the officer made an election under section 552.024 or 552.1175.<sup>3</sup> *See* Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(2); Open Records Decision No. 622 (1994). Based on our review, we find that the department must withhold the

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<sup>1</sup>Chapter 143 prescribes the following types of disciplinary actions: removal, suspension, demotion, and uncompensated duty. *See* Local Gov't Code §§ 143.051-.055. A letter of reprimand does not constitute discipline under chapter 143.

<sup>2</sup>We note that section 143.089(g) requires a police department that receives a request for information maintained in a file under section 143.089(g) to refer the requestor to the civil service director or the director's designee.

<sup>3</sup>“Peace officer” is defined by article 2.12 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

information we have marked in Exhibit B pursuant to section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code.

In summary, the information in Exhibit A is confidential pursuant to section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code and must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code. *The department must withhold the information we have marked in Exhibit B pursuant to section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code.* 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, 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 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Cindy Nettles  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CN/mcf

Ref: ID# 286584

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Howard Roden  
Senior Writer  
The Conroe Courier  
100 Avenue A  
Conroe, Texas 77301  
(w/o enclosures)