



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

January 30, 2008

Ms. Charlotte A. Towe
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Office of the General Counsel
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2008-01384

Dear Ms. Towe:

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# 301351.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received two requests from the same requestor for the interview questions and answers given by all applicants for two specified positions as well as the rationale provided for the selection of applicants.¹ You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.122 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note that you have only submitted information responsive to the request for interview documentation, and you have not submitted the requested rationale provided for the selection of applicants. To the extent the rationale existed when the department received this request, we assume it has been released. If not, you must do so at this time. *See Gov't Code § 552.006, .301, .302; see Open Records Decision No. 664 (2000) (noting that if governmental body concludes that no exceptions apply to requested information, it must release information as soon as possible).*

¹You inform us that the department sought and received clarification of the requests from the requestor. *See Gov't Code § 552.222(b)* (stating that if information requested is unclear to governmental body or if a large amount of information has been requested, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify or narrow request, but may not inquire into purpose for which information will be used).

The submitted information is comprised of two sets of interview questions and answers; one set from the Review and Release Processing Department and one set from the Hearing Section. Section 552.122 of the Government Code exempts from required public disclosure "a test item developed by a . . . governmental body[.]" Gov't Code § 552.122(b). In Open Records Decision No. 626 (1994), this office determined that the term "test item" in section 552.122 includes "any standard means by which an individual's or group's knowledge or ability in a particular area is evaluated," but does not encompass evaluations of an employee's overall job performance or suitability. *Id.* at 6. The question of whether specific information falls within the scope of section 552.122(b) must be determined on a case-by-case basis. *Id.* Traditionally, this office has applied section 552.122 where release of "test items" might compromise the effectiveness of future examinations. *Id.* at 4-5; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 118 (1976). Section 552.122 also protects the answers to test questions when the answers might reveal the questions themselves. *See* Attorney General Opinion JM-640 at 3 (1987); ORD 626 at 8.

You state that the submitted interview questions are "intended to display the technical expertise of the applicant" and that the department prefers to use similar questions from one position selection to the next. Further, you argue that release of the information at issue could compromise future interviews. You seek to withhold the submitted interview questions, as well as the preferred and actual answers to those questions, under section 552.122. Having considered your arguments and reviewed the information at issue, we conclude that interview question one from the Hearing Section qualifies as a test item for the purposes of section 552.122(b). We also conclude that the release of the recommended and actual answer to that question would tend to reveal the question itself. Accordingly, we conclude that the department may withhold interview question one from the Hearing Section, along with the recommended and actual answer to that question, under section 552.122 of the Government Code. We find, however, that interview questions two through four from the Hearing Section and all of the interview questions from the Review and Release Processing Department as well as the applicant's closing remarks are general questions or statements evaluating the applicant's general workplace skills, subjective ability to respond to particular situations, and overall suitability for employment, and do not test any specific knowledge of an applicant. Accordingly, we determine that the remaining documents are not test items under section 552.122(b). As you claim no other exception to disclosure, interview questions two through four from the Hearing Section and all of the interview questions from the Review and Release Processing Department as well as the applicant's closing remarks 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 file suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such a challenge, 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).

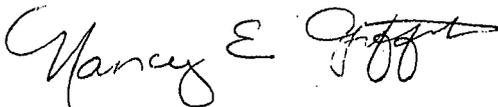
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records 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 challenge 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,



Nancy E. Griffiths
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

NEG/jb

Ref: ID# 301351

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Betty Ramos
5105 Prock Lane
Austin, Texas 78721
(w/o enclosures)