



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 11, 2008

Mr. C. Patrick Phillips
Assistant City Attorney
City of Fort Worth
1000 Throckmorton Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

OR2008-05711A

Dear Mr. Phillips:

This office issued Open Records Letter No. 2008-05711 (2008) on April 29, 2008. In that decision, we failed to cite to the correct statute. Where this office determines that an error was made in the decision process under sections 552.301 and 552.306, we will correct the previously issued ruling. Consequently, this decision serves as the correct ruling and is a substitute for the decision issued on April 29, 2008. *See generally* Gov't Code 552.011 (providing that Office of Attorney General may issue decision to maintain uniformity in application, operation, and interpretation of Public Information Act (the "Act"))).

You have asked whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 313729.

The City of Fort Worth (the "city") received a request for offense report number 08-34401. The city claims the requested information is excepted from public disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Section 261.201 of the Family Code reads in part as follows:

- (a) The following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may be disclosed only for purposes consistent with this code and applicable federal or state law or under rules adopted by an investigating agency:

(1) a report of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect made under this chapter and the identity of the person making the report; and

(2) except as otherwise provided in this section, the files, reports, records, communications, audiotapes, videotapes, and working papers used or developed in an investigation under this chapter or in providing services as a result of an investigation.

We believe that the requested information consists of reports, records, and working papers used or developed in an investigation made under chapter 261 of the Family Code. Because you have not cited any specific rule that the investigating agency has adopted with regard to the release of this type of information, we assume that no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, the city must withhold the requested information pursuant to section 261.201 in conjunction with section 552.101 of the Government Code. *See* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (construing predecessor statute). Accordingly, you must not release the requested information to the requestor.¹ Because section 552.101 is dispositive, we do not address the city's other argument.

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).

¹We note that if the investigation has been referred to the Department of Family and Protective Services (the "department"), a parent or other legal representative of a child who is a requestor may be entitled to access to the department's records. Section 261.201(g) of the Family Code provides that the department, upon request and subject to its own rules:

shall provide to the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of a child who is the subject of reported abuse or neglect information concerning the reported abuse or neglect that would otherwise be confidential under this section if the department has edited the information to protect the confidentiality of the identity of the person who made the report and any other person whose life or safety may be endangered by the disclosure.

Fam. Code § 261.201(g).

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,



Yen-Ha Le
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

YHL/ma

Ref: ID# 313729

c: Mr. Cecilio Aquino
421 Vicki Place
Hurst, Texas 76053
(w/o enclosures)

Ms. Cheryl K. Byles
Assistant City Attorney
City of Fort Worth
1000 Throckmorton Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76102
(w/o enclosures)