



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

July 21, 2008

Mr. Michael Bostic
Assistant City Attorney
City of Dallas
1500 Marilla Street, Room 7BN
Dallas, Texas 75201

OR2008-09857

Dear Mr. Bostic:

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# 318985.

The City of Dallas (the "city") received a request for three categories of information related to the Trinity River Audubon Center. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 through 552.148 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered your claims.

Section 552.301 of the Government Code prescribes the procedures that a governmental body must follow in asking this office to decide whether requested information is excepted from public disclosure. Under section 552.301(e), a governmental body is required to submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving the request (1) general written comments stating the reasons why the stated exceptions apply that would allow the information to be withheld; (2) a copy of the written request for information, (3) a signed statement or sufficient evidence showing the date the governmental body received the written request; and (4) a copy of the specific information requested or representative samples, labeled to indicate which exceptions apply to which parts of the documents. Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(A)-(D). The city has not submitted to this office written comments

¹Although you also raise section 552.201 of the Government Code as an exception to disclosure, this section is not an exception to disclosure. Rather, section 552.201 is an administrative provision that provides for the identity of the officer for public information. See Gov't Code § 552.201.

stating the reasons why the exceptions you have raised would allow the information to be withheld, nor provided a copy or representative sample of the information requested. Consequently, the city has failed to comply with section 552.301 of the Government Code.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released, unless the governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.302; *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ) (governmental body must make compelling demonstration to overcome presumption of openness pursuant to statutory predecessor to section 552.302); Open Records Decision No. 319 (1982). This statutory presumption can generally be overcome when the information is confidential by law or third-party interests are at stake. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 630 at 3 (1994), 325 at 2 (1982). In failing to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301, the city has waived the discretionary exceptions you raised. *See* Open Records Decision No. 522 (1989) (discretionary exceptions in general). Further, because the city failed to submit any information for our review, we have no basis for finding it confidential under the claimed mandatory exceptions. Thus, we have no choice but to order the city to release the responsive information in accordance with section 552.302 of the Government Code. If you believe the information is confidential and may not lawfully be released, you must challenge this ruling in court as outlined below.

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). If the governmental body does not file suit over 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

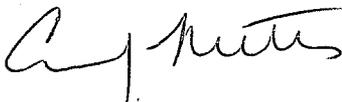
requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

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,



Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/mcf

Ref: ID# 318985

No Enclosures

c: Mr. John Schutze
Dallas Observer
2501 Oak Lawn
Dallas, Texas 75219
(w/o enclosures)