



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

November 5, 2008

Mr. Philip A. DeFriend  
Assistant General Counsel  
TDCJ—Office of the General Counsel  
P.O. Box 4004  
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2008-15203

Dear Mr. DeFriend:

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# 326864.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the “department”) received a request for information related to two specific job postings. You claim that portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under sections 552.122 and 552.137 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note that the submitted information includes the personal information of applicants for the two positions with the department. In Open Records Letter No. 2005-01067 (2005), we issued a previous determination that authorizes the department to withhold the personal information of a current or former employee of the department under section 552.117(a)(3) of the Government Code without the necessity of again requesting an attorney general decision with regard to the applicability of this exception. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.301(a); Open Records Decision No. 673 at 7-8 (2001) (delineating elements of second type of previous determination under section 552.301(a)). We note that a post office box number is not a “home address” for purposes of section 552.117.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, to the extent the applicants are current or former employees of the department, the

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<sup>1</sup>*See* Gov’t Code § 552.117; Open Records Decision No. 622 at 4 (1994) (legislative history makes clear that purpose of section 552.117 is to protect public employees from being harassed *at home*) (citing House Committee on State Affairs, Bill Analysis, H.B. 1976, 69th Leg. (1985)).

department must withhold the personal information we have marked in accordance with Open Records Letter No. 2005-01067.<sup>2</sup>

A portion of the submitted information is comprised of interview questions and answers. Section 552.122(b) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure test items developed by a licensing agency or governmental body. *See* 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. Whether information falls within the section 552.122 exception must be determined on a case-by-case basis. Open Records Decision No. 626 at 6. 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 have submitted three sets of applicants' interview questions and answers. 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 submitted information, we conclude that the interview questions we have marked qualify as test items for the purposes of section 552.122(b). We also find that release of the model and actual answers to these test items would tend to reveal the questions themselves. Therefore, the department may withhold the information we marked pursuant to section 552.122(b). However, we find that the remaining interview questions and the applicants' closing remarks are general questions and statements evaluating an applicant's individual abilities, personal opinions, and subjective ability to respond to particular situations, and do not test any specific knowledge of an applicant. Accordingly, these questions and their answers are not excepted from disclosure under section 552.122 of the Government Code.

Section 552.137 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "an e-mail address of a member of the public that is provided for the purpose of communicating electronically with a governmental body" unless the member of the public consents to its release or the e-mail address is of a type specifically excluded by subsection (c). *See* Gov't Code

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<sup>2</sup>In the event that the social security numbers we have marked are not those of department employees, we note that section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office under the Act. *See* Gov't Code § 552.147.

§ 552.137(a)-(c). The e-mail addresses we have marked are not a type specifically excluded by section 552.137(c). You do not inform us that the owners of the e-mail addresses have affirmatively consented to their public disclosure. We therefore conclude that the department must withhold the e-mail addresses we have marked under section 552.137 of the Government Code.

We note that the submitted information contains Texas motor vehicle record information.<sup>3</sup> Section 552.130 excepts from disclosure information that relates to “a motor vehicle operator’s or driver’s license or permit issued by an agency of this state.” Gov’t Code § 552.130(a)(1). Accordingly, you must withhold the Texas motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, the department must withhold the information we have marked pursuant to section 552.117 of the Government Code and Open Records Letter No. 2005-01067, to the extent it applies to current or former employees of the department. The department may withhold the interview questions we have marked, along with the model and actual answers to those questions, under section 552.122 of the Government Code. The department must withhold the e-mail addresses we have marked under section 552.137 of the Government Code, as well as the Texas motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The remaining 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 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

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<sup>3</sup>The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

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,



Emily Sitton  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

EBS/eeg

Ref: ID# 326864

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Lt. Felix Barragan  
2402 River Oaks Lane  
Edinburg, Texas 78539  
(w/o enclosures)