



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

January 11, 2010

Ms. Candice M. De La Garza
Assistant City Attorney
City of Houston
P.O. Box 368
Houston, Texas 77001-0368

OR2010-00455

Dear Ms. De La Garza:

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# 367053.

The City of Houston (the "city") received a request for information on the completed road repair and any final outcome at a specified address. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 through 552.147 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim.

We must address the city's obligations under the Act. Section 552.301 of the Government Code prescribes procedures that a governmental body must follow in asking this office to determine whether requested information is excepted from public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(a). Section 552.301(e) requires a governmental body 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. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A)-(D). You inform us that the city received this request on October 19, 2009. However, as of the date of this letter, you have not submitted to this office comments explaining why the stated exceptions apply, nor have you submitted a copy or representative sample of the information requested. Consequently, we find that the city failed to comply with the requirements of section 552.301.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to submit to this office the information required in section 552.301(e) results in the legal presumption that the information is public and must be released. Information that is presumed public must be released unless a governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information to overcome this presumption. *See id.* § 552.302; *City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 279 S.W.3d 806, 811 (Tex. App.—Amarillo 2007, pet. granted); *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Generally, a governmental body may demonstrate a compelling reason to withhold information by showing the information is made confidential by another source of law or affects third party interests. *See* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Because the city has failed to comply with the requirements of the Act, the city has waived all of its claimed discretionary exceptions to disclosure. *See* Open Records Decision No. 663 at 5 (1999) (untimely request for decision resulted in waiver of discretionary exceptions). Although the city also raises mandatory exceptions to disclosure, because you have not submitted the requested information for our review, we have no basis for finding any of the information confidential by law. We, therefore, conclude the city must release the requested information to the requestor pursuant to section 552.302. If you believe the information is confidential and may not lawfully be released, you must challenge this ruling in court pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information 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 information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Sarah Casterline
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

SEC/eeg

Ref: ID# 367053

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)