



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 14, 2010

Ms. YuShan Chang
Assistant City Attorney
City of Houston
P.O. Box 368
Houston, Texas 77001-0368

OR2010-06913

Dear Ms. Chang:

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# 380031.

The Houston Fire Department (the "department") received a request for the findings of a specified complaint. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This exception encompasses information that other statutes make confidential. You raise section 552.101 in conjunction with section 143.1214 of the Local Government Code, which provides in part:

(b) The department shall maintain an investigatory file that relates to a disciplinary action against a fire fighter or police officer that was overturned on appeal, or any document in the possession of the department that relates to a charge of misconduct against a fire fighter or police officer, regardless of whether the charge is sustained, only in a file created by the department for the department's use. The department may only release information in those investigatory files or documents relating to a charge of misconduct:

- (1) to another law enforcement agency or fire department;
- (2) to the office of a district or United States attorney; or
- (3) in accordance with Subsection (c).

(c) The department head or the department head's designee may forward a document that relates to a disciplinary action against a fire fighter or police officer to the [civil service] director or the director's designee for inclusion in the fire fighter's or police officer's personnel file maintained under Sections 143.089(a)-(f) [of the Local Government Code] only if:

- (1) disciplinary action was actually taken against the fire fighter or police officer;
- (2) the document shows the disciplinary action taken; and
- (3) the document includes at least a brief summary of the facts on which the disciplinary action was based.

Local Gov't Code § 143.1214(b)-(c).¹ You inform us that the submitted information is a record of an investigation by the department into alleged misconduct on the part of a department fire fighter. You state that because the allegations were not sustained and no disciplinary action was taken, the information in question does not meet the conditions specified by section 143.1214(c) for inclusion in the fire fighter's personnel file under section 143.089(a) of the Local Government Code. You also state that the requestor is not another law enforcement agency or fire department or a representative of the office of a district or United States attorney. You contend that the department must withhold the information at issue under section 143.1214 of the Local Government Code. Based on your representations, we agree that the submitted information is confidential under section 143.1214 and must be withheld from the requestor on that basis under section 552.101 of the Government Code. *See* Open Records Decision No. 642 (1996) (concluding that files relating to investigations of Houston Fire Department personnel by Public Integrity Review Group of Houston Police Department were confidential under Local Gov't Code § 143.1214).

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.

¹You inform us that the City of Houston is a civil service city under chapter 143 of the Local Government Code.

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,



Tamara Wilcox
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

TW/dls

Ref: ID# 380031

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)