



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 29, 2010

Ms. Kathy Rendon
City Secretary
City of Stratford
P.O. Box 188
Stratford, Texas 79084

OR2010-17742

Dear Ms. Rendon:

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# 401890.

The City of Stratford (the "city") received a request for "all employee reprimands, verbal and written, that have been issued since the month of May." You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.102 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim.

We must address the city's obligations under the Act. Section 552.301 of the Government Code describes the obligations placed on a governmental body that receives a written request for information it wishes to withhold. Pursuant to section 552.301(e) of the Government Code, the 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. *See Gov't Code § 552.301(e)*. You indicate you received the request for information on September 14, 2010. However, as of the date of this letter, you have not submitted to this office a copy of the specific information requested or a representative sample of such information. Consequently, we find 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 the requested 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; *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, 381-82 (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 of Government Code); *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* ORD 630. You claim the requested information is excepted under section 552.102 of the Government Code. Although section 552.102 can provide a compelling reason for non-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. Thus, we have no choice but to order the city to release the requested information to the requestor. 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,



Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/dls

Ref: ID# 401890

No enclosure

c: Requestor