



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

March 27, 2012

Ms. Karen Stead  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Tyler  
P.O. Box 2039  
Tyler, Texas 75710-2039

OR2012-04429

Dear Ms. Stead:

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# 448836 (LegalDesk #TMG-508419).

The Tyler Police Department (the “department”) received duplicate requests from the same requestor for any documents relating to a named police officer being disciplined, suspended from duty, placed on probation, reprimanded, demoted, or having any action taken against him by the department. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.<sup>1</sup>

We note the requestor has specifically excluded driver’s license numbers, license plate numbers, and social security numbers from his request. Accordingly, driver’s license numbers, license plate numbers, and social security numbers are not responsive to the request. This ruling does not address the public availability of non-responsive information, and the department need not release information that is not responsive to the request.

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 section encompasses section 143.089 of the Local Government Code.

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<sup>1</sup>We assume the “representative sample” of information submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent those records contain substantially different types of information than those submitted to this office.

Section 143.089 of the Local Government Code contemplates two different types of personnel files relating to a police officer: a police officer's civil service file that the civil service director is required to maintain, and an internal file that the police department may maintain for its own use. Local Gov't Code § 143.089(a), (g). The officer's civil service file must contain certain specified items, including commendations, periodic evaluations by the police officer's supervisor, and documents relating to any misconduct in which the department took disciplinary action against the officer under chapter 143 of the Local Government Code. *Id.* § 143.089(a)(1)-(3).

In cases in which a police department investigates a police officer's misconduct and takes disciplinary action against an officer, it is required by section 143.089(a)(2) to place all investigatory records relating to the investigation and disciplinary action, including background documents such as complaints, witness statements, and documents of like nature from individuals who were not in a supervisory capacity, in the police officer's civil service file maintained under section 143.089(a).<sup>2</sup> *Abbott v. City of Corpus Christi*, 109 S.W.3d 113, 122 (Tex. App.—Austin 2003, orig. proceeding). All investigatory materials in a case resulting in disciplinary action are "from the employing department" when they are held by or in possession of the police department because of its investigation into a police officer's misconduct, and the police department must forward them to the civil service commission for placement in the civil service personnel file. *Id.* Such records may not be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 143.089 of the Local Government Code. *See* Local Gov't Code § 143.089(f); Open Records Decision No. 562 at 6 (1990).

However, a document relating to an officer's alleged misconduct may not be placed in his civil service personnel file if there is insufficient evidence to sustain the charge of misconduct. Local Gov't Code § 143.089(b). In addition, a document relating to disciplinary action against a police officer that has been placed in the officer's personnel file as provided by section 143.089(a)(2) must be removed from the officer's file if the civil service commission finds the disciplinary action was taken without just cause or the charge of misconduct was not supported by sufficient evidence. *See id.* § 143.089(c). Information that reasonably relates to an officer's employment relationship with the police department and that is maintained in a police department's internal file pursuant to section 143.089(g) is confidential and must not be released. *See City of San Antonio v. San Antonio Express-News*, 47 S.W.3d 556 (Tex. App.—San Antonio 2000, orig. proceeding); *City of San Antonio v. Texas Attorney General*, 851 S.W.2d 946, 949 (Tex. App.—Austin 1993, writ denied).

You inform us the City of Tyler is a civil service city under Chapter 143 of the Local Government Code. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under

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<sup>2</sup>Chapter 143 prescribes the following types of disciplinary actions: removal, suspension, demotion, and uncompensated duty. Local Gov't Code §§ 143.051–.055; *see e.g.*, Attorney General Opinion JC-0257 (2000) (written reprimand is not disciplinary action for purposes of Local Government Code chapter 143).

section 143.089(g), as information that should be maintained in the department's internal file of the named officer pursuant to section 143.089(g). However, we note the information at issue includes a list of complaints made against the named officer, and some of these reflect they were sustained. As noted above, in cases in which a police department investigates a police officer's misconduct and takes disciplinary action against an officer, it is required by section 143.089(a)(2) to place all investigatory records relating to the investigation and disciplinary action in the police officer's civil service file maintained under section 143.089(a). Thus, to the extent any of the complaints at issue resulted in disciplinary action as contemplated by Chapter 143, information relating to these complaints must be placed in the named officer's civil service file unless the department has already done so. *See id.* The department must refer the requestor to the civil service director or the director's designee. *See id.* § 143.089(g). We agree, however, that the submitted information is confidential under section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code and must be withheld under section 552.101 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](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,



Sean Opperman  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

SO/dls

Ref: ID# 448836

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)