



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 10, 2012

Ms. Kyle G. Thomas
Assistant City Attorney
City of Sugar Land
P.O. Box 110
Sugar Land, Texas 77487-0110

OR2012-16216

Dear Ms. Thomas:

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# 467574.

The City of Sugar Land (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to a specified case handled by the city police department.¹ You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.130, and 552.147 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim.

We must address the obligations of the city under the Act. Section 552.301 of the Government Code prescribes the procedures that a governmental body must follow in asking this office to decide whether requested information is excepted from public disclosure. Gov't Code § 552.301. Section 552.301(b) requires that a governmental body ask for a decision from this office and state which exceptions apply to the requested information by the tenth business day after receiving the request. *Id.* § 552.301(b). Pursuant to section 552.301(e), a governmental body is required to submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving an open records request (1) 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

¹As you did not submit a copy of the written request for information, we take our description from your brief.

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. *Id.* § 552.301(e).

You state the city received the request for information on July 14, 2012. Thus, the city was required to request a decision from this office by July 30, 2012 and to submit the information required by section 552.301(e) by August 6, 2012. However, the envelope in which you submitted the request for a decision bears a meter mark of August 2, 2012. *See id.* § 552.308 (describing rules for calculating submission dates of documents sent via first class United States mail). Further, as of the date of this letter, you have not submitted to this office arguments stating why any claimed exceptions apply to the information at issue, a copy of the written request, or a copy or representative sample of the information requested. Accordingly, we find the city failed to comply with section 552.301 of the Government Code.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that 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 (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 that the information is made confidential by another source of law or affects third party interests. *See* ORD 630. Because you failed to comply with the requirements of the Act, the city has waived its claimed discretionary exception to disclosure. *See* Open Records Decision No. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (untimely request for decision results 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. Thus, we have no choice but to order the requested information released 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle R. Garza", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Michelle R. Garza
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MRG/som

Ref: ID# 467574

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor