



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 26, 2013

Ms. Cheryl Elliot Thornton
Assistant County Attorney
County of Harris
1019 Congress Street, 15th Floor
Houston, Texas 77002

OR2013-20668

Dear Ms. Thornton:

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# 506987 (C.A. File No. 13PIA0494).

The Harris County Tax Assessor-Collector Office (the "county") received a request for the "VTR-214 (application for persons with disabilities parking placard and/or license)" pertaining to a named individual. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim.

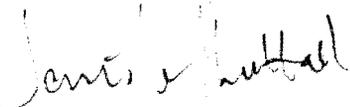
We must address the county's procedural obligations under the Act. Pursuant to section 552.301(e) of the Government Code, a governmental body is required to submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving the request (1) written comments stating the reasons why the stated exceptions apply 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 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 inform us that the county received this request on September 6, 2013. However, as of the date of this letter, you have not submitted to this office a copy or representative sample of the information requested. Consequently, we find that the county failed to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with the requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption the requested information is public and must be released unless a compelling reason exists to withhold the information from disclosure. *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); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Generally, a compelling reason to withhold information exists where some other source of law makes the information confidential or where third party interests are at stake. Open Records Decision No. 150 at 2 (1977). You assert the requested information is confidential under section 552.101 of the Government Code. By failing to submit any information for our review, we have no basis for finding it confidential under section 552.101. 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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Luttrall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JL/som

Ref: ID# 506987

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)