



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 12, 2014

Ms. A. Feliz Abalos
Senior Assistant City Attorney
City of Odessa
205 North Grant
Odessa, Texas 79761

OR2014-14078

Dear Ms. Abalos:

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# 532452.

The Odessa Police Department (the "department") received a request for information relating to a specified incident. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, and 552.111 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim.

Initially, we must address the department's procedural obligations under section 552.301 of the Government Code when requesting a decision from this office under the Act. Pursuant to section 552.301(e), a governmental body must 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 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)*. In this instance, you state the department received the request for information on May 21, 2014. As of the date of this letter, you have not submitted for our review a copy or representative sample of the information requested. Consequently, we find the department 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 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). Because the department has failed to comply with the procedural requirements of the Act, the department has waived its discretionary exceptions to disclosure. *See* Open Records Decision No. 663 at 5 (1999) (untimely request for decision resulted in waiver of discretionary exceptions). Although the department also raises a mandatory exception to disclosure, because you have not submitted the requested information for our review, we have no basis for finding any of the information excepted from disclosure or 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.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,



David L. Wheelus
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

DLW/ds

Ref: ID# 532452

c: Requestor