



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 27, 2016

Mr. Matthew L. Grove
Assistant County Attorney
Fort Bend County
401 Jackson Street, 3rd Floor
Richmond, Texas 77469

OR2016-28402

Dear Mr. Grove:

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# 639133.

The Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received two requests from the same requestor for specified information pertaining to specified types of assaultive offenses from a specified time period. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 through 552.156 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim.

We must address the obligations of the sheriff's office under section 552.301 of the Government Code, which prescribes the procedures a governmental body must follow in asking this office to decide whether requested information is excepted from public disclosure. Pursuant to section 552.301(e) of the Government Code, 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). You state the sheriff's office received the first request for information on September 30, 2016. The second request seeks the same information as the first request. However, as of the date of this letter, you have not submitted arguments explaining why the

stated exceptions apply or a copy or representative sample of the specific information requested. Consequently, we find the sheriff's office 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 comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released unless there is a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342 (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); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). A compelling reason generally exists when information is confidential by law or third-party interests are at stake. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 630 at 3, 325 at 2 (1982). Because you failed to comply with the requirements of the Act, you have waived all of your claimed discretionary exceptions to disclosure. *See* Open Records Decision No. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (untimely request for decision results in waiver of discretionary exceptions). Although you raise 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 excepted from disclosure or confidential by law. Thus, we have no choice but to order the requested information released pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code. If you believe the information is confidential and may not be lawfully 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,



Matthew Taylor
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MHT/eb

Ref: ID# 639133

c: Requestor