



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 30, 2016

Mr. Jackie R. Claborn, II
Bailey County Attorney
County of Bailey
306 West 2nd Street
Muleshoe, Texas 79347

OR2016-28762

Dear Mr. Claborn:

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# 640006.

The Bailey County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for all formal and informal disciplinary actions issued by the sheriff's office during a specified time period.

We must address the procedural obligations of the sheriff's office 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). The sheriff's office received the request for information on October 14, 2016. However, as of the date of this letter, the sheriff's office has not submitted for our review a copy or representative sample of the information requested or stated any exceptions that apply to the requested information. Consequently, we find the sheriff's office 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). In this instance, the sheriff's office does not raise any exceptions to disclosure. Additionally, as the sheriff's office has failed to submit 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 sheriff's office to release the requested information pursuant to section 552.302.

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,



Kaelan A. Henze
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KAH/eb

Ref: ID# 640006

c: Requestor