



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

January 22, 2019

Ms. Myrna S. Reingold
Galveston County
722 Moody Avenue, Fifth Floor
Galveston, Texas 77550

OR2019-01754

Dear Ms. Reingold:

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# 746973.

The Galveston County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for information pertaining to a named individual's visitations with inmates at the Galveston County Jail during a specified time period. 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 sheriff's office's obligations 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. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301. 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 claimed 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. *Id.* § 552.301(e). The sheriff's office states it received the request for information on October 24, 2018. Accordingly, the sheriff's office's fifteen-business-day deadline was November 14, 2018. However, as of this date, the sheriff's office has not submitted to this office written comments stating the reasons why the claimed exception applies or a copy or representative sample of the information requested. Consequently, we conclude the sheriff's office failed

to comply with the procedural requirements mandated by section 552.301 of the Government Code.

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, 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). Although the sheriff's office raises an exception to disclosure, because it has not submitted the requested information for our review, we have no basis for finding any of the information excepted from disclosure. Thus, we have no choice but to order the requested information released pursuant to section 552.302. If you believe the information 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,



Katherine Stark
Attorney
Open Records Division

KS/mo

Ref: ID# 746973

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)