



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

January 31, 2019

Ms. Dianne M. Flores
Civil Legal Assistant
Williamson County
405 Martin Luther King Street, Box 7
Georgetown, Texas 78626

OR2019-02949

Dear Ms. Flores:

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# 748741 (PIA-2018-517).

The Williamson County Attorney's Office (the "county attorney's office") received a request for information pertaining to a specified tract of land. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 through 552.151 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim.

We must address the county attorney'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(b), a governmental body must ask for a decision from this office and state the exceptions that apply within ten business days of receiving the written request. *See id.* § 552.301(b). Further, 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 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 id.* § 552.301(e). In this instance, the county attorney's office states it received the request for information on November 5, 2018. We note this office does not count the date the request was received or holidays for the purpose of calculating a governmental body's deadlines under the Act. You inform us the county attorney's office was closed for business on November 22, 2018, and November 23, 2018, for the Thanksgiving Holiday. Accordingly, the county attorney's office's ten-business-day deadline under section 552.301(b) was November 19, 2018, and the county attorney's

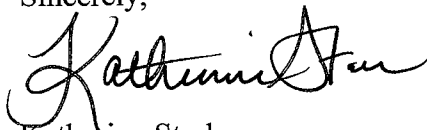
office's fifteen-business-day deadline under section 552.301(e) was November 28, 2018. However, the envelope in which the county attorney's office provided the information required by section 552.301(b) was postmarked November 21, 2018. *See id.* § 552.308(a)(1) (describing rules for calculating submission dates of documents sent via first class United States mail, common or contract carrier, or interagency mail). In addition, as of this date, the county attorney's office has not submitted to this office written comments stating the reasons why the claimed exceptions apply or a copy or representative sample of the information requested. Consequently, we conclude the county attorney'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 county attorney's office raises exceptions 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/gw

Ref: ID# 748741

c: Requestor