



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 25, 2020

Ms. Allison A. Bastian
Counsel for the City of Harlingen
Denton, Navarro, Rocha, Bernal & Zech, P.C.
701 East Harrison, Suite 100
Harlingen, Texas 78550-9165

OR2020-05889

Dear Ms. Bastian:

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# 813418.

The City of Harlingen (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to specified license plates. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 through 552.148 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exceptions.

We must address the city's procedural obligations 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. *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 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). We note the city received the request on October 21, 2019. However, as of the date of this letter, the city has not submitted for our review written comments stating why the claimed exceptions apply or a copy or representative sample of the requested information. Consequently, we conclude the city failed to comply with the procedural requirements mandated by section 552.301(e) 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 city raises 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. 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 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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Matthew Taylor
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MHT/jxd

Ref: ID# 813418

c: Requestor