



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

November 24, 2020

Mr. Neil Bonavita  
Attorney  
Fort Worth Independent School District  
100 North University Drive  
Fort Worth, Texas 76107

OR2020-29436

Dear Mr. Bonavita:

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# 855127 (Ref. No. W003678).

The Fort Worth Independent School District (the "district") received a request for personnel information pertaining to a named district employee and certain information pertaining to the district's evaluation process. You state the district will redact information pursuant to Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009).<sup>1</sup> You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under the Act. We have considered your arguments.

We must address the district's obligations under the Act. Section 552.301 of the Government Code 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), 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).

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<sup>1</sup> Open Records Decision No. 684 serves as a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold specific categories of information without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision.

You state the district received the present request for information on September 1, 2020. As of the date of this letter, the district has not submitted for our review comments stating why the claimed exceptions apply or a copy or representative sample of the information requested. Consequently, we find the district has failed to comply with the requirements of 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 you raise exceptions to disclosure under the Act, because the district has not submitted the requested information for our review, we have no basis for finding any of the information at issue excepted from disclosure. Thus, we have no choice but to order the requested information released pursuant to section 552.302. If the district believes the information at issue may not lawfully be released, it 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,

Michelle Garza  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

MRG/jm

Ref: ID# 855127

c: Requestor