



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 23, 2020

Ms. Kasey Feldman-Thomason
General Counsel
Public Utility Commission of Texas
P.O. Box 13326
Austin, Texas 78711

OR2020-32223

Dear Ms. Feldman-Thomason:

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# 858848 (PUC Request ID No. 2020-10-005).

The Public Utility Commission of Texas (the "commission") received a request for the following information pertaining to the High Point Special Utility District: (1) financial documents submitted to the commission for a specified time period; (2) complaints submitted to the commission for a specified time period; (3) any water rate investigation initiated by the commission during a specified time period; and (4) any code of conduct documents submitted to the commission. You state the commission has released some of the requested information. You claim the remaining requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.111 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim.

We must address the commission's obligations under the Act. 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. Gov't Code § 552.301 (e). The commission received the request for information on October 2, 2020. However, as of the date of this letter, you have failed to submit written comments explaining why your claimed exceptions apply and a

copy of the remaining information requested. Consequently, we find the commission 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 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 commission raises exceptions to disclosure, because you have not submitted the remaining 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 remaining 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 <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,

Jennifer Copeland
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JC/be

Ref: ID# 858848

c: Requestor