



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 29, 2022

Mr. Ronald D. Stutes  
Counsel for the City of Coffee City  
Wilson, Robertson & Cornelius, P.C.  
909 ESE Loop 323, Suite 400  
Tyler, Texas 75701

OR2022-30194

Dear Mr. Stutes:

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# 975596.

The City of Coffee City (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for a copy of the hard drive from the computer or laptop used by the city mayor. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.102, 552.107, 552.108, 552.117, 552.136, and 552.147 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). In this instance, you state the city received the clarified request for information on July 12, 2022. *See City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 304 S.W.3d 380, 387 (Tex. 2010) (holding that when governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification

or narrowing of unclear or overbroad request for public information, ten-day period to request attorney general ruling is measured from date request is clarified or narrowed). However, as of the date of this letter, the city has not submitted for our review written comments stating the reasons why the claimed exceptions apply or a copy or representative sample of the requested information. Consequently, we conclude the city has 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* Gov't Code § 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,

James M. Graham  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JMG/pt

Ref: ID# 975596

c: Requestor