



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 6, 2022

Ms. Sarah Hodges
Assistant County Attorney
Harris County Constable Precinct 5
1019 Congress Street, 15th Floor
Houston, Texas 77002-1700

OR2022-37693

Dear Ms. Hodges:

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# 985411.

The Harris County Constable's Office, Precinct 5 (the "county") received a request for certain communications related to particular funds and budgets, as well as communications between a named individual and a particular agency containing specified keywords sent during a stated time period.¹ You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 through 552.154 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim.

We must address the county's obligations under section 552.301 of the Government Code, which prescribes the procedural obligations that 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 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)(1)(A)-(D). You inform us the county received the request for information on

¹ As you have not submitted a copy of the request for information for our review, we take our description from your brief to our office.

August 25, 2022. However, as of the date of this letter, you have not submitted to this office a copy of the written request for information, written comments stating the reasons why the claimed exceptions apply, or a copy or representative sample of the information requested. Accordingly, we conclude the county failed to comply with the requirements of section 552.301.

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, because the county 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 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,

Erin Groff
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

EMG/mo

Ref: ID# 985411

c: Requestor