



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF LAW

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December 20, 2019

Via email to: w458@raycsmithatty.net

Ray C. Smith, Esquire
Guyton City Attorney
Building 2A
10153 Ford Avenue
Richmond Hill, GA 31324

RE: *Open Records Complaint from Jessica Szilagyi regarding the City of Guyton*

Dear Judge Smith:

I am writing regarding a complaint our office received from Ms. Jessica Szilagyi about an Open Records request she submitted to the City of Guyton. On October 28, 2019, Ms. Szilagyi requested the personnel file of Interim Police Chief Joseph Coppola, including complaints filed against him, as well as other records. A scanned copy of his personnel file was provided to her on October 22, 2019. Ms. Szilagyi noted that the personnel file did not contain any training records after 2017 and asked for those records to be made available if they existed. She followed up with the city several times but still has not received the records or a timeline for when they will be available.

Under Georgia law the Attorney General, as an independent constitutional officer, has the discretionary authority to enforce the Open Records Act and the Open Meetings Act. O.C.G.A. §§ 50-18-73(a), 50-14-5(a). The Attorney General has chosen to exercise that discretion by establishing a mediation program where citizens may raise issues and concerns with us regarding the Acts, and we will attempt to resolve disputes between citizens and local government.

I am not aware of all the circumstances surrounding Ms. Szilagyi's request, and I am not assuming the city violated the law. I have enclosed a copy of Ms. Szilagyi's correspondence

Ray C. Smith, Esq.
December 20, 2019
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the city, and I would appreciate a response to this complaint within the next ten business days.
Please call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,


Jennifer Colangelo

JENNIFER COLANGELO
Assistant Attorney General

Enclosures

cc: Ms. Jessica Szilagyi

Re: Open Records Request - Guyton 10.18.19

JE Me
Mon, 04 Nov 2019 12:34:23 PM -0500
To "Alison Bruton" <alison.bruton@cityofguyton.com>
Tags 

Hey Alison,

I just wanted to follow up to see if you had any luck tracking down the training documents for Chief Coppola since his tenure in Guyton began.

Thanks,

Jessica Szilagyi
Statewide Contributor
AllOnGeorgia.com
770.265.1404

On Oct 22, 2019, at 1:58 PM, Alison Bruton <alison.bruton@cityofguyton.com> wrote:

I haven't been involved in monitoring the PD training, as that usually falls on the Chief/DPS and maybe the City Manager. I know that Mr. Coppola has attended training courses, including Chief School, but those certificates have not been provided to me. I will try and obtain copies and provide those to you.

Employment evaluations have not been done in some time, unfortunately.

Yes, that is the only reference to missing items that I am aware of.

Alison M. Bruton
City Clerk

From: Jessica Szilagyi <jessica@allongeorgia.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 22, 2019 1:20 PM
To: Alison Bruton <alison.bruton@cityofguyton.com>
Subject: Re: Open Records Request - Guyton 10.18.19

Thank you for this.

I believe the only question I have about the records is whether or not the City fo Guyton maintains training records and continues to do personnel employment evaluations, since his training is only up to 2017 in this file. Is it on the officer to maintain that with POST?

And is the mayor's letter about missing reprimands and documentation the only documentation that things are absent from the file?

Jessica Szilagyi
Statewide Contributor
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770.265.1404

On Oct 22, 2019, at 9:55 AM, Alison Bruton <alison.bruton@cityofguyton.com> wrote:

Good Morning,

Attached are the documents pertaining to your request regarding the following:

- *The personnel file of Interim Police Chief Joseph Coppola with the exception of any criminal background checks conducted during the hiring process. Please include any complaints filed against the Coppola during his tenure in Guyton so long as those complaints are not currently under investigation.*
- *Any documentation that reflects the hours and/or days worked by any and all employees of the Guyton Police Department in January 2019 through August 2019. (I previously requested this information from September 2019. I'm not sure what the report was called, but the format in which it was provided is what I am seeking)*

If you have any questions regarding these documents, please let me know. *Side note- I apologize that the personnel file is in so many attachments. Also, when you are reviewing the time for Mr. McDonald, he was the Public Safety Director/Police Chief when he was employed, and he was a salaried employee. You will notice several days where it will show he worked for 24 hours. Those hours are incorrect. The system was not updated due to his salaried status. In regards to the additional request stated below, I will work with the Interim Chief and Court Clerk to schedule this. Is there a date/time that would work best for you?

Also, if I wanted to review the court docket information from cases that have been discharged, dismissed, or completed to date in 2019, would it be possible for me to review those in the office of the clerk or police clerk instead of having to request copies and have those prepared/emailed?

Alison M. Bruton
City Clerk

From: Jessica Szilagyi <jessica@allongeorgia.com>
Sent: Friday, October 18, 2019 2:53 PM
To: Alison Bruton <alison.bruton@cityofguyton.com>
Subject: Open Records Request - Guyton 10.18.19

Good afternoon,

Under the **Georgia Open Records Act § 50.18.70 et seq.**, I am requesting an opportunity to inspect or obtain copies of public records that pertain to the City of Guyton and the Guyton Police Department.

Specifically, I am requesting:

- The personnel file of Interim Police Chief Joseph Coppola with the exception of any criminal background checks conducted during the hiring process. Please include any complaints filed against the Coppola during his tenure in Guyton so long as those complaints are not currently under investigation.
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August 2019. (I previously requested this information from September 2019. I'm not sure what the report was called, but the format in which it was provided is what I am seeking)

Just as note, if some of these will require redaction that is of considerable time/resources, I'm happy to merely 'review' the documents at City Hall instead. I know in previous cities, I've been able to provide a notarized Affidavit stating I will not release or utilize any personal information (in both Statesboro and Oak Park) that's prohibited from release. I'm happy to do whatever is easiest and the least time consuming for city employees.


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If there are any costs associated with this request, please let me know in advance if the request will exceed \$25. Please let me know if you have any questions or need clarification.

Jessica Szilagyi
Statewide Contributor
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<Paul Davis Jan-Aug 19.pdf>
<Hester Jan-Aug 19.pdf>
<Blunt Jan-Aug 19.pdf>
<McDonald Jan-Aug 19.pdf>

Re: Open Records Request - Guyton 10.18.19

JE Me
Mon, 02 Dec 2019 12:49:15 PM -0500
To "danielhofman" <daniel.hofman@cityofguyton.com>
Tags 

Mr. Hofman,

I hope you had a nice Thanksgiving.
Before Alison's resignation, I had filed an Open Records Request on October 18, 2019 related to the training of Interim Chief Joseph Coppola and his chief school certification. She was looking into it, but I never heard back. I was hoping you could assist me with this as I am only looking for the training he has obtained since working with the City of Guyton and, as stated, the certification for Chief School. It is my understanding that performance evaluations have not been completed, so I will remove that item from my request.

If you need anything additional from me, please let me know and I'll be happy to provide it.

Jessica Szilagyi
Statewide Contributor
AllOnGeorgia.com
770.265.1404
[\[Sign up for my newsletter\]](#)

----- On Mon, 04 Nov 2019 12:34:17 -0500 **Jessica Szilagyi** <jessica@allongeorgia.com> wrote -----

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