



**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF ILLINOIS**

Lisa Madigan
ATTORNEY GENERAL

November 16, 2010

Ms. Sue Ann Nelson
City of Greenville
City Clerk/FOIA Officer
404 S. Third St.
Greenville, IL. 62246

RE: FOIA Pre-approval Request – 2010 PAC 9368

Dear Ms. Nelson:

We have received from the City of Greenville (City) a written notice of its intention to assert the Section 7(1)(f) exemption in response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request submitted by [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] FOIA request sought "all documents associated with St. Joseph's Hospital-Breese, Clinic Project; including but not limited to requests for TIF, Revolving Loan, Enterprise Zone benefits or any other types of incentives." The City claims that the draft pre-TIF agreement and draft site plan responsive to this request are exempt under Section 7(1)(f) because they contain opinions or relate to the formulation of policies or actions by the City.

Section 7(1)(f) of the Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140/7(1)(f)) allows withholding of:

[p]reliminary drafts, notes, recommendations, memoranda or other documents in which opinions are expressed, or policies or actions are formulated, except that a specific record or relevant portion of a record shall not be exempt when the record is publicly cited and identified by the head of the public body.

In *Harwood v. McDonough*, 344 Ill. App. 3d 242 (1st Dist. 2003), the Illinois Appellate Court ruled that "as a matter of public policy, section 7(1)(f) exempts from disclosure predecisional materials used by a public body in its deliberative process." *Id.* at 247. In considering the matter, the *Harwood* court adopted the defendant's argument that the word "preliminary" does not refer to the "posture of the particular document sought to be disclosed" but rather to "predecisional

intra-agency communications.” *Id.* at 247-248. The court noted that no previous Illinois cases interpreted the use of the word preliminary and, as such, stated that it was helpful to look to cases interpreting the parallel language of the Federal Freedom of Information Act. The court determined that the exemption is intended to protect “predecisional, deliberative communications that are part of an agency’s decision-making process.” *Id.* at 248 (quoting *Parmalee v. Camparone*, No. 93 C 7362, 1998 WL 704181 (N.D. Ill October 1, 1998).

With respect to the City’s Section 7(1)(f) assertion, the pre-TIF agreement and site plan at issue appear to fall within the scope of the Section 7(1)(f) exemption. These documents consist of draft and evaluative documents which constitute part of the City’s deliberative process concerning this project. Further, there is no evidence to suggest that these records have been publicly cited and identified by the head of the public body. Accordingly, the City has met its initial burden of demonstrating that these records are exempt from disclosure under Section 7(1)(f).

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (217) 782-9078. This letter shall serve to close this file.

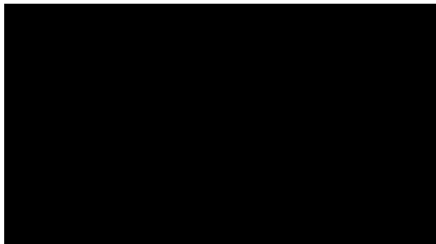
Sincerely,

Cara Smith
Public Access Counselor

By


Matthew M. Sebek
Assistant Public Access Counselor

cc:


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