



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 27, 2004

Sheriff Bob Elliot
Baylor County
101 South Washington
Seymour, Texas 76380

OR2004-4343

Dear Sheriff Elliot:

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# 203133.

The Baylor County Sheriff received a request for the tape of a 911 call and the call log. You ask whether the submitted information implicates the privacy interests of the individuals identified in the information. We will therefore consider whether the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common law privacy.

Section 552.101 excepts "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Section 552.101 encompasses the doctrine of common law privacy. Common law privacy protects information if (1) the information contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) the information is not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976), *cert. denied*, 430 U.S. 931 (1977). The type of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation* included information relating to sexual assault, pregnancy, mental or physical abuse in the workplace, illegitimate children, psychiatric treatment of mental disorders, attempted suicide, and injuries to sexual organs. 540 S.W.2d at 683. Having carefully reviewed the submitted information, we find it is not protected by the common law right to privacy. Therefore, the information may not be withheld from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code.

We note, however, that the submitted information includes motor vehicle information that is excepted from disclosure under section 552.130 of the Government Code.¹ Section 552.130 provides in relevant part:

(a) Information is excepted from the requirement of Section 552.021 if the information relates to

(1) a motor vehicle operator's or driver's license or permit issued by an agency of this state; [or]

(2) a motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state[.]

Thus, you must withhold the Texas driver's license and license plate information we have marked under section 552.130. You must release the remaining information to the requestor.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor

¹The Office of the Attorney General will raise mandatory exceptions like section 552.130 on behalf of a governmental body but will not ordinarily raise other exceptions. See Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Karen Hattaway
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KEH/sdk

Ref: ID# 203133

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Trish Choate
Times Record News
P.O. Box 120
Wichita Falls, Texas 76301
(w/o enclosures)