ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 9, 2006

Ms. Janis Kennedy Hampton
Assistant Bryan City Attorney
P.O. Box 1000
Bryan, Texas 77805

OR2006-06097

Dear Ms. Hampton:

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# 251855.

The Bryan Police Department (the "department") received a request for (1) information pertaining to a specified offense report, (2) all documents pertaining to two named individuals, and (3) all documents pertaining to two specified addresses. You indicate that the department does not have some of the requested information.[1] You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note that you did not submit the information pertaining to the specified offense report. We assume that, to the extent this information existed when the department received the request for information, you have released it to the requestor. If not, then you must do so immediately. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.006, 552.301, 552.302; Open Records Decision No. 664 (2000).

You assert that the submitted information is excepted under section 552.101 of the Government Code, which excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential

[1]We note the Act does not require a governmental body to disclose information that did not exist when the request for information was received. *Econ. Opportunities Dev. Corp. v. Bustamante*, 562 S.W.2d 266 (Tex.App.–San Antonio 1978, writ dism'd); Open Records Decision No. 452 at 3 (1986).

by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Section 552.101 encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which 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). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. A compilation of an individual's criminal history is highly embarrassing information, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person. *Cf. U.S. Dep't of Justice v. Reporters Comm. for Freedom of the Press*, 489 U.S. 749, 764 (1989) (when considering prong regarding individual's privacy interest, court recognized distinction between public records found in courthouse files and local police stations and compiled summary of information and noted that individual has significant privacy interest in compilation of one's criminal history). The submitted information does not depict either of the named individuals as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant; therefore, we find the department has not established that the submitted information is confidential under common-law privacy, and the department may not withhold the information under section 552.101 on that ground.

We note that some of the submitted information is excepted under section 552.130 of the Government Code, which provides that information relating to a motor vehicle operator's license, driver's license, motor vehicle title, or registration issued by a Texas agency is excepted from public release. Gov't Code § 552.130(a)(1), (2). The department must withhold the Texas motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130. The department 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, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the

Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, then the requestor 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 Office of the Attorney General 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,

James L. Coggeshall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JLC/eb

Ref: ID# 251855

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Tom Reed
State Farm Insurance
4444 Corona Street, Suite 140
Corpus Christi, Texas 78411
(w/o enclosures)