



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 6, 2008

Ms. Susan Camp-Lee
Sheets & Crossfield, P.C.
309 East Main Street
Round Rock, Texas 78664-5246

OR2008-06129

Dear Ms. Camp-Lee:

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# 309678.

The City of Round Rock (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for all documents concerning the investigation of a specified traffic accident. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note, and you acknowledge, that the city has not complied with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 of the Government Code in requesting this ruling. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(b), (e). 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 information is public and must be released unless a governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information to overcome this presumption. *See Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex.App.—Austin 1990, no writ) (governmental body must make compelling demonstration to overcome presumption of openness pursuant to statutory predecessor to Gov't Code § 552.302); Open Records Decision No. 319 (1982). Normally, a compelling reason to withhold information exists where some other source of law makes the information confidential or where third-party interests are at stake. *See* Open Records Decision No. 150 (1977). Because your claims under sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government

Code can provide compelling reasons for non-disclosure, we will consider the applicability of these exceptions to the submitted information.

Next, we note that the submitted information contains a CRB-3 report created pursuant to chapter 550 of the Transportation Code. Upon review of the written request, it appears that the requestor has excluded this information from the scope of his request. Thus we find that the submitted CRB-3 report, which we have marked, is not responsive to this request. Because this record is not responsive, it need not be released in response to this request, and we do not address it in this ruling.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes, including criminal history record information ("CHRI"). Title 28, part 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations governs the release of CHRI that states obtain from the federal government or other states. Open Records Decision No. 565 (1990). The federal regulations allow each state to follow its individual law with respect to CHRI it generates. *Id.* Section 411.083 of the Government Code deems confidential CHRI that the Texas Department of Public Safety ("DPS") maintains, except that the DPS may disseminate this information as provided in chapter 411, subchapter F of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 411.083. Sections 411.083(b)(1) and 411.089(a) authorize a criminal justice agency to obtain CHRI; however, a criminal justice agency may not release CHRI except to another criminal justice agency for a criminal justice purpose. *Id.* § 411.089(b)(1). Other entities specified in chapter 411 of the Government Code are entitled to obtain CHRI from DPS or another criminal justice agency; however, those entities may not release CHRI except as provided by chapter 411. *See generally id.* §§ 411.090 - .127. Upon review, the city must withhold the CHRI that you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with federal law and chapter 411 of the Government Code.

Section 552.101 also 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 (Tex. 1976). 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. *Id.* at 683. In addition, this office has found that the following types of information are excepted from required public disclosure under common-law privacy: some kinds of medical information or information indicating disabilities or specific illnesses, *see* Open Records Decision Nos. 470 (1987) (illness from severe emotional and job-related stress), 455 (1987) (prescription drugs, illnesses, operations, and physical handicaps); personal financial information not relating to the financial transaction between an individual and a

governmental body, *see* Open Records Decision Nos. 600 (1992), 545 (1990); and identities of victims of sexual abuse, *see* Open Records Decision Nos. 440 (1986), 393 (1983), 339 (1982). Therefore, the city must withhold the information you have marked under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information that "relates to . . . a motor vehicle operator's or driver's license or permit issued by an agency of this state [or] a motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state." Gov't Code § 552.130. Therefore, the city must withhold the Texas motor vehicle record information you have marked under section 552.130.

In summary, the city must withhold the information you have marked under sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government Code.¹ The remaining information must be released.²

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 file suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such a challenge, 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

¹We note that the submitted information contains a social security number subject to section 552.147 of the Government Code. Section 552.147(b) authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office under the Act. Gov't Code § 552.147.

²We note that some of the information being released is confidential and not subject to release to the general public. However, the requestor in this instance has a special right of access to a portion of the information protected by section 552.130. Gov't Code § 552.023 (person or person's authorized representative has special right of access to records that contain information relating to the person that are protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect that person's privacy interests). Because such information may be confidential with respect to the general public, if the department receives another request for this information from an individual other than this requestor, the department should again seek our decision.

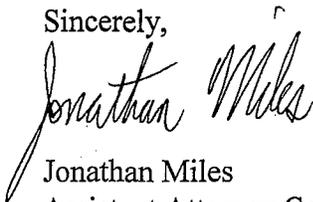
statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental 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 challenge 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. 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,



Jonathan Miles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JM/jh

Ref: ID# 309678

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Thomas B. Bleich
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(w/o enclosures)