



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

January 14, 2009

Mr. Miles K. Risley
City Attorney
City of Victoria
P.O. Box 1758
Victoria, Texas 77902-1758

OR2009-00592

Dear Mr. Risley:

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# 332252.

The Victoria Police Department (the "department") received a request for three categories of information related to a former employee. You claim that the submitted 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.

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. Section 552.101 also 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). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. The types 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); and identities of victims of sexual abuse, *see* Open Records Decision Nos. 440 (1986), 393 (1983), 339 (1982). This office has also concluded personal financial information not relating to a financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body is excepted from required public disclosure under common-law privacy. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 600 (1992), 545 (1990) (deferred compensation information, mortgage payments, assets, bills, and credit history protected under common-law privacy), 373 (1983) (sources of income not related to financial transaction between individual and governmental body protected under common-law privacy). But this office has found that the public has a legitimate interest in information relating to employees of governmental bodies and their employment qualifications and job performance. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 562 at 10(1990), 542 at 5 (1990); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 423 at 2 (1984) (scope of public employee privacy is narrow). We have marked the information that is confidential under common-law privacy. Therefore, the department must withhold this information under section 552.101. But the remaining information either is not highly intimate or embarrassing, or it is of legitimate public interest; therefore, the remaining information is not confidential under common-law privacy, and the department may not withhold it under section 552.101 on that ground.

Section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure the home addresses and telephone numbers, social security numbers, and family member information of current or former officials or employees of a governmental body who request that this information be kept confidential under section 552.024.¹ *See* Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(1). Whether a particular piece of information is protected by section 552.117 must be determined at the time the request for it is received. *See* Open Records Decision No. 530 at 5 (1989). Therefore, the department may only withhold information under section 552.117 on behalf of current or former officials or employees who made a request for confidentiality under section 552.024 prior to the date on which the request for information was received. In this case, you provide documentation showing that the employee at issue timely elected confidentiality under section 552.024. Thus, you must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code.²

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

¹ The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception like section 552.117 on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481(1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

² As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against the disclosure of this information.

§ 552.130. The department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

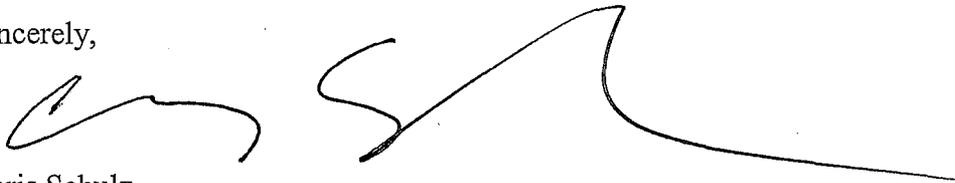
Section 552.136 states that “[n]otwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential.” Gov’t Code § 552.136. Accordingly, the department must withhold the insurance policy numbers we have marked under section 552.136 of the Government Code.

In summary, the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The department must also withhold the information we have marked under sections 552.117(a)(1), 552.130, and 552.136 of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released.

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

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General’s Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Schulz', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Schulz
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CS/cc

Ref: ID# 332252

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)