



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

GREG ABBOTT

January 16, 2009

Ms. Kristy Ashberry
City Secretary
385 South Goliad
Rockwall, Texas 75087

OR2009-00677

Dear Ms. Ashberry:

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# 332769.

The City of Rockwall (the "city") received a request for the identifying information of an individual involved in a specified incident. 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 some of the submitted information, which we have marked, is not responsive to the request for information. The city need not release nonresponsive information in response to this request, and this ruling will not address that information.

Next, section 552.101 excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. You raise section 552.101 in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege, which Texas courts have long recognized. *See Aguilar v. State*, 444 S.W.2d 935, 937 (Tex. Crim. App. 1969). The informer's privilege protects the identities of persons who report activities over which the governmental body has criminal or quasi-criminal law-enforcement authority, provided that the subject of the information does not already know the informer's identity. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 515 at 3 (1998), 208 at 1-2 (1978)*. The privilege protects the identities of individuals who report violations of statutes to the police or similar law-enforcement agencies, as well as those who report violations of statutes with civil or criminal penalties to "administrative officials having a duty of inspection or of law enforcement within their particular spheres." *See Open Records Decision No. 279 at 2 (1981) (citing Wigmore, Evidence, § 2374, at 767 (McNaughton rev. ed. 1961))*. The report must be of a violation of a criminal or civil statute. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 582*

at 2 (1990), 515 at 4-5 (1988). The privilege excepts the informer's statement only to the extent necessary to protect the informer's identity. *See* Open Records Decision No. 549 at 5 (1990).

You seek to withhold the information at issue, which identifies an individual who you state reported a violation or possible violation of the law. However, you have not identified any alleged violation, nor have you explained whether the alleged violation carries civil or criminal penalties. Accordingly, the city has failed to demonstrate that the informer's privilege is applicable to the information at issue. Thus, we conclude that the city may not withhold the information at issue under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the informer's privilege. The information at issue must be released to the requestor.

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,



Christopher D. Sterner
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CDSA/eeg

Ref: ID# 332769

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)