



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 15, 2009

Ms. Cheryl K. Byles
Assistant City Attorney
City of Fort Worth
1000 Throckmorton Street, 3rd Floor
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

OR2009-06618

Dear Ms. Byles:

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# 344180 (PIR# 2417-09).

The City of Fort Worth (the "city") received a request for environmental information pertaining to a specified address. You state the city will release most of the requested information. You claim portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code and privileged under rule 508 of the Texas Rules of Evidence. We have considered your arguments 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. 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 informer's 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 state the information you have marked identifies citizens who reported violations of the city code to city staff members charged with enforcement of the code. You also inform us violations of the code are punishable by civil and criminal penalties. Based on your representations, we conclude the city may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege.¹

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,



Olivia A. Maceo
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

OM/eeg

Ref: ID# 344180

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹As we are able to make this determination, we need not address your remaining claims against disclosure of this information.