



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

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Ms. Donna L. Johnson
Counsel for the City of Stafford
Olson & Olson L.L.P.
Wortham Tower, Suite 600
2727 Allen Parkway
Houston, Texas 77019

OR2013-05855

Dear Mr. Pertile:

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# 483656 (COS No. 13-005).

The Stafford Police Department (the "department"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a named department officer. You state the department will redact information as permitted by Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009)¹ and

¹Open Records Decision No. 684 is a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold certain categories of information, including L-2 and L-3 declarations under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 1701.306(b) of the Occupations Code and Texas license plate numbers under section 552.130(a)(2) of the Government Code, without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision.

sections 552.130,² 552.136,³ and 552.147⁴ of the Government Code. You claim some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.102, 552.117, and 552.130 of the Government Code.⁵ We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information. We have also received and considered comments from the requestor. *See* Gov't Code § 552.304 (interested party may submit comments stating why information should or should not be released).

Initially, we address the requestor's assertion that the department failed to meet its procedural obligations under section 552.301(b) of the Government Code. Pursuant to section 552.301(b), a governmental body must ask for a decision from this office and state the exceptions that apply within ten business days of receiving the written request. *See id.* § 552.301(b). The department states, and the request for information reflects, the department received the request for information on January 31, 2013. Thus, the department's ten-business-day deadline was February 14, 2013. The envelope in which the department submitted its request for a ruling required by section 552.301(b) is postmarked February 4, 2013. *See id.* § 552.308 (describing rules for calculating submission dates of documents sent via first class United States mail, common or contract carrier, or interagency mail). Consequently, we find the department complied with the requirements of section 552.301(b) in requesting this decision from our office. Thus, we will address the department's arguments against disclosure.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." *Id.* § 552.101. Section 552.101 of the Government Code encompasses section 550.065(b) of the Transportation Code, which states that except as provided by subsection (c), accident reports are privileged and confidential. *See* Transp. Code § 550.065. The submitted information contains ST-3 accident report forms that were completed pursuant to chapter 550

²Section 552.130(c) of the Government Code allows a governmental body to redact the information described in subsections 552.130(a)(1) and (a)(3) without the necessity of seeking a decision from the attorney general. *See* Gov't Code § 552.130(c). If a governmental body redacts such information, it must notify the requestor in accordance with section 552.130(e). *See id.* § 552.130(d), (e).

³Section 552.136(c) of the Government Code allows a governmental body to redact the information described in section 552.136(b) without the necessity of seeking a decision from the attorney general. *See* Gov't Code § 552.136(c). If a governmental body redacts such information, it must notify the requestor in accordance with section 552.136(e). *See id.* § 552.136(d), (e).

⁴Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision under the Act. *See* Gov't Code § 552.147(b).

⁵We note that although you raise section 552.1175 of the Government Code, section 552.117 is the proper exception to raise for information the department holds in its capacity as an employer.

of the Transportation Code. *See* Transp. Code § 550.064 (officer's accident report). Section 550.065(c)(4) provides for the release of an accident report to a person who provides two of the following three pieces of information: (1) date of the accident; (2) name of any person involved in the accident; and (3) specific location of the accident. *Id.* § 550.065(c)(4). Under this provision, the Texas Department of Transportation or another governmental entity is required to release a copy of an accident report to a person who provides the agency with two or more pieces of information specified by the statute. *Id.* The requestor has not provided the department with two of the three pieces of information. Thus, the department must withhold the ST-3 accident report forms, which we have marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 550.065(b) of the Transportation Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses the Medical Practice Act (the "MPA"), subtitle B of title 3 of the Occupations Code. *See* Occ. Code §§ 151.001-168.202. Section 159.002 of the MPA provides, in part:

(a) A communication between a physician and a patient, relative to or in connection with any professional services as a physician to the patient, is confidential and privileged and may not be disclosed except as provided by this chapter.

(b) A record of the identity, diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment of a patient by a physician that is created or maintained by a physician is confidential and privileged and may not be disclosed except as provided by this chapter.

(c) A person who receives information from a confidential communication or record as described by this chapter, other than a person listed in Section 159.004 who is acting on the patient's behalf, may not disclose the information except to the extent that disclosure is consistent with the authorized purposes for which the information was first obtained.

Id. § 159.002(a)-(c). Information that is subject to the MPA includes both medical records and information obtained from those medical records. *See id.* §§ 159.002, .004. This office has concluded the protection afforded by section 159.002 extends only to records created by either a physician or someone under the supervision of a physician. Upon review, we find portions of the submitted information constitute confidential medical records. Accordingly, the information we have marked must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the MPA.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses section 1701.306 of the Occupations Code. Section 1701.306 provides in relevant part the following:

(a) The [Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (“TCLEOSE”)] may not issue a license to a person unless the person is examined by:

(1) a licensed psychologist or by a psychiatrist who declares in writing that the person is in satisfactory psychological and emotional health to serve as the type of officer for which a license is sought; and

(2) a licensed physician who declares in writing that the person does not show any trace of drug dependency or illegal drug use after a blood test or other medical test.

(b) An agency hiring a person for whom a license is sought shall select the examining physician and the examining psychologist or psychiatrist. The agency shall prepare a report of each declaration required by Subsection (a) and shall maintain a copy of the report on file in a format readily accessible to [TCLEOSE]. A declaration is not public information.

Id. § 1701.306(a)-(b). Upon review, we find the department must withhold the L-2A declaration we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 1701.306 of the Occupations Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses section 1701.454 of the Occupations Code, which governs the public availability of an F-5 form (“Report of Separation of Licensee”) submitted to TCLEOSE under subchapter J of chapter 1701 of the Occupations Code. The submitted information contains F-5 forms that were created prior to the effective date of the amendment of section 1701.454 by the Seventy-ninth Legislature. *See* Act of May 25, 2005, 79th Leg., R.S., ch. 1298, § 4, 2005 Tex. Gen. Laws 4094, 4096. Thus, the F-5 forms at issue is governed by the previous version of section 1701.454. *See id.* § 6.⁶ Former section 1701.454 provided as follows:

(a) A report or statement submitted to [TCLEOSE] under this subchapter is confidential and is not subject to disclosure under [the Act] unless the person resigned or was terminated due to substantiated incidents of excessive force or violations of the law other than traffic offenses.

⁶Section 6 of the amending legislation states that “[t]he changes in law made by this Act in relation to employment termination reports apply only to an employment termination report under Subchapter J, Chapter 1701, Occupations Code, regarding a resignation or termination that occurs on or after the effective date of this Act. An employment termination report regarding a resignation or termination that occurs before the effective date of this Act is governed by the law as it existed immediately before the effective date, and that law is continued in effect for that purpose.” Act of May 25, 2005, 79th Leg., R.S., ch. 1298, § 6, 2005 Tex. Gen. Laws 4094, 4096.

(b) Except as provided by this subsection, a [TCLEOSE] member or other person may not release the contents of a report or statement submitted under this subchapter. The report or statement may be released only by the [TCLEOSE] employee having the responsibility to maintain the report or statement and only if:

(1) the head of a law enforcement agency or the agency head's designee makes a written request on the agency's letterhead for the report or statement accompanied by the agency head's or designee's signature; and

(2) the person who is the subject of the report or statement authorizes the release by providing a sworn statement on a form supplied by [TCLEOSE] that includes the person's waiver of liability regarding an agency head who is responsible for or who takes action based on the report or statement.

Occ. Code § 1701.454 (repealed 2005). Upon review, we find the F-5 forms we have marked are not subject to release under the provisions of former section 1701.454. Accordingly, the department must withhold the marked F-5 forms under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with former section 1701.454 of the Occupations Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses section 611.002 of the Health and Safety Code, which provides in pertinent part:

(a) Communications between a patient and a professional, and records of the identity, diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment of a patient that are created or maintained by a professional, are confidential.

(b) Confidential communications or records may not be disclosed except as provided by Section 611.004 or 611.0045.

Health & Safety Code § 611.002(a)-(b); *see id.* § 611.001 (defining "patient" and "professional"). Upon review, we find the information we have marked consists of confidential mental health records that are subject to chapter 611 of the Health and Safety Code. Accordingly, the department must withhold the marked information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with chapter 611 of the Health and Safety Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses chapter 411 of the Government Code, which pertains to criminal history record information ("CHRI") generated by the National Crime Information Center or by the Texas Crime Information Center. *See Gov't*

Code § 411.083(a). Title 28, part 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations governs the release of CHRI 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 laws with respect to the CHRI it generates. *See id.* Section 411.083 of the Government Code deems confidential CHRI the Texas Department of Public Safety (“DPS”) maintains, except 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. Similarly, any CHRI obtained from DPS or any other criminal justice agency must be withheld under section 552.101 in conjunction with chapter 411, subchapter F of the Government Code. We note section 411.083 does not apply to active warrant information or other information relating to one’s current involvement with the criminal justice system. *See id.* § 411.081(b) (police department allowed to disclose information pertaining to person’s current involvement in the criminal justice system). Further, CHRI does not include driving record information. *See id.* § 411.082(2)(B). Upon review, we find the information we have marked consists of confidential CHRI, and the department must withhold the marked information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with chapter 411. However, we find no portion of the remaining information consists of CHRI for the purposes of chapter 411, and the department may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.101 on that basis.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses the common-law right of privacy, which protects information if it (1) contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) 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. This office has found financial information that does not relate to a financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body ordinarily satisfies the first requirement of the test for common-law privacy. For example, information related to an individual’s mortgage payments, assets, bills, and credit history is generally protected by the common-law right to privacy. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 545 (1990), 23 (1989); see also Open Records Decision No. 600 (1992)* (public employee’s withholding allowance certificate, designation of beneficiary of employee’s retirement benefits, direct deposit authorization, and employee’s decisions regarding voluntary benefits programs are protected under common-law privacy). However, there is a legitimate public interest in the essential facts about a financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body. *See ORDs 600 at 9* (information revealing employee participation in group insurance plan funded partly or wholly by governmental body is not

excepted from disclosure), 545 (financial information pertaining to receipt of funds from governmental body or debts owed to governmental body not protected by common-law privacy). Whether the public's interest in obtaining personal financial information is sufficient to justify its disclosure must be made on case-by-case basis. *See* Open Records Decision No. 373 at 4 (1983). We also note the public generally has a legitimate interest in information that relates to public employment and public employees. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 542 (1990), 470 at 4 (1987) (public has legitimate interest in job qualifications and performance of public employees), 444 at 5-6 (1986) (public has legitimate interest in knowing reasons for dismissal, demotion, promotion, or resignation or public employees), 432 at 2 (1984) (scope of public employee privacy is narrow).

Upon review, we find the information we have marked is highly intimate or embarrassing and not of legitimate public concern. Accordingly, the department must withhold the marked information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, we find no portion of the remaining information is highly intimate or embarrassing and of no legitimate public concern. Accordingly, the department may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy.

Section 552.102(a) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information in a personnel file, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy." Gov't Code § 552.102(a). The Texas Supreme Court held section 552.102(a) excepts from disclosure the dates of birth of state employees in the payroll database of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. *Tex. Comptroller of Pub. Accounts v. Attorney Gen. of Tex.*, 354 S.W.3d 336 (Tex. 2010). Upon review, we find the department must withhold the dates of birth you have marked under section 552.102(a) of the Government Code.

Section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure the home address, home telephone number, emergency contact information, and social security number of a peace officer, as well as information that reveals whether the peace officer has family members, regardless of whether the peace officer complies with sections 552.024 and 552.1175 of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(2). Section 552.117(a)(2) applies to peace officers as defined by article 2.12 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Accordingly, the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code. However, you have not demonstrated how any of the remaining information consists of the home address, home telephone number, emergency contact information, social security number, or family member information of a peace officer, and it may not be withheld under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator's license, driver's license, motor vehicle title, or registration issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release. *See id.* § 552.130. Accordingly, the department must withhold the motor vehicle record information you have marked, as well as the additional information we have marked, under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, in conjunction with section 552.101 of the Government Code, the department must withhold the following: (1) the marked ST-3 accident report forms pursuant to section 560.065 of the Transportation Code; (2) the marked medical records pursuant to the MPA; (3) the marked L-2A declaration pursuant to section 1701.306 of the Occupations Code; (4) the marked F-5 forms pursuant to former section 1701.454 of the Occupations Code; and (5) the information we have marked under chapter 611 of the Health and Safety Code, chapter 411 of the Government Code; and common-law privacy. The department must withhold the dates of birth you have marked under section 552.102(a) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the information you have marked, as well as the information we have marked, under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The department must release the remaining information.

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, toll free at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Cynthia G. Tynan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CGT/akg

Ref: ID# 483656

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

