



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

June 25, 2013

Mr. Warren M.S. Ernst  
Chief of the General Counsel Division  
Office of the City Attorney  
City of Dallas  
1500 Marilla Street, Room 7BN  
Dallas, Texas 75201

OR2013-10740

Dear Mr. Ernst:

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# 496717.

The City of Dallas (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to a specified animal complaint. You claim some of 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.

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 from disclosure the identities of persons who report activities over which the governmental body has criminal or quasi-criminal law-enforcement authority, provided the subject of the information does not already know the informer's identity. *See Open Records Decision No. 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." *Open Records Decision No. 279 at 1-2 (1981) (citing 8 John H. Wigmore, Evidence in Trials at Common*

*Law*, § 2374, at 767 (J. 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 (1988).

You state portions of the submitted information identify a complainant who reported violations of a city ordinance to the city's Code Compliance Department (the "department"). You explain the department is responsible for enforcing the relevant city ordinance. You also state a violation of the relevant city ordinances is a misdemeanor punishable by fine. The submitted documentation reveals the requestor does not already know the identity of the informer. Based upon your representations and our review, we conclude the city has demonstrated the applicability of the common-law informer's privilege to the information at issue, which you have marked. Therefore, the city may withhold the marked information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. As you raise no further exceptions to disclosure, the city 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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl\\_ruling\\_info.shtml](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml), 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Claire V. Morris Sloan  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CVMS/som

Ref: ID# 496717

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)