ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 21, 2013

Ms. LeAnn M. Quinn
City Secretary
City of Cedar Park
450 Cypress Creek Road
Cedar Park, Texas 78613

OR2013-18276

Dear Ms. Quinn:

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# 507700 (Ref. No. 13-991).

The City of Cedar Park (the "city") received a request for the complaint pertaining to the requestor's dog.[1] You claim some of the requested 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 claim 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 the subject of the information does not already know the informer's identity. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 515 at 3 (1988), 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 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

[1]You state the city received clarification of the request. *See* Gov't Code § 552.222(b)(providing that if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify the request).

a criminal or civil statute. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 582 at 2 (1990), 515 at 4-5. 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 have marked the information the city seeks to withhold on the basis of the informer's privilege. You state the marked information identifies an individual who reported a possible violation of article 2.03 of the city's Code of Ordinances, pertaining to public nuisance animals, to the city's Animal Control Department (the "department"). You explain the department is charged with enforcing the ordinance. You inform us a violation of the ordinance is a misdemeanor offense. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the city may withhold the marked information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. *See* Open Records Decision No. 156 (1977) (name of person who makes complaint about another individual to city's animal control division is excepted from disclosure by informer's privilege so long as information furnished discloses potential violation of state law). 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, 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,

Tamara H. Holland
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

THH/bhf

Ref: ID# 507700

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)