ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

February 7, 2014

Mr. David Ritter
Assistant City Attorney
City of Plano
P.O. Box 860358
Plano, Texas 75086-0358

OR2014-02405

Dear Mr. Ritter:

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# 513628.

The City of Plano (the "city") received a request for information related to a specified 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. Section 552.101 encompasses information protected by the common-law informer's privilege, which has long been recognized by Texas courts. *See Aguilar v. State*, 444 S.W.2d 935, 937 (Tex. Crim. App. 1969); *Hawthorne v. State*, 10 S.W.2d 724, 725 (Tex. Crim. App. 1928). 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 report does not already know their identities. Open Records Decision Nos. 515 at 2-3 (1988), 434 at 1-2 (1986), 208 at 1-2 (1978). For the informer's privilege to apply, the report must be of a violation of a criminal or civil statute. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 582 at (1990), 515 at 3-4. The privilege affords protection to individuals who report violations of statutes to criminal 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)

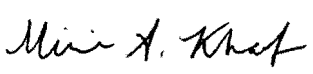
(citing 8 John H. Wigmore, *Evidence in Trials at Common Law*, § 2374, at 767 (J. McNaughton rev. ed. 1961)).

You assert portions of the submitted information reveal the identity of an individual who reported possible city code violations to the city's Animal Services Department. You indicate the subject of the report does not know the informer's identity, and the city has not revealed this information. You state the city's Animal Services Department is responsible for enforcing city code violations, including the code violation involved in the report at issue, and explain that a violation of the city code carries criminal penalties. Based on these representations, we conclude the city may withhold the information we have marked pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. However, we find the remaining information does not identify a complainant for purposes of the informer's privilege. Accordingly, the city may not withhold the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. As you raise no other 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, 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,



Miriam A. Khalifa
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MAK/akg

Ref: ID# 513628

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)