



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 1, 2014

Ms. Linda M. Champion
Assistant City Attorney
Legal Department
City of Victoria
P.O. Box 1758
Victoria, Texas 77902-1758

OR2014-17497

Dear Ms. Champion:

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# 538268.

The City of Victoria (the "city") received a request for an audio recording associated with a specified incident. You claim 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 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. Open Records Decision Nos. 515 at 3 (1988), 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

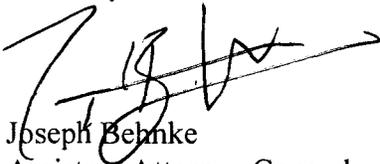
Decision No. 279 at 2 (1981) (citing 8 John H. Wigmore, *Evidence in Trials at Common Law* § 2374, at 767 (J. McNaughton rev. ed. 1961)). The report must be of a violation of a criminal or civil statute. See Open Records Decision Nos. 582 at 2 (1990), 515 at 4-5. The privilege excepts the informer's statement only to the extent necessary to protect the informer's identity. See Open Records Decision No. 549 at 5 (1990).

You state the submitted audio recording is protected under the informer's privilege. We understand the audio recording at issue relates to an individual who called the city's police department to report a possible violation of law. We note in some circumstances, where an oral statement is captured on tape and the voice of the informant is recognizable, it may be necessary to withhold the entire audio statement to protect the informant's identity. Open Records Decision No. 434 at 2 (1986). You do not indicate, nor does it appear, the subject of the complaint knows the identity of the complainant. Accordingly, we conclude the city may withhold the submitted audio recording in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege.

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,



Joseph Behnke
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JB/som

Ref: ID# 538268

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)