



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 3, 2015

Ms. Josette Flores
Assistant City Attorney
City of El Paso
Office of the City Attorney
P.O. Box 1890
El Paso, Texas 79950-1890

OR2015-18530

Dear Ms. Flores:

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# 583686 (Reference No. 15-1005-1146).

The City of El Paso (the "city") received a request for information regarding complaints made against two specified addresses. 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)*.

The privilege excepts the informer's statement only to the extent necessary to protect that informer's identity. Open Records Decision No. 549 at 5 (1990).

You claim the informer's privilege for the identities of complainants within the submitted information. You state some of the information pertains to reports of alleged violations of section 7.08.030 of the El Paso City Code. You also state a person violating any provision of Title 7 of the El Paso City Code is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine. Further, you state some of the information pertains to a report of animal cruelty, which is a violation of section 42.092 of the Texas Penal Code and carries criminal penalties. You state the alleged violations were reported to the city's police department and/or the city's code enforcement personnel. You state you have no indication the identities of the complainants are already known. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the city may withhold the complainants' identities under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. 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,



Kristi L. Godden
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KLK/cz

Ref: ID# 583686

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)