



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 8, 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

OR2015-18616

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# 584788 (El Paso Case No. 15-1005-1161).

The City of El Paso (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to two specified complaints. You inform us the city has released some of the requested information. 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 identity of complainants who reported an alleged violation of section 7.08.030 of the El Paso City Code. You state the alleged violation was 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. 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. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the city may withhold the complainants' identities, which we have marked, 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 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](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,



Nicholas A. Ybarra  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

NAY/cbz

Ref: ID# 584788

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)