



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 29, 2015

Ms. Jacky Casey
Assistant to the City Secretary
City of Rockwall
385 South Goliad Street
Rockwall, Texas 75087

OR2015-20360

Dear Ms. Casey:

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# 580984.

The City of Rockwall (the "city") received a request for information concerning code violation complaints against the requestor. 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.

Initially, we note some of the submitted information does not involve the requestor as the subject of the complaint. We conclude this information, which we marked, is not responsive to the request. The city is not required to release information that is not responsive to the request, and this office will not address the public availability of non-responsive 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). 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 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 information concerns complaints made to the city’s code enforcement officers alleging violations of various provisions within the city’s Code of Ordinances.

You explain violations of these ordinances are considered civil violations and carry fine penalties up to \$2,000. Upon review, we find these alleged violations were reported to the city’s code enforcement officers. Based on these representations and our review, we conclude the city may withhold the complainant’s identifying information, which we marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer’s privilege. The remaining information does not identify the complainant, and the city may not withhold it under section 552.101 of the Government Code. As you raise no other exceptions, 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,



Neal Falgoust
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

NF/bhf

Ref: ID# 580984

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)