



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 2, 2015

Mr. Justin Pruitt
Assistant City Attorney
City of Lubbock
P.O. Box 2000
Lubbock, Texas 79457

OR2015-20731

Dear Mr. Pruitt:

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# 581655 (File No. 1188).

The City of Lubbock (the "city") received a request for information pertaining 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.

Initially, we note a portion of the information you have submitted is not responsive to the instant request, which seeks only the identity of the complainant. This ruling does not address the public availability of non-responsive information, and the city is not required to release non-responsive information in response to this request.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This exception encompasses the 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. *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 city states the responsive information reveals the identity of a complainant who reported a possible violation of law under city ordinance to the city’s police department. We understand the violation of this ordinance would result in a potential fine. There is no indication the subject of the complaint knows the identity of the complainant. Based on the city’s representation and our review, we conclude the responsive information identifies the complainant; thus, the city may withhold the responsive information 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,



Katelyn Blackburn-Rader
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KB-R/akg

Ref: ID# 581655

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)