



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 29, 2015

Mr. Mark E. Dempsey
Assistant City Attorney
City of Garland
P.O. Box 469002
Garland, Texas 75046-9002

OR2015-22689

Dear Mr. Dempsey:

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# 591140.

The Garland Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident report. 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.

Initially we note the department has not complied with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 of the Government Code in requesting this ruling. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(b). When a governmental body fails to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301, the information at issue is presumed public and must be released unless there is a compelling reason to withhold it. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ) (governmental body must make a compelling demonstration to overcome the presumption of openness pursuant to the statutory predecessor of section 552.302); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Generally, a compelling reason to withhold information may exist when the information is made confidential by another source of law or affects third-party interests. *See* Open Records Decision No. 150 at 2 (1977). In this instance, portions of the submitted information are subject to section 552.101 of the Government Code. Section 552.101 can provide a

compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness. Accordingly, we will consider the applicability of section 552.101 to the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that (1) contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) is not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. Types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. Additionally, this office has concluded some kinds of medical information are generally highly intimate or embarrassing. *See* Open Records Decision No. 455 (1987). Upon review, we find most of the information you have marked satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Accordingly, with the exception of the information we have marked for release, the department must withhold the information you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

We note that the incident report contains a date of birth excepted from public disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. Section 552.101 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 the doctrine of common-law privacy. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). Under the common-law right of privacy, an individual has a right to be free from the publicizing of private affairs in which the public has no legitimate concern. *Id.* at 682. In considering whether a public citizen’s date of birth is private, the Third Court of Appeals looked to the supreme court’s rationale in *Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts v. Attorney General of Texas*, 354 S.W.3d 336 (Tex. 2010). *Paxton v. City of Dallas*, No. 03-13-00546-CV, 2015 WL 3394061, at *3 (Tex. App.—Austin May 22, 2015, pet. denied) (mem. op.). The supreme court concluded public employees’ dates of birth are private under section 552.102 of the Government Code because the employees’ privacy interest substantially outweighed the negligible public interest in disclosure.¹ *Tex. Comptroller*, 354 S.W.3d at 347-48. Based on *Texas Comptroller*, the court of appeals concluded the privacy rights of public employees apply equally to public citizens, and thus, public citizens’ dates of birth are also protected by common-law privacy pursuant to section 552.101. *City of Dallas*, 2015 WL 3394061, at *3. Thus, the department must withhold the date of birth we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code.

¹Section 552.102(a) excepts from disclosure “information in a personnel file, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.” Gov’t Code § 552.102(a).

We note, however, the requestor has a special right of access under section 552.023 of the Government Code to her own date of birth which would otherwise be withheld to protect her privacy. *See* Gov't Code § 552.023(a) (person or person's authorized representative has special right of access to information held by governmental body that relates to person and that is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect person's privacy interests); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individual requests information concerning herself). Thus, the department may not withhold the requestor's date of birth from her under section 552.101 on that basis.

In summary, except for information we have marked for release, the department must withhold the information you have marked, as well as the date of birth we have marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The department 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jesse Harvey", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jesse Harvey
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JH/eb

Ref: ID# 591140

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)