



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

November 3, 2015

Ms. Linda A. Samples
Assistant City Attorney
Office of the City Attorney
City of El Paso
P.O. Box 1890
El Paso, Texas 79950-1890

OR2015-23044

Dear Ms. Samples:

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# 585746 (Ref. No. 15-1026-6543).

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

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts "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, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person and (2) 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).

Generally, only highly intimate information that implicates the privacy of an individual is withheld. However, in certain instances, where it is demonstrated that the requestor knows the identity of the individual involved, as well as the nature of certain incidents, the submitted information must be withheld in its entirety to protect the individual's privacy. In this instance, the requestor knows the identity of the individual involved as well as the nature of the submitted information. Therefore, withholding only the individual's identity or certain details of the incident from the requestor would not preserve the subject individual's common-law right of privacy. Accordingly, to protect the privacy of the individual to whom the information relates, the department generally must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

However, the requestor may be the spouse of the individual whose privacy interests are at issue. Thus, the requestor may be acting as the authorized representative of the individual, and may have a right of access to information pertaining to the individual that would otherwise be confidential under common-law privacy. Section 552.023(a) states "a person's authorized representative has a special right of access, beyond the right of the general public, to information held by a governmental body that relates to the person and that is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect that person's privacy interests." Gov't Code § 552.023; *see* Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individual requests information concerning himself). Accordingly, if the requestor is acting as the authorized representative of the individual whose private information is at issue, then the department may not withhold any portion of the submitted information from this requestor under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. Instead, in that instance, the department must release the submitted information in its entirety to this requestor. Conversely, if the requestor is not acting as the authorized representative of the individual, then the department must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

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 cursive script, appearing to read "Lee Seidlits".

Lee Seidlits
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CLS/som

Ref: ID# 585746

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)