



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

January 5, 2016

Mr. Peter G. Smith  
City Attorney  
City of Richardson  
P.O. Box 831078  
Richardson, Texas 75083-1078

OR2016-00208

Dear Mr. Smith:

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# 592971 (Richardson File No. 15-853).

The Richardson Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. You state the department released some 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. This section encompasses 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 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 (1988).

You seek to withhold the identity of an individual who reported an alleged criminal violation to the department. Upon review, we find you have demonstrated the applicability of the common-law informer's privilege to the information you marked and indicated. Therefore, the department may withhold the information you marked and indicated under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege.<sup>1</sup> As you raise no exceptions to disclosure for the remaining information, it must be released.

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,



Paige Thompson  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

PT/bw

Ref: ID# 592971

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

---

<sup>1</sup>As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure of this information.