



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 4, 2016

Mr. Zachary Noblitt
Assistant City Attorney
City of Dallas
1500 Marilla Street, Room 7DN
Dallas, Texas 75201

OR2016-02787

Dear Mr. Noblitt:

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# 598612.

The City of Dallas (the "city") received a request for information regarding a specified incident. You state the city will release some information to the requestor. You indicate the city will redact certain information pursuant to Open Records Letter No. 2011-18466 (2011).¹ You claim a portion of the remaining submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code.² 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." *Id.* § 552.101.

¹Open Records Letter No. 2011-18466 is a previous determination issued to the city's police department authorizing it to withhold, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code, an originating address of a 9-1-1 caller furnished by a service supplier established in accordance with chapter 772 of the Health and Safety Code without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision.

²We note, and you acknowledge, the city did not comply with section 552.301 of the Government Code in requesting this decision. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(b), (e). Nevertheless, because the exception you claim can provide a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness, we will consider your claimed exception for the submitted information. *See id.* §§ 552.007, .302, .352.

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. We note you seek to withhold information pertaining to a deceased individual under common-law privacy. Because “the right of privacy is purely personal,” that right “terminates upon the death of the person whose privacy is invaded.” *Moore v. Charles B. Pierce Film Enters., Inc.*, 589 S.W.2d 489, 491 (Tex. Civ. App.—Texarkana 1979, writ ref’d n.r.e.); see also *Justice v. Belo Broadcasting Corp.*, 472 F. Supp. 145, 147 (N.D. Tex. 1979) (“action for invasion of privacy can be maintained only by a living individual whose privacy is invaded” (quoting RESTATEMENT (SECOND) OF TORTS § 652I)); Attorney General Opinions JM-229 (1984) (“the right of privacy lapses upon death”), H-917 (1976) (“We are . . . of the opinion that the Texas courts would follow the almost uniform rule of other jurisdictions that the right of privacy lapses upon death.”); Open Records Decision No. 272 (1981) (“the right of privacy is personal and lapses upon death”). Accordingly, we find the city has failed to demonstrate the information at issue is highly intimate or embarrassing and of no legitimate public concern. Accordingly, the city may not withhold any of the information at issue under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. As you raise no other exceptions to disclosure, the city must release the submitted 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,



Kristi L. Godden
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KLG/bw

Ref: ID# 598612

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)