



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 23, 2016

Ms. Josette Flores
Assistant City Attorney
Office of the City Attorney
City of El Paso
P.O. Box 1890
El Paso, Texas 79950-1890

OR2016-06652

Dear Ms. Flores:

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# 609206 (Ref. No. 16-1005-1288).

The City of El Paso (the "city") received a request for a specified animal complaint. 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 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 information protected by the common-law 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. Open Records Decision Nos. 515 at 3 (1988), 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). 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.

You claim the informer's privilege for the identity of a complainant who reported an alleged violation of section 7.04.080 of the El Paso City Code. You state the alleged violation was reported to the city's police department and/or the city's code enforcement personnel. You state you have no indication the identity of the complainant is already known. You also state a person violating any provision of Title 7 of the El Paso City Code is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the city may withhold the complainant's identity, which we have marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. *See* Open Records Decision No. 156 (1977) (name of person who makes complaint about another individual to city's animal control division is excepted by informer's privilege so long as information furnished discloses potential violation of state law). The city 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,



Britni Ramirez
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

BR/bhf

Ref: ID# 609206

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)