



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 1, 2016

Ms. Linda Pemberton  
Paralegal  
City of Killeen  
P. O. Box 1329  
Killeen, Texas 76540-1329

OR2016-15053

Dear Ms. Pemberton:

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# 622952 (ORR ID number W019407).

The City of Killeen (the "city") received a request for a specified complaint. You claim the requested 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. You raise section 552.101 in conjunction with 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. *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 1-2 (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 (1988).

However, witnesses who provide information in the course of an investigation but do not make a report of the violation are not informants for the purposes of claiming the informer's privilege. The privilege excepts the informer's statement only to the extent necessary to protect that informer's identity. Open Records Decision No. 549 at 5 (1990). We note the informer's privilege does not apply where the informant's identity is known to the individual who is the subject of the complaint. *See* ORD 208 at 1-2.

You state the requested information identifies a complainant who reported a violation of a city ordinance to the city's Animal Services Unit, which you explain is responsible for enforcing the relevant portions of the city ordinance. You also state a violation of the relevant city ordinance carries civil or criminal penalties. You do not indicate, nor does it appear, the subject of the complaint knows the identity of the complainant. Based upon your representations and our review, we conclude the city has demonstrated the applicability of the common-law informer's privilege to some of the requested information. Therefore, the city may withhold most of the information you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. However, some of the information you have marked does not identify the complainant. Thus with the exception of the information we have marked for release, the city may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. The remaining information 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,



Jesse Harvey  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JH/eb

Ref: ID# 622952

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)