



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 20, 2016

Mr. Andrew J. Decker  
Counsel for the City of Watauga  
Evans, Daniel, Moore, Evans & Biggs  
115 West Second Street, Suite 202  
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

OR2016-16369

Dear Mr. Decker:

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# 625216 (ORR# 16-67).

The City of Watauga (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for water bills for a specified account and time period. 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 information protected by other statutes. Section 182.052 of the Utilities Code provides in relevant part the following:

- (a) Except as provided by Section 182.054, a government-operated utility may not disclose personal information in a customer's account record, or any information relating to the volume or units of utility usage or the amounts billed to or collected from the individual for utility usage, if the customer requests that the government-operated utility keep the information confidential. However, a government-operated utility may disclose information related to the customer's volume or units of utility usage or amounts billed to or collected from the individual for utility usage if the primary source of water for such utility was a sole-source designated aquifer.

(b) A customer may request confidentiality by delivering to the government-operated utility an appropriately marked form provided under Subsection (c)(3) or any other written request for confidentiality.

Util. Code § 182.052(a)-(b). “Personal information” under section 182.052(a) means an individual’s address and telephone number, but does not include the individual’s name. *See id.* § 182.051(4); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 625 (1994) (construing statutory predecessor). We note because section 182.052 is intended to protect the safety and privacy of individual customers, this statute is applicable only to information pertaining to natural persons, and does not protect information relating to business, governmental, and other artificial entities. *See* ORD 625 at 4-5 (in context of section 182.051(4) of the Utility Code, “individual” means only natural persons and does not include artificial entities). Water is included in the scope of utility services covered by section 182.052. Util. Code § 182.051(3).

You argue portions of the submitted information are confidential under section 182.052 of the Utilities Code. Upon review, we find the information at issue consists of the address and billing information of a business entity. Accordingly, the information you have marked is not subject to section 182.052 of the Utilities Code, and it may not be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code on that basis. Thus, 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](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,



Claire V. Morris Sloan  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CVMS/som

Ref: ID# 625216

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)