



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 12, 2016

Ms. LeAnn M. Quinn
City Secretary
City of Cedar Park
450 Cypress Creek Road
Cedar Park, Texas 78613

OR2016-20471

Dear Ms. Quinn:

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# 631745 (Ref. No. 16-1165).

The Cedar Park Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified citation. You claim portions of the submitted information are 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, 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 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)*.

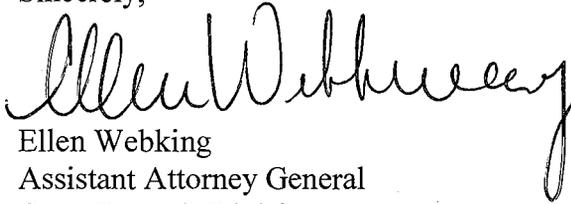
However, individuals who provide information in the course of an investigation are not informants for the purposes of claiming the informer's privilege. The privilege excepts the informer's statement only to the extent necessary to protect that informer's identity. Open Records Decision No. 549 at 5 (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* Open Records Decision No. 208 at 1-2 (1978).

You state the information you have marked identifies a complainant who reported a possible violation of a city ordinance to the department. You inform us a violation of the relevant city ordinance is a Class C misdemeanor. We have no indication the subject of the complaint already knows the identity of the informer. Based upon your representations and our review, we conclude the department has demonstrated the applicability of the common-law informer's privilege to the information at issue. Therefore, the department may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. As no further exceptions to disclosure have been raised, the department must release the remaining information.¹

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,



Ellen Webking
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

EW/bw

¹We note the requestor has a right of access to some of the information being released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.023(a) (governmental body may not deny access to person to whom information relates or person's agent on ground that information is considered confidential by privacy principles); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4. (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individuals request information concerning themselves). Thus, if the department receives another request for the same information from a different requestor, the department must again seek a decision from this office.

Ref: ID# 631745

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)