



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 1, 2016

Ms. Aimee Alcorn
Assistant City Attorney
Legal Department
City of Corpus Christi
P.O. Box 9277
Corpus Christi, Texas 78469-9277

OR2016-04901

Dear Ms. Alcorn:

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# 600107 (CCPD File No. SLeel).

The Corpus Christi Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to the investigations of sustained complaints against department officers during a specified time period.¹ You state the department is releasing some of the requested information to the requestor. You claim portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.130, and 552.152 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.²

¹We note the department sent the requestor an estimate of charges pursuant to section 552.2615 of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 552.2615. The estimate of charges required the requestor to provide a deposit for payment of anticipated costs under section 552.263 of the Government Code. *See id.* § 552.263(a). You inform us the department received the required deposit on December 4, 2015. *See id.* § 552.263(e) (if governmental body requires deposit or bond for anticipated costs pursuant to section 552.263, request for information is considered to have been received on date governmental body receives bond or deposit).

²We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

Initially, we note the department seeks to withhold the dates of birth of public citizens. In Open Records Letter No. 2016-00831 (2016), this office issued a previous determination to the department authorizing it to withhold the dates of birth of public citizens under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy without requesting a decision from this office. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(a); Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001) (listing elements of second type of previous determination under section 552.301(a) of the Government Code). Accordingly, the department must withhold the dates of birth of public citizens in accordance with the previous determination issued in Open Records Letter No. 2016-00831.

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 deemed confidential by statute, such as section 143.089 of the Local Government Code. You state the City of Corpus Christi (the “city”) is a civil service city under chapter 143 of the Local Government Code. Section 143.089 contemplates two different types of personnel files, a police officer's civil service file that the civil service director is required to maintain, and an internal file that the police department may maintain for its own use. Local Gov't Code § 143.089(a), (g). Under section 143.089(a), the police officer's civil service file must contain certain specified items, including commendations, periodic evaluations by the officer's supervisor, and documents relating to any misconduct in any instance in which the department took disciplinary action against the officer under chapter 143 of the Local Government Code. *Id.* § 143.089(a)(1)-(3). Chapter 143 prescribes the following types of disciplinary actions: removal, suspension, demotion, and uncompensated duty. *Id.* §§ 143.051-.055. We note a written reprimand is not a disciplinary action for purposes of section 143.089. *See* Attorney General Opinion JC-0257 (2000). In cases in which a police department investigates an officer's misconduct and takes disciplinary action against an officer, it is required by section 143.089(a)(2) to place all investigatory records relating to the investigation and disciplinary action, including background documents such as complaints, witness statements, and documents of like nature from individuals who were not in a supervisory capacity, in the officer's civil service file maintained under section 143.089(a). *See Abbott v. Corpus Christi*, 109 S.W.3d 113, 122 (Tex. App.—Austin 2003, no pet.).

All investigatory materials in a case resulting in disciplinary action are “from the employing department” when they are held by or are in the possession of the department because of its investigation into an officer's misconduct, and the department must forward them to the civil service commission for placement in the civil service personnel file. *Id.* Such records may not be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 143.089 of the Local Government Code. *See* Local Gov't Code § 143.089(f); Open Records Decision No. 562 at 6 (1990). Information relating to alleged misconduct or disciplinary action taken must be removed from the officer's civil service file if the department determines that there is insufficient evidence to sustain the charge of misconduct or that the disciplinary action was taken without just cause. *See* Local Gov't Code § 143.089(b)-(c).

Section 143.089(g) authorizes a police department to maintain, for its own use, a separate and independent internal personnel file relating to a police officer. *See id.* § 143.089(g). Section 143.089(g) provides as follows:

A fire or police department may maintain a personnel file on a fire fighter or police officer employed by the department for the department's use, but the department may not release any information contained in the department file to any agency or person requesting information relating to a fire fighter or police officer. The department shall refer to the director or the director's designee a person or agency that requests information that is maintained in the fire fighter's or police officer's personnel file.

Id. § 143.089(g). In *City of San Antonio v. Texas Attorney General*, 851 S.W.2d 946 (Tex. App.—Austin 1993, writ denied), the court addressed a request for information contained in a police officer's personnel file maintained by the police department for its use and the applicability of section 143.089(g) to that file. The records included in the departmental personnel file related to complaints against the police officer for which no disciplinary action was taken. The court determined section 143.089(g) made these records confidential. *See City of San Antonio*, 851 S.W.2d at 949; *see also City of San Antonio v. San Antonio Express-News*, 47 S.W.3d 556 (Tex. App.—San Antonio 2000, pet. denied) (restricting confidentiality under Local Gov't Code § 143.089(g) to "information reasonably related to a police officer's or fire fighter's employment relationship"); Attorney General Opinion JC-0257 at 6-7 (addressing functions of Local Gov't Code § 143.089(a) and (g) files). Information maintained in a police department's internal file pursuant to section 143.089(g) is confidential and must not be released. *See City of San Antonio*, 851 S.W.2d at 949.

You state the information you have indicated is kept in the department's internal personnel files in accordance with section 143.089(g). Upon review, we agree the information you have indicated is confidential pursuant to section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code and must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code.³ However, we note case numbers 2015IC-0026, 2015IC-0030, and 2015IC-0087 involved misconduct resulting in suspensions of the involved officers. As described above, documents in an officer's internal department file that relate to any misconduct in cases in which the department took disciplinary action against the officer must be included in the officer's civil service file. *See* Local Gov't Code § 143.089(a)(2). Thus, the submitted information relating to case numbers 2015IC-0026, 2015IC-0030, and 2015IC-0087 must be placed in the officers' civil service files, unless the department has already done so. However, because the department received the request, to the extent the department maintains the information at issue in the section 143.089(g) files for the officers at issue, the information relating to case numbers 2015IC-0026, 2015IC-0030, and 2015IC-0087 is confidential under

³As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure of this information.

section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code and must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code.⁴ To the extent that information is not contained in the officers' section 143.089(g) files, the department may not withhold it under section 552.101 of the Government Code on that basis, and we will address whether any other exceptions to disclosure apply to this information. We will also address whether the remaining submitted information must be released to the requestor.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses information that other statutes make confidential, including federal law. *See English v. Gen. Elec. Co.*, 496 U.S. 72, 79 (1990). Effective November 19, 2001, Congress enacted the Aviation and Transportation Security Act ("ATSA"), which created the United States Transportation Security Administration ("TSA"), a new agency within the United States Department of Transportation ("DOT") headed by the Under Secretary of Transportation for Security (the "Under Secretary"). *See* 49 U.S.C. § 114(a), (b)(1). The ATSA provides that, by November 19, 2002, the responsibility for inspecting persons and property carried by aircraft operators and foreign air carriers will be transferred from the Federal Aviation Administration (the "FAA") Administrator to the Under Secretary as head of the TSA. These responsibilities include carrying out the requirements of chapter 449 of title 49 of the United States Code, which pertain to civil aviation security. *See id.* § 114(d)(1). Section 40119 of title 49, a provision that formerly applied to the FAA Administrator, now states:

Notwithstanding [the Federal Freedom of Information Act (the "FOIA")] and the establishment of a Department of Homeland Security [{"DHS"}], the [Under Secretary] shall prescribe regulations prohibiting disclosure of information obtained or developed in ensuring security under this title if the [Under Secretary] decides disclosing the information would

- (A) be an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;
- (B) reveal a trade secret or privileged or confidential commercial or financial information; or
- (C) be detrimental to transportation safety.

Id. § 40119(b)(1). The language of this provision authorizes TSA's Under Secretary to prescribe regulations "prohibiting disclosure of information obtained or developed in ensuring security." It authorizes the Under Secretary to prescribe regulations that prohibit disclosure of information requested not only under the FOIA, but also under other disclosure statutes. *Cf. Pub. Citizen, Inc. v. Fed. Aviation Admin.*, 988 F.2d 186, 194 (D.C. Cir. 1993)

⁴We note section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code requires a police department that receives a request for information maintained in a file under section 143.089(g) to refer the requestor to the civil service director or the director's designee.

(former section 40119 authorized FAA Administrator to prescribe regulations prohibiting disclosure of information under other statutes as well as under FOIA). Thus, the Under Secretary is authorized by section 40119(b)(1) to prescribe regulations that prohibit disclosure of information requested under the Act.

Pursuant to the mandate and authority of section 40119, the DOT's FAA and TSA jointly published new regulations pertaining to civil aviation security, which are found in title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations and which took effect February 17, 2002. *See* 67 Fed. Reg. 8340. Section 1520.1(a) of these regulations explains that the regulations govern the "maintenance, safeguarding, and disclosure of records and information that TSA has determined to be Sensitive Security Information [(“SSI”)], as defined in § 1520.5." 49 C.F.R. § 1520.1(a). Section 1520.7 states the covered persons to which these regulations apply include, among others, airport operators, such as the city, and "[e]ach person employed by, contracted to, or acting for a covered person[.]" *See id.* § 1520.7(a), (k). Further, section 1520.7(j) specifies these regulations apply to "[e]ach person who has access to SSI, as specified in [section] 1520.11." *Id.* § 1520.7(j). Pursuant to section 1520.11(a), a person has a need to know SSI "[w]hen the person requires access to specific SSI to carry out transportation security activities approved, accepted, funded, recommended, or directed by DHS or DOT." *See id.* § 1520.11(a). Section 1520.11(b) further states a local government employee has a need to know SSI if access to the information is necessary for performance of the employee's official duties on behalf or in defense of the interests of the local government. *See id.* § 1520.11(b)(1). Thus, the regulations in title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations apply to the system.

As to the release of information by persons other than TSA, section 1520.9(a) of title 49 provides in part that a person to which these regulations apply has a duty to protect information, and may disclose SSI "only to covered persons who have a need to know, unless otherwise authorized in writing by TSA, the Coast Guard, or the Secretary of DOT." *Id.* § 1520.9(a). Section 1520.9(a)(3) of title 49 further provides those covered by the regulation must "[r]efer requests by other persons for SSI to TSA or the applicable component or agency within DOT or DHS." *Id.* § 1520.9(a)(3). SSI is defined to include certain information obtained or developed in the conduct of security activities, the disclosure of which TSA has determined would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy, reveal trade secrets or privileged or confidential information obtained from any person, or be detrimental to the security of transportation. *Id.* § 1520.5(a). SSI includes, but is not limited to, "identifying information of certain transportation security personnel[.]" "[l]ists of the names or other identifying information that identify persons as . . . [h]aving unescorted access to a secure area of an airport," and "[a]ny information not otherwise described . . . that TSA determines is SSI under 49 U.S.C. 114(s) or that the Secretary of DOT determines is SSI under 49 U.S.C. 40119." *Id.* § 1520.5(b).

You state the information you have indicated pertains to surveillance footage, release of which could compromise the security and safety of the airport at issue. Based on the statutory and regulatory scheme described above, we conclude the decision to release or

withhold the information in question is not for this office or the department to make, but rather is a decision for the Under Secretary as head of the TSA. *See English*, 496 U.S. at 79 (state law is preempted to extent it actually conflicts with federal law). Therefore, the department may not release the information you have indicated at this time under the Act, but instead must refer the information to the TSA to make a determination concerning disclosure of the information.⁵

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses information made confidential by section 6103(a) of title 26 of the United States Code. Prior decisions of this office have held section 6103(a) of title 26 of the United States Code renders federal tax return information confidential. *See* Attorney General Opinion H-1274 (1978) (tax returns); Open Records Decision Nos. 600 (1992) (W-4 forms), 226 (1979) (W-2 forms). Section 6103(b) defines the term “return information” as “a taxpayer’s identity, the nature, source, or amount of his income, payments, receipts, deductions, exemptions, credits, assets, liabilities, net worth, tax liability, tax withheld, deficiencies, overassessments, or tax payments . . . or any other data, received by, recorded by, prepared by, furnished to, or collected by the Secretary [of the Treasury] with respect to a return or with respect to the determination of the existence, or possible existence, of liability, . . . for any tax, penalty, interest, fine, forfeiture, or other imposition, or offense[.]” *See* 26 U.S.C. § 6103(b)(2)(A). Federal courts have construed the term “return information” expansively to include any information gathered by the Internal Revenue Service regarding a taxpayer’s liability under title 26 of the United States Code. *See Mallas v. Kolak*, 721 F. Supp 748, 754 (M.D.N.C. 1989), *aff’d in part*, 993 F.2d 1111 (4th Cir. 1993). Thus, the submitted W-2 form, which we have marked, constitutes tax return information that is confidential under section 6103(a) of title 26 of the United States Code and must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code.

You claim a portion of the remaining information, which you have indicated, is protected under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 418.182 of the Government Code, which was added to chapter 418 of the Government Code as part of the Texas Homeland Security Act (the “HSA”). Section 418.182(a) of the Government Code provides, in relevant part, “information . . . in the possession of a governmental entity that relates to the specifications, operating procedures, or location of a security system used to protect public or private property from an act of terrorism or related criminal activity is confidential.” Gov’t Code § 418.182(a). The fact that information may be related to a security system does not make the information per se confidential under section 418.182. *See* Open Records Decision No. 649 at 3 (1996) (language of confidentiality provision controls scope of its protection). Furthermore, the mere recitation by a governmental body of a statute’s key terms is not sufficient to demonstrate the applicability of a claimed provision. As with any confidentiality provision, a governmental body asserting section 418.182 must adequately explain how the responsive information falls within the

⁵As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

scope of the statute. See Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(A) (governmental body must explain how claimed exception to disclosure applies).

The information at issue consists of surveillance video recordings at the city's detention center (the "center"). You state the surveillance video system is part of the center's security system. You assert the recordings contain information that identifies the specifications, operating procedures, location, and vulnerabilities of the security system, including blind spots, camera ranges, picture clarity, image quality, angles, and zoom capacity. You further assert the release of the information at issue would compromise the center's security and inhibit center personnel's ability to maintain the location secure from terroristic acts and related criminal activity. Upon review, we find the information at issue relates to the specifications, operating procedures, or location of a security system used to protect public or private property from an act of terrorism or related criminal activity. *See Tex. Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Abbott*, 310 S.W.3d 670 (Tex. App.—Austin 2010, no pet.) (recorded images of Texas Department of Public Safety video taken from Capitol security cameras relate to specifications of security system used to protect public property from act of terrorism or related criminal activity). Accordingly, the department must withhold the video recordings you have indicated under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 418.182(a) of the Government Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses information made confidential by the Medical Practice Act ("MPA"), subtitle B of title 3 of the Occupations Code, which governs release of medical records. Section 159.002 of the MPA provides, in relevant part:

- (a) A communication between a physician and a patient, relative to or in connection with any professional services as a physician to the patient, is confidential and privileged and may not be disclosed except as provided by this chapter.
- (b) A record of the identity, diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment of a patient by a physician that is created or maintained by a physician is confidential and privileged and may not be disclosed except as provided by this chapter.
- (c) A person who receives information from a confidential communication or record as described by this chapter, other than a person listed in Section 159.004 who is acting on the patient's behalf, may not disclose the information except to the extent that disclosure is consistent with the authorized purposes for which the information was first obtained.

Occ. Code § 159.002(a)-(c). Information subject to the MPA includes both medical records and information obtained from those medical records. *See id.* §§ 159.002, .004. This office has concluded the protection afforded by section 159.002 extends only to records created by either a physician or someone under the supervision of a physician. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 487 (1987), 370 (1983), 343 (1982)*. Upon review, we find the information

we have marked constitutes records of the identity, diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment of a patient by a physician that were created or are maintained by a physician. Accordingly, the department must withhold the marked medical records under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the MPA.

Section 552.139 of the Government code provides, in part, “a photocopy or other copy of an identification badge issued to an official or employee of a governmental body” is confidential.⁶ Gov’t Code § 552.139(b)(3). Therefore, the department must withhold the copy of the identification badge issued to an employee of a governmental body, which you have indicated, under section 552.139 of the Government Code.⁷

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also 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. Additionally, this office has concluded some kinds of medical information are generally highly intimate or embarrassing. *See* Open Records Decision No. 455 (1987). This office has also found personal financial information not relating to a financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body is generally highly intimate or embarrassing. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 600 (1992) (personal financial information includes choice of particular insurance carrier), 523 (1989) (common-law privacy protects credit reports, financial statements, and other personal financial information), 373 (1983) (sources of income not related to financial transaction between individual and governmental body protected under common-law privacy). Upon review, we find the information we have marked and indicated satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Accordingly, the department must withhold the information we have marked and indicated under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, the department has failed to demonstrate the remaining information is highly intimate or embarrassing and of no legitimate public interest. Thus, the department may not withhold the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

Section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure the home address, home telephone number, emergency contact information, social security number, and family member information of a peace officer, regardless of whether the peace officer complies with section 552.024 or 552.1175 of the Government Code. Gov’t Code § 552.117(a)(2). You

⁶The Office of the Attorney General will raise mandatory exceptions on behalf of a governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

⁷As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your argument against disclosure of this information.

state the department lacks the technological capability to redact information from the audio recordings. However, because the department had the ability to copy the submitted audio recordings at issue in order to submit the requested information for our review, we believe the department has the capacity to produce copies of only the non-confidential portions of the audio recordings at issue. Accordingly, the department must withhold the information we have indicated under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator's license, driver's license, motor vehicle title or registration, or personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release. *See id.* § 552.130. Thus, the department must withhold the motor vehicle record information you have indicated, in addition to the information we have indicated, in the remaining information under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, the department must withhold the dates of birth of public citizens in accordance with the previous determination issued in Open Records Letter No. 2016-00831. The department must withhold the information you have indicated under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code. Further, to the extent the department maintains the information at issue in the section 143.089(g) files for the officers at issue, the information relating to case numbers 2015IC-0026, 2015IC-0030, and 2015IC-0087 is confidential under section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code and must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code. The department may not release the airport surveillance information you have indicated at this time under the Act, but instead must refer the information to the TSA to make a determination concerning disclosure of the information. The department must withhold the W-2 form we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 6103(a) of title 26 of the United States Code. The department must withhold the video recordings you have indicated under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 418.182(a) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the marked medical records under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the MPA. The department must withhold the copy of the identification badge issued to an employee of a governmental body, which you have indicated, under section 552.139 of the Government Code. The department must withhold the information we have marked and indicated under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The department must withhold the information we have indicated under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the motor vehicle record information you have indicated, in addition to the information we have indicated, in the remaining information under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The department must release the remaining information.⁸

⁸We note the information being released contains social security numbers. Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office. *See Gov't Code* § 552.147(b).

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,



Lee Seidlits
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CLS/som

Ref: ID# 600107

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)