



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 3, 2017

Ms. Marie N. Rovira  
Counsel for the City of Lavon  
Messer, Rockefeller & Fort, PLLC  
6351 Preston Road, Suite 350  
Frisco, Texas 75034

OR2017-04603

Dear Ms. Rovira:

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# 647726.

The City of Lavon (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for all information pertaining to a named individual, including four specified cases. You state the city has released some information. You claim some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup> We have considered the exceptions 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

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<sup>1</sup>Although you do not raise section 552.130 in your brief, we understand you to raise this section based on your markings in the submitted information.

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). 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). However, witnesses who provide information in the course of an investigation but does not make a report of the violation are not informants for the purposes of claiming the informer’s privilege.

You contend portions of the submitted information reveal the identities of informers who reported possible criminal violations of law to the city’s police department. You indicate the subject of the report does not know the informers’ identities. Based upon your representations and our review, we conclude the city has demonstrated the applicability of the common-law informer’s privilege to the information we have marked. Therefore, the city may withhold the information we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer’s privilege. However, we find the remaining information you marked relates to a witness who provided information in the course of an investigation. We therefore conclude you have failed to demonstrate the applicability of the common-law informer’s privilege with regard to this witness. Thus, the city may not withhold any of the remaining information you marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the informer’s privilege.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that (1) contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) is 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. Under the common-law right of privacy, an individual has a right to be free from the publicizing of private affairs in which the public has no legitimate concern. *Indus. Found.*, 540 S.W.2d at 682. In considering whether a public citizen’s date of birth is private, the Third Court of Appeals looked to the supreme court’s rationale in *Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts v. Attorney General of Texas*, 354 S.W.3d 336 (Tex. 2010). *Paxton v. City of Dallas*, No. 03-13-00546-CV, 2015 WL 3394061, at \*3 (Tex. App.—Austin May 22, 2015, pet. denied) (mem. op.). The supreme court concluded public employees’ dates of birth are private under section 552.102 of the Government Code because the employees’ privacy interest substantially outweighed the negligible public interest in

disclosure.<sup>2</sup> *Texas Comptroller*, 354 S.W.3d at 347-48. Based on *Texas Comptroller*, the court of appeals concluded the privacy rights of public employees apply equally to public citizens, and thus, public citizens' dates of birth are also protected by common-law privacy pursuant to section 552.101. *City of Dallas*, 2015 WL 3394061, at \*3. One of the dates of birth you seek to withhold on this basis relates to an individual whose identity is being withheld. This individual has been de-identified and his privacy interest is thus protected. Therefore, the city must withhold the dates of birth we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

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 a personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release. Gov't Code § 552.130. Upon review, we find the city must withhold the motor vehicle record information you have marked and the additional information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, the city may withhold the information we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. The city must withhold the dates of birth we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The city must withhold the information you have marked and we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released.<sup>3</sup>

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.

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<sup>2</sup>Section 552.102(a) excepts from disclosure "information in a personnel file, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy." Gov't Code § 552.102(a).

<sup>3</sup>We note the information being released includes the named individual's date of birth and driver's license information, to which the requestor has a right of access. See Gov't Code § 552.023(a) ("[a] person or a person's authorized representative has a special right of access, beyond the right of the general public, to information held by a governmental body that relates to the person and that is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect that person's privacy interests"); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individuals request information concerning themselves). If the city receives another request for this particular information from a different requestor, then the city should again seek a decision from this office. We also 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 under the Act. Gov't Code § 552.147(b). The requestor, however, has a right of access to the named individual's social security number. See *id.* § 552.023(a). The city may withhold the social security number pertaining to the other individual under section 552.147.

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,



Britni Ramirez  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

BR/som

Ref: ID# 647726

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)