



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 16, 2017

Mr. Alan T. Ozuna
Counsel for the City of Pharr
Denton, Navarro, Rocha, Bernal, Hyde & Zech, P.C.
701 East Harrison, Suite 100
Harlingen, Texas 78550-9165

OR2017-05449

Dear Mr. Ozuna:

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# 649065.

The City of Pharr (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for citations issued, including warnings, by the city's fire department during the last three years and a second request from the same requestor for a copy of the policies and procedures pertaining to an investigation of a firefighter. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note the requestor seeks only that portion of policies and procedures dealing with the investigation of a firefighter. Accordingly, the remaining portion of the fire department's policy and procedure manual is not responsive to the present request. This ruling does not address the public availability of non-responsive information, and the city is not required to release non-responsive information in response to this request.

Section 552.103 of the Government Code provides, in relevant part, as follows:

- (a) Information is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information relating to litigation of a civil or criminal nature to which the state or a political subdivision is or may be a party or to which an officer or

employee of the state or a political subdivision, as a consequence of the person's office or employment, is or may be a party.

...

(c) Information relating to litigation involving a governmental body or an officer or employee of a governmental body is excepted from disclosure under Subsection (a) only if the litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated on the date that the requestor applies to the officer for public information for access to or duplication of the information.

Gov't Code § 552.103(a), (c). The governmental body has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show the section 552.103(a) exception is applicable in a particular situation. The test for meeting this burden is a showing that (1) litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated on the date the governmental body received the request for information and (2) the information at issue is related to that litigation. *Univ. of Tex. Law Sch. v. Tex. Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479, 481 (Tex. App.—Austin 1997, orig. proceeding); *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210, 212 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.); Open Records Decision No. 551 at 4 (1990). The governmental body must meet both prongs of this test for information to be excepted from disclosure under section 552.103(a).

This office has found that a pending Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (the "EEOC") complaint and a pending complaint filed with the Texas Workforce Commission's Civil Rights Division ("CRD") indicate litigation is reasonably anticipated. Open Records Decision Nos. 386 at 2 (1983), 336 at 1 (1982). The city states, and has provided documentation showing, that, prior to the city's receipt of the request for information, the requestor filed an EEOC complaint against the city with the CRD alleging sex discrimination. The city further claims the requestor seeks information concerning citations issued "in an effort to demonstrate alleged improper issuance of citations by other city employees . . . for the purpose of arguing some violation of the investigation policy." Based on the representations of the city and our review of the submitted documents, we find the city has demonstrated it reasonably anticipated litigation when it received the request for information. We also find the city has established the policy and procedure pertaining to an investigation of a firefighter for harassment and discrimination is related to the anticipated litigation for purposes of section 552.103(a). Therefore, the city may withhold the information at issue under section 552.103(a) of the Government Code. However, upon review we find the city has not demonstrated the remaining responsive information relates to the anticipated litigation. Thus, we conclude the city may not withhold the remaining information under section 552.103(a) of the Government Code.

However, once the information has been obtained by all parties to the litigation, no section 552.103(a) interest exists with respect to that information. Open Records Decision

No. 349 at 2 (1982). We also note the applicability of section 552.103(a) ends when the litigation has concluded. Attorney General Opinion MW-575 at 2 (1982); Open Records Decision Nos. 350 at 3 (1982), 349 at 2.

We note the remaining information contains dates of birth. Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.”¹ Gov’t Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 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. 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.² *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. Thus, the city must withhold all public citizens’ dates of birth under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

We note the remaining information contains information subject to section 552.130 of the Government Code, which provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator’s or 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. Gov’t Code § 552.130(a). Upon review, we find the city must withhold the driver’s license information contained in the remaining information under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

¹The Office of the Attorney General will raise mandatory exceptions on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. See Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

²Section 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).

In summary, the city may withhold the policy and procedure pertaining to an investigation of a firefighter for harassment and discrimination under section 552.103(a) of the Government Code. The city must withhold all public citizens' dates of birth under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The city must withhold the driver's license information contained in the remaining information under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The city must release the remaining responsive 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, 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,



Kelly McWethy
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KSM/sb

Ref: ID# 649065

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)