



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

May 4, 2017

Mr. Gary Grief
Executive Director
Texas Lottery Commission
P.O. Box 16630
Austin, Texas 78761-6630

OR2017-09590

Dear Mr. Grief:

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# 656471 (ORR# L-22370).

The Texas Lottery Commission (the "commission") received a request for information pertaining to a specified investigation. The commission indicates it has released some of the requested information. The commission claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.107 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions the commission claims and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." 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 demonstrated. *See 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 *Morales v. Ellen*, 840 S.W.2d 519 (Tex. App.—El Paso 1992, writ denied), the court addressed the applicability of the common-law privacy doctrine to files of an investigation of allegations of sexual harassment. The investigation files in the *Ellen* decision contained individual witness statements, an affidavit by the individual accused of the misconduct responding to the allegations, and conclusions of the board of inquiry that conducted the investigation. *Ellen*, 840 S.W.2d at 525. The court ordered the release of the affidavit of the person under investigation and the conclusions of the board of inquiry, stating the public's interest was sufficiently served by the disclosure of such documents. *Id.* In concluding, the *Ellen* court held "the public did not possess a legitimate interest in the identities of the individual witnesses, nor the details of their personal statements beyond what is contained in the documents that have been ordered released." *Id.* Thus, if there is an adequate summary of an investigation of alleged sexual harassment, the investigation summary must be released under *Ellen*, along with the statement of the accused. However, the identities of the victims and witnesses of the alleged sexual harassment must be redacted, and their detailed statements must be withheld from disclosure. See Open Records Decision Nos. 393 (1983), 339 (1982). However, when no adequate summary exists, detailed statements regarding the allegations must be released, but the identities of victims and witnesses must still be redacted from the statements. In either case, the identity of the individual accused of sexual harassment is not protected from public disclosure. We also note supervisors are generally not witnesses for purposes of *Ellen*, except where their statements appear in a non-supervisory context.

The submitted information relates to an investigation into an alleged sexual harassment. Upon review, we find the submitted information contains an adequate summary of the alleged sexual harassment investigation. The submitted information also contains the statement of the accused. The summary and statement of the accused are not confidential under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy; however, information within the summary and statement that identifies victims and witnesses must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. See *Ellen*, 840 S.W.2d at 525. Therefore, pursuant to section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy and the holding in *Ellen*, the commission must withhold the identifying information of the victims and witnesses, which we have marked, within the summary and the statement of the accused. Upon review, we also find some of the remaining information, which we have marked, satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Therefore, the commission must withhold the additional information we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. Because there is an adequate summary, the commission must also withhold the remaining information in the sexual harassment investigation, which the commission marked as Exhibit B, under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy and the holding in *Ellen*.¹

¹As our ruling is dispositive for this information, we need not address your remaining argument against its disclosure.

Some of the remaining information may be subject to section 552.117 of the Government Code.² Section 552.117(a)(1) excepts from disclosure the home address and telephone number, emergency contact information, social security number, and family member information of a current or former employee or official of a governmental body who requests this information be kept confidential under section 552.024 of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(1). Whether a particular item of information is protected by section 552.117(a)(1) must be determined at the time of the governmental body's receipt of the request for the information. *See* Open Records Decision No. 530 at 5 (1989). Thus, information may be withheld under section 552.117(a)(1) only on behalf of a current or former employee or official who made a request for confidentiality under section 552.024 prior to the date of the governmental body's receipt of the request for the information. Information may not be withheld under section 552.117(a)(1) on behalf of a current or former employee or official who did not timely request under section 552.024 the information be kept confidential. Therefore, to the extent the individuals whose information we have marked timely requested confidentiality under section 552.024 of the Government Code, the commission must withhold the information we marked under section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code. Conversely, to the extent the individuals at issue did not timely request confidentiality under section 552.024, the commission may not withhold the marked information under section 552.117(a)(1).

In summary, the commission must withhold (1) the identifying information of the victims and witnesses, which we marked within the summary and the statement of the accused, under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy and the holding in *Ellen*; (2) the additional information we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy; (3) Exhibit B under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy and the holding in *Ellen*; and (4) the information we marked under section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code, to the extent the individuals whose information we marked timely requested confidentiality under section 552.024 of the Government Code. The commission must release the remaining information to this requestor.³

²The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

³We 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); *see also* Gov't Code § 552.137(b). Thus, if the commission receives another request for the same information from a different requestor, the commission must again seek a decision from this office.

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,



Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/som

Ref: ID# 656471

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)