



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 5, 2017

Ms. Maleshia B. Farmer
City Attorney
City of North Richland Hills
4301 City Point Drive
North Richland Hills, Texas 76180

OR2017-12207

Dear Ms. Farmer:

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# 660591.

The City of North Richland Hills (the "city") received a request for all employment records pertaining to a specified employee. You state the city has released some information. You inform us the city will redact information pursuant to section 552.024(c) of the Government Code and Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009).¹ You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.102(a) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information in a personnel file, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion

¹Section 552.024(c)(2) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact information protected by section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code without the necessity of requesting a decision under the Act if the current or former employee or official to whom the information pertains timely chooses not to allow public access to the information. *See* Gov't Code § 552.024(c)(2). Open Records Decision No. 684 is a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold certain categories of information, including a fingerprint under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 560.003 of the Government Code and an e-mail address of a member of the public under section 552.137 of the Government Code, without the necessity of requesting an attorney general opinion.

of personal privacy[.]”² Gov’t Code § 552.102(a). The Texas Supreme Court held section 552.102(a) exempts from disclosure the dates of birth of state employees in the payroll database of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. *Tex. Comptroller of Pub. Accounts v. Attorney Gen. of Tex.*, 354 S.W.3d 336 (Tex. 2010). Upon review, we find the city must withhold the date of birth we have marked under section 552.102(a) of the Government Code.³

Section 552.101 of the Government Code exempts 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 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. This office has found that personal financial information not relating to the financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body is excepted from disclosure under common-law privacy. *See* Open Records Decision No. 600 (1992) (public employee’s withholding allowance certificate, designation of beneficiary of employee’s retirement benefits, direct deposit authorization, and employee’s decisions regarding voluntary benefits programs, among others, protected under common-law privacy). This office has also determined that a public employee’s net pay is protected by common-law privacy even though it involves a financial transaction between the employee and the governmental body. *See* Attorney General Opinion GA-0572 at 3-5 (2007) (stating that net salary necessarily involves disclosure of information about personal financial decisions and is background financial information about a given individual that is not of legitimate concern to the public). However, there is a legitimate public interest in the essential facts about a financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 600 at 9 (information revealing that employee participates in group insurance plan funded partly or wholly by governmental body is not excepted from disclosure), 545 (1990) (financial information pertaining to receipt of funds from governmental body or debts owed to governmental body not protected by common-law privacy). Upon review, we find the information we have marked satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Accordingly, the city must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, the city has failed to demonstrate the remaining information is highly intimate or embarrassing and of no legitimate public interest. Thus, the city may not withhold any of the

²The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body. Open Records Decision No. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

³As our ruling is dispositive, we do not address your argument against disclosure of this information.

remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

In summary, the city must withhold the date of birth we have marked under section 552.102(a) of the Government Code. The city must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The city must release the remaining 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# 660591

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)