



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 17, 2017

Mr. Cristian Rosas-Grillet
Assistant City Attorney
City of Laredo
P.O. Box 579
Laredo, Texas 78042-0579

OR2017-15932

Dear Mr. Rosas-Grillet:

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# 673487 (PIR# W007680-060917).

The City of Laredo (the "city") received a request for code enforcement calls related to a specified address. You state you have released some information to the requestor. You claim the portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 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 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). However, individuals who provide information in the course of an investigation are not informants for the purposes of claiming the informer’s privilege. 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).

You state the information you have marked reveals the identity of complainants who reported possible violations of sections 16-55 and 21-18 of the city’s code to the city’s 3-1-1 call center. You state the complaints were referred to the city’s Community Development Department and/or the city’s Building Department, which you explain have the authority to enforce the provisions of the code at issue. You also state the alleged violations are punishable by fine. We have no indication the subject of the complaints knows the identity of the informers. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the city may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer’s privilege. As you raise no other exceptions to disclosure, 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,



Tim Neal
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

TN/tdw

Ref: ID# 673487

Enc. Submitted documents .

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)