



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 18, 2017

Mr. Alan Petrov  
Counsel for City of West University Place  
Johnson Petrov, L.L.P.  
2929 Allen Parkway, Suite 3150  
Houston, Texas 77019

OR2017-23889

Dear Mr. Petrov:

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# 680418.

The City of West University Place (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified complaint. You claim some of 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 552.101 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

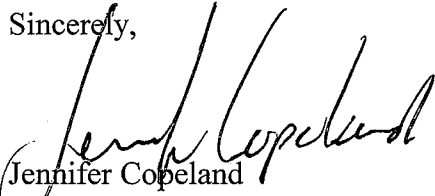
a criminal or civil statute. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 582 at 2 (1990), 515 at 4 (1988). However, individuals who provide information in the course of an investigation but do not make the initial report of the violation are not informants for the purposes of claiming the informer's privilege. 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 claim the informer's privilege for the identity of a complainant who reported an alleged violation of sections 70-25(a) and 70-25(g) of the city's Code of Ordinances. You state the alleged violation was reported to the city's public works department, which is responsible for enforcing the ordinances at issue. You state you have no indication the identity of the complainant is already known. You also state, and submit documentation demonstrating, violations of the ordinances at issue are punishable by a fine. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the city may withhold the complainant's identity, which we have marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. 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](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,

  
Jennifer Copeland  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JC/sb

Ref: ID# 680418

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)