



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 14, 2019

Mr. Jonathan T. Koury
Assistant City Attorney
City of Bryan
P.O. Box 1000
Bryan, Texas 77805

OR2019-07169

Dear Mr. Koury:

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# 762068 (ORR 2503).

The City of Bryan (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to a specified animal control incident. 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 552.101 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 report the violation of law are not informants for the purposes of claiming the informer's

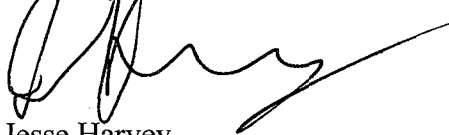
privilege. The privilege excepts the informer's statement only to the extent necessary to protect that informer's identity. Open Records Decision No. 549 at 5 (1990).

The city claims the informer's privilege for the identity of a complainant who reported an alleged violation of section 10-14 of the city's Code of Ordinances to the city's Police Department, which we understand has the authority to enforce the provision of the code at issue. We also understand the alleged violation is punishable by fine, pursuant to the city's Code of Ordinances. We have no indication the subject of the complaint knows the identity of the complainant. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the city may withhold the complainant's identifying information, which it marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. See Open Records Decision No. 156 (1977) (name of person who makes complaint about another individual to city's animal control division is excepted by informer's privilege so long as information furnished discloses potential violation of state law). As it raises 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,



Jesse Harvey
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JH/gw

Ref: ID# 762068

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)