



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 9, 2019

Ms. Jennifer Smith  
Assistant District Attorney  
Hidalgo County Criminal District Attorney's Office  
100 East Cano  
Edinburg, Texas 78539

OR2019-28277

Dear Ms. Smith:

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# 790093 (HCCDAO File No. 2019-0117-DA.SO).

The Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received three requests from the same requestor for information pertaining to three specified internal affairs investigations. The sheriff's office states it will release some information to the requestor. The sheriff's office claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, 552.117, and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions the sheriff's office claims and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.<sup>1</sup>

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. 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

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<sup>1</sup> We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

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. Additionally, this office has concluded some kinds of medical information are generally highly intimate or embarrassing. *See* Open Records Decision No. 455 (1987). The Third Court of Appeals has concluded public citizens' dates of birth are protected by common-law privacy pursuant to section 552.101. *See Paxton v. City of Dallas*, No. 03-13-00546-CV, 2015 WL 3394061, at \*3 (Tex. App.—Austin May 22, 2015, pet. denied) (mem. op.). However, this office has concluded the public has a legitimate interest in information that relates to public employees and their conduct in the workplace. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 562 at 10 (1990) (personnel file information does not involve most intimate aspects of human affairs but in fact touches on matters of legitimate public concern), 470 at 4 (1987) (job performance does not generally constitute public employee's private affairs), 444 at 3 (1986) (public has obvious interest in information concerning qualifications and performance of government employees), 405 at 2 (1983) (manner in which public employee's job was performed cannot be said to be of minimal public interest), 392 (1982) (reasons for employee's resignation ordinarily not private). Additionally, we note the scope of a public employee's privacy is narrow. *See* Open Records Decision No. 423 at 2 (1984). Further, we note an individual's name, address, and telephone number are generally not private information under common-law privacy. *See* Open Records Decision No. 554 at 3 (1990) (disclosure of person's name, address, or telephone number not an invasion of privacy).

Generally, only highly intimate information that implicates the privacy of an individual is withheld. However, in certain instances, where it is demonstrated the requestor knows the identity of the individual involved as well as the nature of certain incidents, the entire report must be withheld to protect the individual's privacy. Although the sheriff's office seeks to withhold the entirety of the submitted information under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy, we note the sheriff's office has failed to demonstrate, nor does it otherwise appear, this is a situation in which the entirety of the information at issue must be withheld on that basis. Accordingly, the sheriff's office may not withhold the entirety of the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. Nevertheless, upon review, we find portions of the submitted information are highly intimate or embarrassing and not of legitimate public concern. Thus, the sheriff's office must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.<sup>2</sup> However, we find the remaining information is not confidential under common-law privacy and the sheriff's office may not withhold it under section 552.101 on that ground.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses the doctrine of constitutional privacy. Constitutional privacy consists of two interrelated types of privacy: (1) the right to make certain kinds of decisions independently and (2) an individual's interest in avoiding disclosure of personal matters. ORD 455 at 4. The first type protects an individual's autonomy within "zones of privacy" which include matters related to marriage, procreation,

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<sup>2</sup> As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the sheriff's office's remaining arguments against disclosure of this information.

contraception, family relationships, and child rearing and education. *Id.* The second type of constitutional privacy requires a balancing between the individual's privacy interests and the public's need to know information of public concern. *Id.* The scope of information protected is narrower than that under the common law doctrine of privacy; the information must concern the "most intimate aspects of human affairs." *Id.* at 5 (quoting *Ramie v. City of Hedwig Village, Texas*, 765 F.2d 490 (5th Cir. 1985)). Upon review, we find the sheriff's office has failed to demonstrate any of the remaining information falls within the zones of privacy or implicates an individual's privacy interests for purposes of constitutional privacy. Therefore, the sheriff's office may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code on the basis of constitutional privacy.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses section 418.182 of the Government Code, which was added to chapter 418 of the Government Code as part of the Texas Homeland Security Act ("HSA"). Section 418.182(a) of the Government Code provides in relevant part, "information . . . in the possession of a governmental entity that relates to the specifications, operating procedures, or location of a security system used to protect public or private property from an act of terrorism or related criminal activity is confidential." Gov't Code § 418.182(a). The fact that information may be related to a governmental body's security system does not make the information *per se* confidential under section 418.182. *See* Open Records Decision No. 649 at 3 (1996) (language of confidentiality provision controls scope of its protection). Furthermore, the mere recitation by a governmental body of a statute's key terms is not sufficient to demonstrate the applicability of a claimed provision. As with any confidentiality provision, a governmental body asserting section 418.182 must adequately explain how the responsive information falls within the scope of the statute. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(A) (governmental body must explain how claimed exception to disclosure applies).

The sheriff's office states some of the submitted information consists of surveillance camera video recordings which are part of the sheriff's office's security system. The sheriff's office states the surveillance camera footage identifies vulnerabilities in the surveillance system, including camera location and angle, video quality and clarity, and surveillance coverage. Upon review, we find the video recordings at issue relate to the specifications, operating procedures, or location of a security system used to protect public or private property from an act of terrorism or related criminal activity. *See Tex. Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Abbott*, 310 S.W.3d 670 (Tex. App.—Austin 2010, no pet.) (finding confidential under section 418.182 of the HSA video recording containing images recorded by security cameras in Texas Capitol hallway because specifications of security system included cameras' capabilities and video recording demonstrated those capabilities through characteristics, quality, and clarity of images recorded). Accordingly, the sheriff's office must withhold the information we have indicated under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 418.182(a) of the Government Code.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the sheriff's office's remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses information protected by chapter 411 of the Government Code, which makes confidential criminal history record information (“CHRI”) generated by the National Crime Information Center or by the Texas Crime Information Center. *See id.* § 411.083(a). Title 28, part 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations governs the release of CHRI that states obtain from the federal government or other states. Open Records Decision No. 565 (1990). The federal regulations allow each state to follow its individual laws with respect to the CHRI it generates. *See id.* Section 411.083 of the Government Code deems confidential CHRI that the Department of Public Safety (“DPS”) maintains, except that DPS may disseminate this information as provided in chapter 411, subchapter F, or subchapter E-1 of the Government Code. *See Gov’t Code* § 411.083(a). Sections 411.083(b)(1) and 411.089(a) authorize a criminal justice agency to obtain CHRI; however, a criminal justice agency may not release CHRI except to another criminal justice agency for a criminal justice purpose. *Id.* § 411.089(b)(1). Other entities specified in chapter 411 of the Government Code are entitled to obtain CHRI from DPS or another criminal justice agency; however, those entities may not release CHRI except as provided by chapter 411. *See generally id.* §§ 411.090-.127. Thus, any CHRI obtained from DPS or any other criminal justice agency must be withheld under section 552.101 in conjunction with chapter 411, subchapter F, of the Government Code. We note Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”) numbers constitute CHRI generated by the FBI. Upon review, we find a portion of the remaining information consists of CHRI that is confidential under section 411.083. Thus, the sheriff’s office must withhold the FBI number we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code and federal law.<sup>4</sup>

Section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure the home addresses, home telephone numbers, emergency contact information, and social security number of a peace officer, as well as information that reveals whether the peace officer has family members, regardless of whether the peace officer complies with section 552.024 or section 552.1175 of the Government Code.<sup>5</sup> Gov’t Code § 552.117(a)(2). We note section 552.117 is also applicable to personal cellular telephone numbers, provided the cellular telephone service is not paid for by a governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision No. 506 at 5-6 (1988) (section 552.117 not applicable to cellular telephone numbers paid for by governmental body and intended for official use). It is unclear whether the employees at issue are currently licensed peace officers as defined by article 2.12 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Accordingly, the sheriff’s office must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code if the employees at issue are currently licensed peace officers as defined by article 2.12; however, the marked cellular telephone numbers may be withheld only if a governmental body does not pay for the cellular telephone service. If the employees are not currently licensed peace officers as defined by article 2.12, then the sheriff’s office may not withhold this information under section 552.117(a)(2). However, no portion of the remaining information constitutes

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<sup>4</sup> As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the sheriff’s office’s remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

<sup>5</sup> “Peace officer” is defined by article 2.12 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

information subject to section 552.117(a)(2), and the sheriff's office may not withhold any of it on this basis.

Nevertheless, if the employees are not currently licensed peace officers, then the information at issue may be subject to section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code. 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 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). As previously noted, section 552.117 is applicable to personal cellular telephone numbers, provided the cellular telephone service is not paid for by a governmental body. *See* ORD 506 at 5-6. 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 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. Therefore, to the extent the employees are not currently licensed peace officers as defined by article 2.12 and timely requested confidentiality under section 552.024 of the Government Code, then the sheriff's office must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code; however, the marked cellular telephone numbers may be withheld only if a governmental body does not pay for the cellular telephone service. To the extent the former employees are not currently licensed as peace officers as defined by article 2.12 and did not timely request confidentiality under section 552.024, then the sheriff's office may not withhold the information at issue under section 552.117(a)(1). However, no portion of the remaining information constitutes information subject to section 552.117(a)(1), and the sheriff's office may not withhold any of it on this basis.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator's license, driver's license, motor vehicle title or registration, or personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release. *See* Gov't Code § 552.130. Accordingly, the sheriff's office must withhold the motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. However, no portion of the remaining information constitutes motor vehicle record information subject to section 552.130, and the sheriff's office may not withhold any of it on this basis.

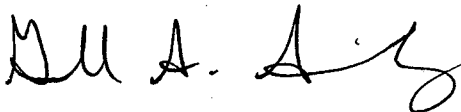
In summary, the sheriff's office must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The sheriff's office must withhold the information we have indicated under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 418.182(a) of the Government Code. The sheriff's office must withhold the FBI number we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code. The sheriff's office must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.117(a)(2)

of the Government Code if the employees at issue are currently licensed peace officers as defined by article 2.12; however, the marked cellular telephone numbers may be withheld only if a governmental body does not pay for the cellular telephone service. To the extent the employees are not currently licensed peace officers as defined by article 2.12 and timely requested confidentiality under section 552.024 of the Government Code, then the sheriff's office must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code; however, the marked cellular telephone numbers may be withheld only if a governmental body does not pay for the cellular telephone service. The sheriff's office must withhold the motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The sheriff's office must release the remaining information.<sup>6</sup>

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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

GAA/jxd

Ref: ID# 790093

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

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<sup>6</sup> The information being released contains a social security number. Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office. *See* Gov't Code § 552.147(b).