



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 31, 2019

Ms. Jessica Farrias
Administrative Support Specialist
City of Carrollton
P.O. Box 110535
Carrollton, Texas 75011-0535

OR2019-30856

Dear Ms. Farrias:

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# 801891 (ORR# 801891).

The City of Carrollton (the "city") received a request for information related to a specified report number. The city claims some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions the city claims and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we must address the city's obligations under section 552.301 of the Government Code, which prescribes the procedures a governmental body must follow in asking this office to decide whether requested information is excepted from public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301. Pursuant to section 552.301(b), a governmental body must ask for a decision from this office and state the exceptions that apply within ten business days of receiving the written request. *See id.* § 552.301(b). We note the city received the instant request for information on September 20, 2019. Accordingly, the city was required to provide the information required by section 552.301(b) by October 4, 2019. However, the envelope in which the city provided the information required by sections 552.301(b) was postmarked October 7, 2019. *See id.* § 552.308(a)(1) (describing rules for calculating submission dates of documents sent via first class United States mail, common or contract carrier, or interagency mail). Accordingly, we conclude the city failed to comply with the procedural requirements mandated by section 552.301 of the Government Code.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released unless the governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ) (governmental body must make compelling demonstration to overcome presumption of openness pursuant to statutory predecessor to section 552.302). The need of a governmental body other than the agency that is seeking an open records decision to withhold information under section 552.108 of the Government Code can provide a compelling reason to withhold information from disclosure. *See Open Records Decision No. 586 at 3* (1991). Because the city informs us, and provides documentation showing, the Dallas County Criminal District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney's office") objects to the release of the information at issue, we will consider whether the city may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108 on behalf of the district attorney's office. Further, because section 552.101 can provide a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness, we will address the applicability of these exceptions to the information that was previously released.

Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]" Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must explain how and why this exception is applicable to the information at issue. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). The city has provided a statement from the district attorney's office demonstrating the information at issue relates to a pending criminal investigation or prosecution. Based on this representation, we conclude release of the information the city has marked will interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Accordingly, we find the city may withhold the information it has marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.¹

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. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). Under the common-law right of privacy, an individual has a right to be free from the publicizing of private affairs in which the public has no legitimate concern. *Id.* at 682. The Third Court of Appeals concluded public citizens' dates of birth are also protected by common-law

¹As our ruling is dispositive for this information, we need not address the remaining argument against its disclosure.

privacy pursuant to section 552.101. *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.). Upon review, we find the information you marked satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Therefore, the city must withhold the dates of birth it marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

In summary, the city may withhold the information it marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code on behalf of the district attorney's office. The city must withhold the dates of birth it 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 <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,



Jesse Harvey
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JHI/gw

Ref: ID# 801891

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)