



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 14, 2020

Ms. Marie N. Johnson  
Counsel for the City of Denison  
Messer, Fort & McDonald  
6371 Preston Road, Suite 200  
Frisco, Texas 75034

OR2020-04808

Dear Ms. Johnson:

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# 811980 (ORR# D110819LW).

The City of Denison (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for all records related to a named individual. The city states it is releasing some of the requested information. The city claims some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception the city claims 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. Section 552.101 encompasses information made confidential by chapter 772 of the Health and Safety Code, which authorizes the development of local emergency communication districts. Section 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code applies to an emergency communication district for a county with a population of more than 20,000 and makes confidential the originating telephone numbers and addresses of 9-1-1 callers that are furnished by a 9-1-1 service supplier.<sup>1</sup> See Open Records Decision No. 649 (1996). The city indicates it is part of an emergency communication district that is subject to section 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code. The city marked a telephone number and address

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<sup>1</sup> Although the city refers to section 772.310 of the Health and Safety Code in its brief to this office, we understand the city to raise section 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code based on the substance of its argument.

that it seeks to withhold. We conclude the city must withhold the marked telephone number and address under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code if it consists of the originating telephone number and address furnished by a 9-1-1 service supplier. If the marked information does not consist of the originating telephone number and address provided by a 9-1-1 service supplier, it may not be withheld under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 772.318.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also 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 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, because “the right of privacy is purely personal[,]” that right “terminates upon the death of the person whose privacy is invaded[.]” *Moore v. Charles B. Pierce Film Enters., Inc.*, 589 S.W.2d 489, 491 (Tex. Civ. App.—Texarkana 1979, writ ref'd n.r.e.); *see also Justice v. Belo Broadcasting Corp.*, 472 F. Supp. 145, 147 (N.D. Tex. 1979) (“action for invasion of privacy can be maintained only by a living individual whose privacy is invaded” (quoting RESTATEMENT (SECOND) OF TORTS § 6521)); Attorney General Opinions JM-229 (1984) (“the right of privacy lapses upon death”), H-917 (1976) (“We are . . . of the opinion that the Texas courts would follow the almost uniform rule of other jurisdictions that the right of privacy lapses upon death.”); Open Records Decision No. 272 (1981) (“the right of privacy is personal and lapses upon death”). Therefore, information that pertains solely to a deceased individual may not be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code on the basis of that individual's privacy interest. Thus, the city must withhold all living public citizens' dates of birth under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

In summary, the city must withhold the marked telephone number and address under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code if it consists of the originating telephone number and address furnished by a 9-1-1 service supplier. The city must withhold all living public citizens' dates of birth 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Claire Morris Sloan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Claire V. Morris Sloan  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CVMS/jxd

Ref: ID# 811980

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)