



KEN PAXTON  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 26, 2020

Mr. Robert Carroll  
Senior Assistant City Attorney  
City of Odessa  
P.O. Box 4398  
Odessa, Texas 79760-4398

OR2020-06099

Dear Mr. Carroll:

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# 814932 (City ID# P001865-120219).

The City of Odessa (the "city") received a request for the probable cause affidavit pertaining to a specified incident. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim 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). The city received the request for information on December 2, 2019. You do not inform us the city was closed for any business days between December 2, 2019, and December 16, 2019. Accordingly, you were required to provide the information required by section 552.301(b) by December 16, 2019. However, the envelope in which the city provided the information required by section 552.301(b) was postmarked December 18, 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 there is a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ). The city claims sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code for the submitted information. Because section 552.101 can provide a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness, we will address your argument under this section for the submitted information. However, we find you have failed to establish a compelling reason to address your remaining exception.

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 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. 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.). Thus, the city must withhold all public citizens' dates of birth under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, we find the city has failed to demonstrate the remaining information is highly intimate or embarrassing and of no legitimate public interest. Thus, the city may not withhold the remaining information under section 552.101 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 cursive script, appearing to read "Meagan Hunter".

Meagan Hunter  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

MH/jxd

Ref: ID# 814932

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)