



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 17, 2020

Ms. Linda Pemberton
Paralegal
City of Killeen
P.O. Box 1329
Killeen, Texas 76540-1329

OR2020-08437

Dear Ms. Pemberton:

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# 819065 (ORR# W011001).

The City of Killeen (the "city") received a request for utility bills for a specified address. The city states it will withhold information pursuant to section 552.136(c) of the Government Code.¹ The city claims some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exception 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 of the Government Code encompasses section 182.052 of the Utilities Code, which provides in relevant part, the following:

- (a) Except as provided by Section 182.054, a government-operated utility may not disclose personal information in a customer's account record, or any information relating to the volume or units of utility usage or the

¹ Section 552.136 of the Government Code permits a governmental body to withhold the information described in section 552.136(b) without the necessity of seeking a decision from this office. *See* Gov't Code § 552.136(c). If a governmental body redacts such information, it must notify the requestor in accordance with section 552.136(e). *See id.* § 552.136(d), (e).

amounts billed to or collected from the individual for utility usage, if the customer requests that the government-operated utility keep the information confidential. However, a government-operated utility may disclose information related to the customer's volume or units of utility usage or amounts billed to or collected from the individual for utility usage if the primary source of water for such utility was a sole-source designated aquifer.

(b) A customer may request confidentiality by delivering to the government-operated utility an appropriately marked form provided under Subsection (c)(3) or any other written request for confidentiality.

Util. Code § 182.052(a)-(b). Water service is included in the scope of utility services covered by section 182.052. *Id.* § 182.051(3). However, because section 182.052 is intended to protect the safety and privacy of individual customers, this statute is applicable to only information pertaining to natural persons, and does not protect information relating to business, governmental, and other artificial entities. *See id.* at 4-5 (in context of section 182.051(4) of the Utilities Code, "individual" means only natural persons and does not include artificial entities). The submitted utility account information does not pertain to a natural person. Therefore, none of the submitted information is confidential under section 182.052 and the city may not withhold any of it under section 552.101 on that basis. Accordingly, the city must release the submitted 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,

James L. Coggeshall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JLC/gw

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Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)