



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

April 15, 2020

Ms. Jennifer Burnett
University of Texas System
Office of General Counsel
210 West Seventh Street
Austin, Texas 78701-2901

OR2020-10929

Dear Ms. Burnett:

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# 823861 (ORR# 194989).

The University of Texas at San Antonio (the "university") received a request for the personnel file for a named university employee. The university states it is withholding information subject to section 552.117 of the Government Code as permitted by section 552.024(c) of the Government Code.¹ The university also states it is withholding certain information pursuant to Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009).² The university states it is releasing some of the requested information. The university claims some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception the university claims and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, the university asserts the University of Texas Electronic Identification Number ("UTEID") contained in the submitted documents are not subject to the Act. The Act

¹ Section 552.117 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure the home addresses and telephone numbers, emergency contact information, social security numbers, and family member information of current or former officials or employees of a governmental body. *See* Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(1). Section 552.024 of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to withhold information subject to section 552.117 without requesting a decision from this office if the current or former employee or official chooses not to allow public access to the information. *See id.* § 552.024(c).

² Open Records Decision No. 684 is a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold certain information without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision.

applies only to “public information.” *See* Gov’t Code § 552.021. Section 552.002(a) defines “public information” as:

[I]nformation that is written, produced, collected, assembled, or maintained under a law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business:

- (1) by a governmental body;
- (2) for a governmental body and the governmental body:
 - (A) owns the information;
 - (B) has a right of access to the information; or
 - (C) spends or contributes public money for the purpose of writing, producing, collecting, assembling, or maintaining the information; or
- (3) by an individual officer or employee of a governmental body in the officer’s or employee’s official capacity and the information pertains to official business of the governmental body.

Id. § 552.002(a). In Open Records Decision No. 581 (1990), this office determined certain computer information, such as source codes, documentation information, and other computer programming, that has no significance other than its use as a tool for the maintenance, manipulation, or protection of public property is not the kind of information made public under section 552.021 of the Government Code. The university informs us when combined with an individual’s password, a UTEID serves as the required log-on protocol to access the computer mainframe, which is the university’s centralized hub that runs all its high-level electronic functions. The university indicates the UTEIDs are used solely to access the university’s computer mainframe and they have no other significance other than their use as tools for the maintenance, manipulation, or protection of public information. Based on these representations and our review, we find the UTEID contained in the submitted documents does not constitute public information under section 552.002 of the Government Code. Therefore, we conclude the UTEID is not subject to the Act and the university is not required to release it to the requestor.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts “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. This office has found personal financial information not relating to a financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body is excepted from required public disclosure under common-law privacy. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 600 (1992) (designation of beneficiary of employee's retirement benefits, direct deposit authorization, and forms allowing employee to allocate pretax compensation to group insurance, health care or dependent care), 545 (1990) (deferred compensation information, participation in voluntary investment program, election of optional insurance coverage, mortgage payments, assets, bills, and credit history), 523 (1989) (common-law privacy protects credit reports, financial statements, and other personal financial information), 373 (1983) (sources of income not related to financial transaction between individual and governmental body protected under common-law privacy). However, there is a legitimate public interest in the essential facts about a financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body. *See* ORDs 600 at 9 (information revealing employee participates in group insurance plan funded partly or wholly by governmental body is not excepted from disclosure), 545 (financial information pertaining to receipt of funds from governmental body or debts owed to governmental body not protected by common-law privacy). Upon review, we agree the information the university marked satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Therefore, the university must withhold the information it marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The university 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,

Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/be

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Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)