



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 3, 2020

Ms. Andrea D. Russell
Counsel for the Town of Flower Mound
Taylor Olson Adkins Sralla Elam, L.L.P.
6000 Western Place, Suite 200
Fort Worth, Texas 76107

OR2020-15289

Dear Ms. Russell:

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# 833329.

The Town of Flower Mound (the "town"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified address and a specified incident.¹ The town 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. This exception encompasses section 826.0211(a) of the Health and Safety Code, which reads as follows:

(a) Information contained in a rabies vaccination certificate or in any record compiled from the information contained in one or more certificates that identifies or tends to identify an owner or an address, telephone number, or other personally identifying information of an owner of a vaccinated animal is confidential and not subject to disclosure under [the Act]. The

¹The town sought and received clarification of the information requested. *See* Gov't Code § 552.222 (if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify request); *see also* *City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 304 S.W.3d 380, 387 (Tex. 2010) (if governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification of unclear or over-broad request, ten-day period to request attorney general ruling is measured from date request is clarified).

information contained in the certificate or record may not include the social security number or the driver's license number of the owner of the vaccinated animal.

Health & Safety Code § 826.0211(a). Section 826.0211 is applicable only to information contained in a rabies vaccination certificate or in a record compiled from information contained in one or more rabies vaccination certificates. Upon review, we find section 826.0211 is applicable to some of the information at issue, which we have marked. Therefore, the town must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 826.0211(a) of the Health and Safety Code. However, the town has failed to demonstrate section 826.0211 is applicable to any of the remaining information. Thus, the town may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.101 on that ground.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses the informer's privilege, which has long been recognized by Texas courts. *Aguilar v. State*, 444 S.W.2d 935, 937 (Tex. Crim. App. 1969); *Hawthorne v. State*, 10 S.W.2d 724, 725 (Tex. Crim. App. 1928). The informer's privilege protects from disclosure the identities of persons who report activities over which the governmental body has criminal or quasi-criminal law-enforcement authority, provided the subject of the information does not already know the informer's identity. See Open Records Decision No. 208 at 1-2 (1978). The informer's privilege protects the identities of individuals who report violations of statutes to the police or similar law-enforcement agencies, as well as those who report violations of statutes with civil or criminal penalties to "administrative officials having a duty of inspection or of law enforcement within their particular spheres." Open Records Decision No. 279 at 1-2 (1981) (citing 8 John H. Wigmore, *Evidence in Trials at Common Law*, § 2374, at 767 (J. McNaughton rev. ed. 1961)). The report must be of a violation of a criminal or civil statute. See Open Records Decision Nos. 582 at 2 (1990), 515 at 4 (1988). The privilege excepts the informer's statement only to the extent necessary to protect that informer's identity. Open Records Decision No. 549 at 5 (1990).

The city states the information it has marked identifies a complainant who reported violations of city ordinances to city staff members who are responsible for enforcing the relevant portions of the city ordinances. The city also states violations of the relevant city ordinances carry civil penalties. Upon review, we conclude the city may withhold the information it has marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the informer's privilege.

In summary, the town must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 826.0211(a) of the Health and Safety Code. the city may withhold the information it has marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the informer's privilege. 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,

James L. Coggeshall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JLC/jlbm

Ref: ID# 833329

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)