



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 24, 2020

Mr. Michael Phelps
Senior Paralegal
Harris County Appraisal District
P.O. Box 920975
Houston, Texas 77292-0975

OR2020-18531

Dear Mr. Phelps:

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# 838931 (ORR# 20-3419).

The Harris County Appraisal District ("HCAD") received a request for the iFile number pertaining to a specified property.¹ HCAD claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.136 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exception and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note only the submitted iFile number is responsive to the request for information. This ruling does not address the public availability of any information that is not responsive to the request, and HCAD is not required to release any non-responsive information in response to this request.

Section 552.136(b) of the Government Code provides, "[n]otwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential." Gov't Code § 552.136(b). HCAD states the submitted iFile number can be used to access confidential property information of value to property owners and third-party professionals

¹HCAD 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).

involved in the protests of property tax appraisals. Based on these representations, we conclude the iFile number at issue is an access device number for purposes of section 552.136(a). HCAD also states the requestor is not the owner of the property to which the iFile number pertains. *See id.* § 552.023(a) (“[a] person or a person’s authorized representative has a special right of access, beyond the right of the general public, to information held by a governmental body that relates to the person and that is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect that person’s privacy interests”); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individuals request information concerning themselves). Accordingly, HCAD must withhold the submitted iFile number under section 552.136(b) of the Government Code.

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/be

Ref: ID# 838931

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)