



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 31, 2022

Ms. Bridgette A. Begle
Counsel for the City of Waller
Olson & Olson, L.L.P.
2727 Allen Parkway, Suite 600
Houston, Texas 77019-2133

OR2022-33621

Dear Ms. Begle:

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# 981192 (Ref. No. COW22-013).

The City of Waller (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident involving the requestor. You state you will redact motor vehicle record information pursuant to section 552.130(c) of the Government Code and social security numbers pursuant to 552.147(b) of the Government Code.¹ You claim some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code.² We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

¹ Section 552.130(c) of the Government Code allows a governmental body to redact the information described in subsection 552.130(a) without the necessity of seeking a decision from the attorney general. *See* Gov't Code § 552.130(c). If a governmental body redact such information, it must notify the requestor in accordance with section 552.130(e). *See id.* § 552.130(d), (e). Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office. *See id.* § 552.147(b).

² We note, and you acknowledge, the city failed to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 of the Government Code in requesting a decision from this office. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(b), (e). Nonetheless, section 552.101 of the Government Code can provide a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness caused by a failure to comply with section 552.301. *See id.* §§ 552.007, .302, .352. Thus, we will consider the applicability of this exception to the submitted information, notwithstanding the city's violation of section 552.301 in requesting this decision.

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. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). Under the doctrine of the common-law privacy, an individual has a right to be free from the publicizing of private affairs in which the public has no legitimate concern. *Id.* at 682. 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.). We note the requestor has a right of access to his own date of birth. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.023(a) (person or person’s authorized representative has special right of access to records that contain information relating to the person that are 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). Thus, with the exception of the requestor’s date of birth, the city must withhold all public citizens’ dates of birth under section 552.101 of the Government Code 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,

Kimbell Kesling
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KK/pt

Ref: ID# 981192

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)