OFFICE *of the* ATTORNEY GENERAL
GREG ABBOTT

August 6, 2003

Mr. J. David Dodd, III
Nichols, Jackson, Dillard, Hager & Smith, L.L.P.
500 North Akard, Suite 1500
Dallas, Texas 75201

OR2003-5452

Dear Mr. Dodd:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 188780.

The Allen Police Department (the "department") received a request for an incident report pertaining to a specific individual. You claim that the requested report is protected from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the doctrine of common-law privacy. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Section 552.101 also encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy. Common-law privacy protects information if (1) the information contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) the information is not of legitimate concern to the public. *Industrial Found. v. Texas Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976), *cert. denied*, 430 U.S. 931 (1977). The type of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation* included information relating to sexual assault, pregnancy, mental or physical abuse in the workplace, illegitimate children, psychiatric treatment of mental disorders, attempted suicide, and injuries to sexual organs. 540 S.W.2d at 683.

The submitted documents contain information that is considered highly intimate or embarrassing and is not of legitimate concern to the public. In most cases, the department

would only be allowed to withhold this information from public disclosure. In this instance, however, the requestor knows the identity of the individual involved. Thus, withholding only certain portions of the submitted report would not preserve the named individual's common-law privacy rights. Accordingly, to protect the privacy of the individual to whom the information relates, we conclude that the department must withhold the submitted report in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law right of privacy.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

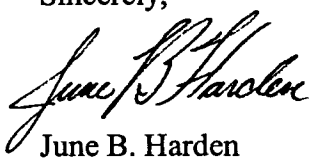
If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or

complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



June B. Harden
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JBH/seg

Ref: ID# 188780

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Ms. Kathy Davis
221 Sunridge Way
Allen, Texas 75002
(w/o enclosures)