



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

April 6, 2004

Mr. G. Chadwick Weaver
First Assistant City Attorney
City of Midland
P.O. Box 1152
Midland, Texas 79702-1152

OR2004-2761

Dear Mr. Weaver:

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# 198827.

The City of Midland (the "city") received a request for all information relating to a specified Peddler Permit. You indicate that you have released much of the requested information. However, you claim that portions of the requested information are excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides in relevant part:

(a) Information is excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021 if the information relates to:

(1) a motor vehicle operator's or driver's license or permit issued by an agency of this state; [or]

¹ You claim section 411.086 of the Government Code as an exception to disclosure. Because this is not an exception to disclosure under the Act, we understand you to assert section 552.101 of the Government Code.

(2) a motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state;

(3) a personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or a local agency authorized to issue an identification document.

You must withhold the Texas identification number we have marked under section 552.130.

You also contend that the social security numbers contained in the requested information are confidential and you cite section 411.086 of the Government Code. Social security numbers may be withheld in some circumstances under section 552.101 of the Government Code, which excepts from disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.” A social security number or “related record” may be excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 in conjunction with the 1990 amendments to the federal Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. § 405(c)(2)(C)(viii)(I). *See Open Records Decision No. 622 (1994)*. These amendments make confidential social security numbers and related records that are obtained or maintained by a state agency or political subdivision of the state pursuant to any provision of law enacted on or after October 1, 1990. *See id.*

The provision that you cite, section 411.086 of the Government Code, contemplates rules that the Department of Public Safety (“DPS”) shall adopt in regard to requests for criminal history information. Section 411.086(b)(2) states that such rules “may require a person requesting criminal history information about an individual to submit to [DPS] one or more of the following: . . . (E) any known identifying number of the individual, including social security number” While you state that the collection of social security numbers “by police officers helps establish identities of criminals,” you do not inform this office whether the Midland Police Department (the “department”) obtained or maintains any of the social security numbers at issue in order to request criminal history information from DPS. Moreover, you do not inform us as to whether DPS actually requires or required the department to submit any of the social security numbers at issue. We conclude that the social security numbers in the requested information are confidential under section 552.101 in conjunction with the 1990 amendments to the federal Social Security Act if the department obtained or maintains the social security numbers for the purpose of requesting criminal history information from DPS, and if DPS actually requires or required the department to submit that information to DPS in connection with a request for criminal history information.

To the extent the social security numbers in the requested information were obtained or are maintained by the department solely under a policy or practice to identify individuals, such a policy or practice does not constitute a law enacted on or after October 1, 1990 authorizing the department to obtain or maintain a social security number. In that case, we have no basis for concluding that any of the social security numbers are confidential under section

405(c)(2)(C)(viii)(I), and therefore excepted from public disclosure under section 552.101 on the basis of that federal provision. We caution, however, that section 552.352 of the Act imposes criminal penalties for the release of confidential information. Prior to releasing any social security numbers, you should ensure that no such information was obtained or is maintained pursuant to any provision of law enacted on or after October 1, 1990.

In summary, you must withhold the Texas identification number under section 552.130 of the Government Code, and prior to releasing any social security numbers in the submitted information, you should ensure that no such information was obtained or is maintained pursuant to any provision of law enacted on or after October 1, 1990. You must release the remaining requested information to the requestor.

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,



Jennifer E. Berry
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JEB/sdk

Ref: ID# 198827

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. Norman McCracken
5501 Hillcrest
Midland, Texas 79707
(w/o enclosures)