



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 6, 2005

Mr. Ron G. MacFarlane, Jr.
Dealey, Zimmermann, Clark Malouf & MacFarlane, P.C.
Attorneys and Counselors at Law
3131 Turtle Creek Boulevard, Suite 1201
Dallas, Texas 75210-5415

OR2005-09085

Dear Mr. MacFarlane:

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# 232922.

The Cedar Hill Police Department (the "department"), which you represent, received a request for a specified offense report. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

You contend that the submitted information must be withheld 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." This section encompasses the common law right of privacy, which protects information if it (1) contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) is not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). The types 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. *Id.* at 683. In Open Records Decision No. 339 (1982), we concluded that a sexual assault victim has a common-law privacy interest which prevents disclosure of information that would identify the victim. *See also Morales v. Ellen*, 840 S.W.2d 519 (Tex. App.—El Paso 1992, writ denied) (identity of witnesses to and victims of sexual harassment was highly intimate or embarrassing information and public did not have a legitimate interest in such information). Further, in Open Records Decision No. 393 (1983), this office concluded that, generally, only that information which either identifies

or tends to identify a victim of sexual assault or other sex-related offense may be withheld under common-law privacy, but because the identifying information was inextricably intertwined with other releasable information, the governmental body was required to withhold the entire report. Open Records Decision No. 393 at 2 (1983).

In this case, we agree that the submitted information contains information relating to sexual assault allegations that warrants protection under common-law privacy. However, we find that the identifying information of the victim is not so inextricably intertwined as to require the department to withhold all of the submitted information. Therefore, we conclude that the department must withhold the sexual assault victim's identifying information, which we have marked, under section 552.101 and common-law privacy. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 393 (1983), 339 (1982).

A portion of the remaining information is subject to section 552.130 of the Government Code. Section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts information relating to a Texas motor vehicle driver's license and information relating to a Texas motor vehicle title or registration. Gov't Code § 552.130. The department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

Finally, we note that a portion of the remaining submitted information is subject to section 552.147 of the Government Code. Section 552.147¹ provides that "[t]he social security number of a living person is excepted from" required public disclosure under the Act. Therefore, the department must withhold the social security number we have marked in the submitted information under section 552.147.²

In summary, the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. The motor vehicle information we have marked must be withheld under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The department must withhold the social security number we have marked under section 552.147 of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released.

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

¹Added by Act of May 23, 2005, 79th Leg., R.S., S.B. 1485, § 1, sec. 552.147(a) (to be codified at Tex. Gov't Code § 552.147).

²We note that section 552.147(b) 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 under the Act.

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, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, 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 Office of the Attorney General 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. 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,



Louis T. Dubuque
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LTD/jpa

Ref: ID# 232922

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Jamie Kincaid
c/o Ron G. MacFarlane, Jr.
Dealey, Zimmermann, Clark Malouf & MacFarlane, P.C.
Attorneys and Counselors at Law
3131 Turtle Creek Boulevard, Suite 1201
Dallas, Texas 75210-5415
(w/o enclosures)