



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 2, 2007

Ms. Lizbeth Islas Plaster
Assistant City Attorney
City of Lewisville
P.O. Box 299002
Lewisville, Texas 75029-9002

OR2007-09870

Dear Ms. Plaster:

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# 285452.

The City of Lewisville (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to a specified 9-1-1 call. You state that a portion of the responsive information has been released to the requestor. You claim that a portion of 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.

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 information made confidential by other statutes. Section 552.101 encompasses chapter 772 of the Health and Safety Code, which authorizes the development of local emergency communications districts. Sections 772.118, 772.218, and 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code apply only to an emergency 9-1-1 district established in accordance with chapter 772. *See* Open Records Decision No. 649 (1996). These statutes make confidential the originating telephone numbers and addresses of 9-1-1 callers that are furnished by a service supplier. *Id.* at 2. Section 772.318 applies to an emergency communication district for a county with a population of more than 20,000. We understand you to assert that the emergency communication district here is subject to section 772.318. Therefore, we agree that the originating telephone number and the address of the 9-1-1 caller in the submitted information, which we have marked, is confidential under section 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code, and the city must withhold this information under section 552.101 of the Government Code. You also argue that the complainant's identity should be withheld under section 772.318; however, section 772.318 does not protect the identity of 9-1-1 callers. Therefore, the complainant's identifying information is not confidential under section 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code.

You also claim that the identity of the complainant may be withheld pursuant to the common law informer's privilege. Section 552.101 encompasses the common law informer's privilege, which has long been recognized by Texas courts. *See Aguilar v. State*, 444 S.W.2d 935, 937 (Tex. Crim. App. 1969); *Hawthorne v. State*, 10 S.W.2d 724, 725 (Tex. Crim. App. 1928). It protects from disclosure the identities of persons who report activities over which the governmental body has criminal or quasi-criminal law-enforcement authority, provided that the subject of the information does not already know the informer's identity. Open Records Decision Nos. 515 at 3 (1988), 208 at 1-2 (1978). The informer's privilege protects the identities of individuals who report violations of statutes to the police or similar law-enforcement agencies, as well as those who report violations of statutes with civil or criminal penalties to "administrative officials having a duty of inspection or of law enforcement within their particular spheres." Open Records Decision No. 279 at 2 (1981) (citing Wigmore, Evidence, § 2374, at 767 (McNaughton rev. ed. 1961)). The report must be of a violation of a criminal or civil statute. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 582 at 2 (1990), 515 at 4-5. The privilege excepts an informer's statement only to the extent necessary to protect the informer's identity. *See* Open Records Decision No. 549 at 5 (1990).

You state that the complainant at issue reported alleged violations of criminal law. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude that the city has demonstrated the applicability of the common law informer's privilege in this instance. Thus, the city may withhold the information we have marked pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the informer's privilege.

In summary, in conjunction with section 552.101 of the Government Code, the city must withhold (1) the originating telephone number and the address of the 9-1-1 caller, which we have marked, under section 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code; and (2) the identifying information we have marked under the common law informer's privilege. The remaining submitted information must be released to the requestor.¹

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

¹We note that the information being released contains confidential information to which the requestor has a right of access. *See* Gov't Code § 552.023(a); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individual asks governmental body to provide him with information concerning himself). However, if the city receives another request for this particular information from a different requestor, then the city should again seek a decision from this office.

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,



M. Alan Akin
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MAA/jb

Ref: ID# 285452

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Amanda Morales
6109 Highfield Park
Denton, Texas 76210
(w/o enclosures)