



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

October 3, 2007

Mr. John Danner  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of San Antonio  
P. O. Box 839966  
San Antonio, Texas 78283

OR2007-12905

Dear Mr. Danner:

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# 290857.

The City of San Antonio (the "city") received a request for code compliance records pertaining to the requestor's property. You claim that portions of the submitted information are exempted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions 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." Gov't Code § 552.101. This exception encompasses the 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). It protects from disclosure the identities of persons who report activities over which a 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 (1988). The privilege excepts

the informer's statement only to the extent necessary to protect that informer's identity. Open Records Decision No. 549 at 5 (1990).

You state that marked information reveals the identity of an individual who reported alleged violations of the city code to the city code compliance department (the "department"). You state that department inspectors investigated the complaints and found instances of non-compliance that constitute misdemeanors carrying a possible fine of up to two-thousand dollars. You also indicate the identity of the reporting individual is not known by the subject of the complaint. Upon review of the submitted information and your arguments, we conclude that you may withhold the identifying information of the individual who reported the violations at issue, which you have marked, under section 552.101 in conjunction with the informer's privilege.

Next you state that some of the remaining information contains a Texas license plate number. Section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure 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 city must withhold the license plate numbers you have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, you may withhold the identifying information of the individual who reported the violations at issue, which you have marked, under section 552.101 in conjunction with the informer's privilege. You must withhold the license plate number you have marked under section 552.130. 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 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

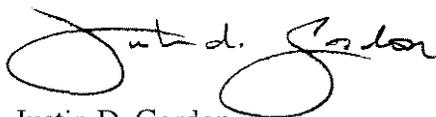
Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor 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,



Justin D. Gordon  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JDG/jh

Ref: ID# 290857

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Candy Anderson  
327 Cumberland  
San Antonio, Texas 78204  
(w/o enclosures)