



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

September 8, 2008

Chief Kenneth W. Findley
Acting Chief of Police
City of Deer Park
P.O. Box 700
Deer Park, Texas 77536-0700

OR2008-12290

Dear Chief Findley:

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# 325961.

The Deer Park Police Department (the "department") received a request for records regarding a specified address and a specified report of an incident involving a named individual. You state that some of the requested information has been released. 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.

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. This exception encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that (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. *See Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). The types of information considered to be intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation* include 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. Generally, only highly intimate information that implicates the privacy of an individual is withheld. However, in certain instances where it is demonstrated that the

requestor knows the identity of the individual involved as well as the nature of certain incidents, the entire report must be withheld to protect the individual's privacy.

In this instance, the request reflects that the requestor knows the identity of the individual involved as well as the nature of the submitted information. Thus, withholding only the identity of the individual involved or certain details of the incident from the requestor would not preserve the individual's common-law right to privacy. We therefore conclude that all of the submitted information is protected by common-law privacy.

We note, however, that the requestor would have a special right of access to the submitted information if he is an authorized representative of the individual whose privacy interests are at stake. See Gov't Code § 552.023(a).¹ Therefore, if he is the individual's authorized representative, then the submitted information may not be withheld on privacy grounds and must be released to this requestor.² See Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individual requests information concerning herself). If the requestor is not the individual's authorized representative, then the department must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law 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 file suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such a challenge, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3). If the governmental body does not file suit over 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).

¹Section 552.023(a) provides that "[a] person or a person's authorized representative has a special right of access, beyond the right of the general public, to information held by a governmental body that relates to the person and that is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect that person's privacy interests." Gov't Code § 552.023(a).

²We note that the submitted information includes Texas driver's license numbers that would be excepted from public disclosure under section 552.130 of the Government Code. However, section 552.130 protects personal privacy. Thus, the requestor has a right to his own driver's license number under section 552.023 and would also have a right to the other individual's driver's license number if he is her authorized representative.

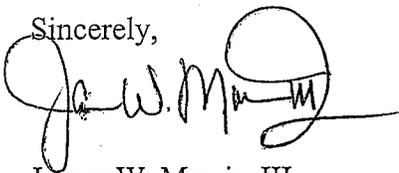
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records 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 challenge 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,



James W. Morris, III
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JWM/jh

Ref: ID# 325961

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. Michael Grayson
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Pasadena, Texas 77506
(w/o enclosures)