



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 7, 2008

Mr. C. Patrick Phillips
Assistant City Attorney
City of Fort Worth
1000 Throckmorton Street, 3rd Floor
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

OR2008-13740

Dear Mr. Phillips:

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# 323821.

The Fort Worth Police Department (the "department") received a request for DNA evidence pertaining to a specified case. 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 section encompasses information protected by 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, 683-85 (Tex. 1976). Generally, only information that either identifies or tends to identify a victim of sexual assault or other sex-related offense must be withheld under common-law privacy. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 440 (1986), 393 (1983), 339 (1982)*. However, a governmental body is required to withhold an entire report when identifying information is inextricably intertwined with other releasable information or when the requestor knows the identity of the alleged victim. *See Open Records Decisions Nos. 393 (1983), 339 (1982); see also Open Records Decision No. 440 (1986) (detailed*

descriptions of serious sexual offenses must be withheld). In this instance, the submitted information reveals that the requestor knows the identity of the alleged sexual assault victim listed in the submitted information. Thus, withholding only the identifying information from the requestor would not preserve the victim's common-law right to privacy. Accordingly, to protect the privacy of the alleged victim, the department must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 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).

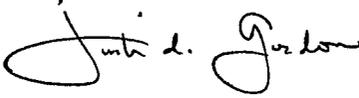
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin D. Gordon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "G".

Justin D. Gordon
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JDG/ma

Ref: ID# 323821

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Gary A. Udashen
Sorrels, Udashen & Anton
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(w/o enclosures)