



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 3, 2008

Ms. Cheryl K. Byles
Assistant City Attorney
City of Fort Worth
1000 Throckmorton Street, 3rd Floor
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

OR2008-14989

Dear Ms. Byles:

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# 327586.

The City of Fort Worth (the "city") received a request for a specified incident report. You claim that portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

We note that you have redacted certain Texas motor vehicle record information in accordance with the previous determinations issued in Open Records Letter Nos. 2006-14726 (2006) and 2007-00198 (2007). *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(a); Open Records Decision No. 673 at 7-8 (2001). However, the information you redacted is the requestor's Texas motor vehicle record information. Although the city would be ordinarily required to withhold that information from the public under section 552.130 of the Government Code, the requestor has a right of access to his own Texas motor vehicle record information. *See* Gov't Code § 552.023(a); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individual requests information concerning himself). We note that the previous determinations expressly state that they do not apply when the requestor has a right of access to the information under section 552.023 of the Government Code. Thus, the redacted information must be released to the requestor.

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 the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information from disclosure when (1) it is highly intimate or embarrassing, such that its release would be highly objectionable to a person of ordinary sensibilities and (2) there is no legitimate public interest in its disclosure. *See Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). Information must be withheld under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy upon a showing of "special circumstances." *See Open Records Decision No. 169* (1977). This office considers "special circumstances" to refer to a very narrow set of situations in which the release of information would likely cause someone to face "an imminent threat of physical danger." *Id.* at 6. Such "special circumstances" do not include "a generalized and speculative fear of harassment or retribution." *Id.*

In this instance, the city informs us the information it has marked identifies an undercover officer, the release of which would likely cause the officer to face imminent threat of physical danger. Based on the city's representations and our review, we agree that the city must withhold the information it has marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the "special circumstances" aspect of common-law privacy. 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 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,

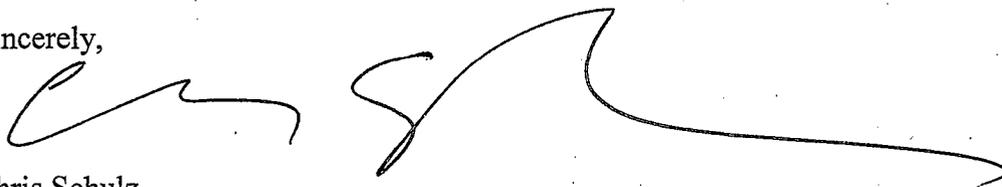
toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

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, appearing to read 'Chris Schulz', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Schulz
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CS/ma

Ref: ID# 327586

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Filiberto Moran
1217 Broadway Avenue
Fort Worth, Texas 76104
(w/o enclosures)