



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

February 24, 2010

Ms. Molly Shortall
Assistant City Attorney
City of Arlington
P.O. Box 90231
Arlington, Texas 76004-3231

OR2010-02739

Dear Ms. Shortall:

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# 371382.

The City of Arlington (the "city") received a request for information on a specified animal at large violation. You state the city has released some of the requested information. 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.

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. The common-law informer's privilege, which is incorporated into the Act under section 552.101, has long been recognized by Texas courts. *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). The informer's privilege 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. However, the informer's privilege protects the content of the communication only to the extent that it identifies the informant. *Roviaro v. United States*, 353 U.S. 53, 60 (1957).

You inform us that the submitted information reveals the identity of an individual who reported an alleged violation of the city's animal at large ordinance to the Animal Services Division of the city's Community Services Division, the department charged with enforcing the ordinance. You have provided us with a copy of the ordinance, and we understand an animal at large violation provides for a fine. You further inform us that the requestor does not know the identity of the informer. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the city may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the informer's privilege. The remaining information must be released.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information 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 information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Sarah Casterline
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

SEC/eeg

Ref: ID# 371382

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)