



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

January 3, 2011

Mr. Richard P. Bianchi
Aransas County Attorney
301 North Live Oak Street
Rockport, Texas 78382

OR2011-00078

Dear Mr. Bianchi:

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# 409353.

The Aransas County Sheriff's Office (the "county") received a request for personnel information relating to a named deputy sheriff. You claim 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 information you submitted. We assume the county has released any other information that would be responsive to this request, to the extent such information existed when the county received the request. If not, then the county must release any such information immediately.¹ See Gov't Code §§ 552.221, .301, .302; Open Records Decision No. 664 (2000).

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 common-law privacy, which protects information that is highly intimate or embarrassing, such that its release would be highly objectionable to a person of ordinary sensibilities, and of no legitimate public interest. See *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common law privacy, both elements of the test must be established. *Id.* at 681-82. Common-law privacy encompasses certain types of personal

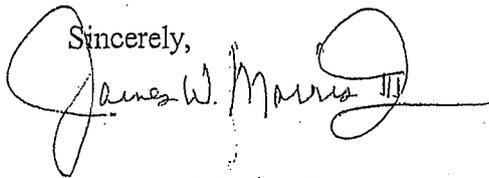
¹We note the Act does not require a governmental body to release information that did not exist when it received a request or create responsive information. See *Econ. Opportunities Dev. Corp. v. Bustamante*, 562 S.W.2d 266 (Tex. Civ. App.—San Antonio 1978, writ dismissed); Open Records Decision Nos. 605 at 2 (1992), 555 at 1 (1990), 452 at 3 (1986), 362 at 2 (1983).

financial information. Financial information that relates only to an individual ordinarily satisfies the first element of the common-law privacy test, but the public has a legitimate interest in the essential facts about a financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 600 at 9-12 (1992) (identifying public and private portions of certain state personnel records), 545 at 4 (1990) (attorney general has found kinds of financial information not excepted from public disclosure by common-law privacy to generally be those regarding receipt of governmental funds or debts owed to governmental entities), 523 at 4 (1989) (noting distinction under common-law privacy between confidential background financial information furnished to public body about individual and basic facts regarding particular financial transaction between individual and public body), 373 at 4 (1983) (determination of whether public's interest in obtaining personal financial information is sufficient to justify its disclosure must be made on case-by-case basis). We find the submitted personal financial information is highly intimate or embarrassing and not a matter of legitimate public interest. We therefore conclude the county must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James W. Morris III". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

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

JWM/em

Ref: ID# 409353

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)