



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

January 30, 2012

Ms. J. Middlebrooks
Assistant City Attorney
Criminal Law and Police Division
City of Dallas
1400 South Lamar
Dallas, Texas 75215

OR2012-01441

Dear Ms. Middlebrooks:

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# 447891.

The Dallas Police Department (the "department") received a request for a specified incident report. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exception and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we must address the department's procedural obligations under section 552.301 of the Government Code when requesting a decision from this office under the Act. Pursuant to section 552.301(b), within ten business days after receiving the request the governmental body must request a ruling from this office and state the exceptions to disclosure that apply. *See Gov't Code* § 552.301(b). In this instance, you state the department received the request for information on December 16, 2011, and the department was closed on December 23 and 26, 2011 and January 2, 2012. Accordingly, the ten-business-day deadline was January 4, 2012. The department's request for a decision, however, bears a post office mark reflecting it was mailed on January 5, 2012. *See id.* § 552.308(a) (deadline under the Act is met if document bears post office mark indicating time within the deadline period). Consequently, we find the department failed to comply with section 552.301 of the Government Code.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released unless a compelling reason exists to withhold the information from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ) (governmental body must make compelling demonstration to overcome presumption of openness pursuant to statutory predecessor to section 552.302); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994). Generally, a compelling reason to withhold information exists where some other source of law makes the information confidential or where third party interests are at stake. Open Records Decision No. 150 at 2 (1977). You raise section 552.101 of the Government Code, which can provide a compelling reason to withhold information. Thus, we will address the applicability of section 552.101.

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 common-law right to privacy, which protects information if it (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. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be met. *Id.* at 681-82. Common-law privacy protects the types of information held to be intimate or embarrassing in *Industrial Foundation*. *See id.* at 683 (information relating to sexual assault, pregnancy, mental or physical abuse in workplace, illegitimate children, psychiatric treatment of mental disorders, attempted suicide, and injuries to sexual organs). In Open Records Decision No. 393 (1983), this office concluded, generally, only information which either identifies or tends to identify a victim of sexual assault or other sex-related offense may be withheld under common-law privacy. 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 Record Decision Nos. 393 at 2 (1983), 339 (1982), 440 (1986) (detailed descriptions of serious sexual offenses must be withheld).

The submitted information relates to an alleged sexual assault. In this instance, the request indicates the requestor knows the identity of the alleged victim. Therefore, withholding only identifying information from the requestor would not preserve the victim's common-law right to privacy. Accordingly, to protect the victim's privacy, 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 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,



Misty Haberer Barham
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MHB/agn

Ref: ID # 447891

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)