



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

April 22, 2013

Ms. Alexis G. Allen  
Counsel for the City of Rowlett  
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1800 Lincoln Plaza  
500 North Akard  
Dallas, Texas 75201

OR2013-06514

Dear Ms. Allen:

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# 489095 (Reference No. 60083).

The City of Rowlett (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified complaint regarding barking dogs. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.137 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." This exception encompasses the informer's privilege, which has long been recognized by Texas courts. See *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 the subject of the information does not already know the informer's identity. See Open Records Decision No. 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 1-2 (1981) (citing 8 John H. Wigmore, *Evidence in Trials at Common Law*, § 2374, at 767 (J. McNaughton

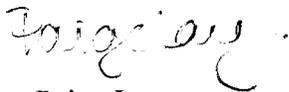
rev. ed. 1961)). The report must be of a violation of a criminal or civil statute. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 582 at 2 (1990), 515 at 4 (1988). The privilege excepts the informer's statement only to the extent necessary to protect that informer's identity. Open Records Decision No. 549 at 5 (1990).

You state the submitted information pertains to a complaint alleging barking dogs at the requestor's address. The submitted information reveals that this constitutes a violation of the city's animal nuisance ordinance which may result in civil or criminal penalties. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude that the city may withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege.<sup>1</sup> However, you have failed to demonstrate any of the remaining information identifies or tends to identify an individual who reported a violation, and this information may not be withheld on that basis. As no further exceptions to disclosure have been raised for the remaining information, it 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](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,



Paige Lay  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

PL/bhf

Ref: ID# 489095

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

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<sup>1</sup>As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.