



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 23, 2013

Ms. Charlotte L. Staples
Counsel for the City of North Richland Hills
Taylor, Olson, Adkins, Sralla, Elam, L.L.P.
6000 Western Place, Suite 200
Fort Worth, Texas 76107

OR2013-08624

Dear Ms. Staples:

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# 492774 (Reference No. W000082-042513).

The City of North Richland Hills (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to complaints made involving the requestor's property. You claim 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. Section 552.101 encompasses information protected by 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 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)). However, the informer's privilege does not apply where the informant's identity is known to the individual who is the

subject of the complaint. *See* Open Records Decision No. 208 at 1-2 (1978). The informer's privilege protects the content of the communication only to the extent that it identifies the informant. *See* Open Records Decision No. 549 at 5 (1990).

You state the submitted information is related to a complaint of alleged violations of section 66-8 of the North Richland Hills City Code. You state there are criminal penalties for violation of these ordinances under section 34-1 of the city code. There is no indication the subject of the complaint knows the identity of the complainant in the submitted information. Therefore, based on your representations and our review of the submitted information, we conclude the city may withhold the information you have highlighted 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,



Paige Lay
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

PL/bhf

Ref: ID# 492774

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)