



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

January 22, 2014

Ms. Danielle R. Folsom
Assistant City Attorney
City of Houston
P.O. Box 368
Houston, Texas 77001-0368

OR2014-01301

Dear Ms. Folsom:

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# 516561 (GC No. 21056).

The City of Houston (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to complaints about a specified property. You state the city will make some of the responsive information available to the requestor. You claim a portion of the requested information is 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. You raise section 552.101 in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege, which Texas courts have long recognized. *See Aguilar v. State*, 444 S.W.2d 935, 937 (Tex. Crim. App. 1969). 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)*.

You state a portion of the submitted information identifies a complainant who reported a violation of the city's Building Standards Code to city employees charged with enforcing the ordinance at issue. You also state a violation of the ordinance at issue carries criminal penalties. You do not inform us the requestor already knows the identity of the informer. Based upon your representations and our review, we conclude the city has demonstrated the applicability of the common-law informer's privilege to the information you have marked. Therefore, the city may withhold the information you marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. The city must release the remaining information.

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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Tamara H. Holland
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

THH/dls

Ref: ID# 516561

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)