



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

November 10, 2014

Mr. Brandon W. Carr  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Fort Worth  
1000 Throckmorton Street, Third Floor  
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

OR2014-20382

Dear Mr. Carr:

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# 548085 (City PIR No. W037635).

The City of Fort Worth (the "city") received a request for the identity of the complainant related to complaints filed against the requestor's address. You claim some of 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 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). 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 portions of the submitted information, which you have marked, identify a complainant or complainants who reported violations of Sections 12.5-825 and 12.5-827 of the city code to city staff members charged with enforcement of the code. You inform us a violation of the relevant city ordinances is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine. You state you have received no indication the requestor knows the identity of the informer(s). 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 at issue. Therefore, the city may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege.

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](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,



Cindy Nettles  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CN/dls

Ref: ID# 548085

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)