



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 24, 2014

Mr. Guillermo Trevino
Assistant City Attorney
Office of the City Attorney
City of Fort Worth
1000 Throckmorton Street, 3rd Floor
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

OR2014-21378

Dear Mr. Trevino:

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# 544473 (City ID No. W036815).

The City of Fort Worth (the "city") received a request for the personnel records of a named former city police officer, including any internal investigations involving the named officer.¹ You state the city has released the majority of the requested information to the requestor. Further, you state the city has redacted information pursuant to section 552.130(c) and Open

¹We note the city sought and received clarification of the information requested. See Gov't Code § 552.222 (providing if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify request); see also *City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 304 S.W.3d 380, 387 (Tex. 2010) (holding that when a governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification or narrowing of an unclear or over-broad request for public information, the ten-day period to request an attorney general ruling is measured from the date the request is clarified or narrowed).

Records Decision No. 684 (2009).² You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.102, 552.117, and 552.136 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.” Gov’t Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses section 143.089 of the Local Government Code. You inform us the city is a civil service city under chapter 143 of the Local Government Code. Section 143.089 provides for the existence of two different types of personnel files relating to a police officer: one that must be maintained as part of the officer’s civil service file and another that the police department may maintain for its own internal use. *See* Local Gov’t Code § 143.089(a), (g). Under section 143.089(a), the officer’s civil service file must contain certain specified items, including commendations, periodic evaluations by the police officer’s supervisor, and documents relating to any misconduct in which the department took disciplinary action against the officer under chapter 143 of the Local Government Code. *Id.* § 143.089(a)(1)–(2). Chapter 143 prescribes the following types of disciplinary actions: removal, suspension, demotion, and uncompensated duty. *Id.* §§ 143.051–.055; *see* Attorney General Opinion JC-0257 (written reprimand is not disciplinary action for purposes of Local Gov’t Code chapter 143). In cases in which a police department investigates a police officer’s misconduct and takes disciplinary action against an officer, it is required by section 143.089(a)(2) to place all investigatory records relating to the investigation and disciplinary action, including background documents such as complaints, witness statements, and documents of like nature from individuals who were not in a supervisory capacity, in the police officer’s civil service file maintained under section 143.089(a). *See Abbott v. Corpus Christi*, 109 S.W.3d 113, 122 (Tex. App.—Austin 2003, no pet.). All investigatory materials in a case resulting in disciplinary action are “from the employing department” when they are held by or are in the possession of the department because of its investigation into a police officer’s misconduct, and the police department must forward them to the civil service commission for placement in the civil service personnel file. *Id.* Such records may not be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 143.089 of the Local Government Code. *See* Local Gov’t Code § 143.089(f); Open Records Decision No. 562 at 6 (1990).

²Section 552.130(c) of the Government Code allows a governmental body to redact the information described in subsections 552.130(a) without the necessity of seeking a decision from the attorney general. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.130(c). If a governmental body redacts such information, it must notify the requestor in accordance with section 552.130(e). *See id.* § 552.130(d), (e). Open Records Decision No. 684 serves as a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold certain categories of information, including W-2 and W-4 forms under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 6103(a) of title 26 of the United States Code and personal e-mail address under section 552.137 of the Government Code, without the necessity of seeking a decision from the attorney general. *See* ORD 684.

However, a document relating to a police officer's alleged misconduct may not be placed in his civil service file if there is insufficient evidence to sustain the charge of misconduct. Local Gov't Code § 143.089(b). Information that reasonably relates to a police officer's employment relationship with the police department and that is maintained in a police department's internal file pursuant to section 143.089(g) is confidential and must not be released.³ *City of San Antonio v. San Antonio Express-News*, 47 S.W.3d 556 (Tex. App.—San Antonio 2000, pet. denied); *City of San Antonio v. Tex. Attorney Gen.*, 851 S.W.2d 946, 949 (Tex. App.—Austin 1993, writ denied).

You inform us the information contained in Exhibit C-2 is maintained in the city police department's (the "department") internal personnel files under section 143.089(g). Based on your representations and our review, Exhibit C-2 is confidential under section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code and must be withheld from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) 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 satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. Types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. Additionally, this office has found personal financial information not relating to the financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body is generally highly intimate or embarrassing. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 600 (1992), 545 (1990) (deferred compensation information, participation in voluntary investment program, election of optional insurance coverage, mortgage payments, assets, bills, and credit history). This office has found financial information relating only to an individual ordinarily satisfies the first requirement of the test for common-law privacy. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 600 (designation of beneficiary of employee's retirement benefits, direct deposit authorization, and forms allowing employee to allocate pretax compensation to group insurance, health care or dependent care), 523 (1989). Thus, a public employee's allocation of part of the employee's salary to a voluntary investment program offered by the employer is a personal investment decision, and information about that decision is protected by common-law privacy. We note payroll deductions for federal withholding tax are protected by common-law privacy and must be withheld under section 552.101. However, the payroll deductions for social security, mandatory retirement, and Medicare are not protected by common-law privacy and may not be withheld under section 552.101. *See, e.g.,* Open

³Section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code requires a police department that receives a request for information maintained in a personnel file under section 143.089(g) to refer that requestor to the civil service director or the director's designee. Local Gov't Code § 143.089(g).

Records Decision Nos. 600 at 9-12 (1992) (participation in TexFlex), 545 at 3-5 (1990) (deferred compensation plan); *see also* Attorney General Opinion GA-0572 at 4 (2007) (public employee's net salary protected by common-law privacy, but gross salary is not). Finally, we note the public interest in a public employee's prior salary justifies disclosure, as such information bears on the employee's past employment record and suitability for the employment position in question. *See* Open Records Decision No. 455 at 9 (1987).

Upon review, except for the information we have marked for release, we find the information you marked satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Therefore, the city must generally withhold this information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. You do not explain whether the listed payroll deductions and benefits reflect mandatory participation by the employee or are the employee's voluntary financial decisions. Thus, to the extent this information reflects the employee's voluntary allocation of salary to optional investment, retirement, or other financial programs offered by the city, the city must withhold it under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, to the extent the information at issue reflects the employee's mandatory participation in the city's retirement program or benefits paid by the city, the deduction amounts are not confidential and may not be withheld on this basis.

Section 552.102(a) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information in a personnel file, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy[.]" Gov't Code § 552.102(a). The Texas Supreme Court held section 552.102(a) excepts from disclosure the dates of birth of state employees in the payroll database of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. *Tex. Comptroller of Pub. Accounts v. Attorney Gen. of Tex.*, 354 S.W.3d 336 (Tex. 2010). Upon review, we find the city must withhold the date of birth you have marked under section 552.102(a) of the Government Code.

You state the city marked certain information for redaction under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code as permitted by section 552.024 of the Government Code. Section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure the home address, home telephone number, emergency contact information, social security number, and family member information of a peace officer, regardless of whether the peace officer complies with sections 552.024 or 552.1175 of the Government Code.⁴ Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(2). Accordingly, the city must withhold the information you have marked, in addition to the information we have marked, under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code.

⁴Section 552.117(a)(2) adopts the definition of peace officer found in article 2.12 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

You state the city has marked certain information for redaction pursuant to section 552.136(c) of the Government Code. Section 552.136 of the Government Code provides, “[n]otwithstanding any other provision of [the Act], a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential.” *Id.* § 552.136(b); *see id.* § 552.136(a) (defining “access device”). Except for the information we have marked for release, the city must withhold the information you have marked under section 552.136 of the Government Code.

In summary, the city must withhold Exhibit C-2 under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code. Except for the information we have marked for release, the city must withhold the marked information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy, to the extent the marked payroll information reflects the employee’s voluntary allocation of salary to optional investment, retirement, and other financial programs offered by the city. Additionally, the city must withhold the date of birth you marked under section 552.102(a) of the Government Code. The city also must withhold the information you have marked, in addition to the information we marked, under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code. Finally, except for the information we have marked for release, the city must withhold the information you have marked under section 552.136 of the Government Code. 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,



Lee Seidlits
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CLS/som

Ref: ID# 544473

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)