



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

May 5, 2016

Ms. Paige Mebane
Assistant City Attorney
Office of the City Attorney
1000 Throckmorton Street, Third Floor
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

OR2016-10228

Dear Ms. Mebane:

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# 608618 (PIR No. W049505).

The Fort Worth Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. You state you have released some information to the requestor. You claim some of the submitted information is not subject to the Act. You claim some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note some of the requested information may have been the subject of Open Records Letter No. 2015-19971 (2015). We have no indication the law, facts, or circumstances upon which the prior ruling was based have changed. Accordingly, to the extent the requested information is identical to the information previously requested and ruled upon, the department must continue to rely on Open Records Letter No. 2015-19971 as a previous determination, and withhold or release the previously ruled upon information in accordance with it. *See* Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001) (so long as law, facts, and circumstances on which prior ruling was based have not changed, first type of previous determination exists where requested information is precisely same information as was addressed in a prior attorney general ruling, ruling is addressed to same governmental body, and ruling concludes that information is or is not excepted from disclosure). However, to

the extent the information in the current request is not encompassed by the prior ruling, we will consider your submitted arguments.

You assert some of the requested information consists of records held on behalf of the grand jury. The judiciary is expressly excluded from the requirements of the Act. Gov't Code § 552.003(1)(B). This office has determined that a grand jury, for purposes of the Act, is a part of the judiciary and, therefore, not subject to the Act. *See* Open Records Decision No. 411 (1984). Further, records kept by a governmental body that is acting as an agent for a grand jury are considered records in the constructive possession of the grand jury, and, therefore, are also not subject to the Act. *See* Open Records Decisions Nos. 513 (1988), 411, 398 (1983). *But see* ORD 513 at 4 (defining limits of judiciary exclusion). Thus, the requested information that is held by the department as an agent of the grand jury consists of records of the judiciary not subject to disclosure under the Act, and we do not address its public availability.

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. This section encompasses information made confidential by other statutes. Section 414.009 of the Government Code provides, in part, as follows:

(a) A person who is a member or employee of the [Texas Crime Stoppers Council] or who accepts a report of criminal activity on behalf of a crime stoppers organization commits an offense if the person intentionally or knowingly divulges to a person not employed by a law enforcement agency the content of a report of a criminal act or the identity of the person who made the report without the consent of the person who made the report.

Id. § 414.009(a). You state the information you have marked consists of a report to a crime stoppers organization and the identity of the person who made the report. *See id.* § 414.001(2)(B) (defining “crime stoppers organization” as public organization operated on local or statewide level, that pays rewards to persons who report to organization information about criminal activity, and that forwards information to appropriate law enforcement agency). Accordingly, we conclude the department must withhold the information you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 414.009 of the Government Code.

Section 552.101 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 concluded some kinds of medical information are generally highly intimate or embarrassing. *See* Open Records Decision No. 455 (1987). This office has found personal financial information not relating to a financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body is generally excepted from required public disclosure under common-law privacy. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 545 (1990) (common-law privacy protects mortgage payments, assets, bills, and credit history), 523 (1989) (common-law privacy protects credit reports, financial statements, and other personal financial information). Further, under the common-law right of privacy, an individual has a right to be free from the publicizing of private affairs in which the public has no legitimate concern. *Indus. Found.*, 540 S.W.2d at 682. In considering whether a public citizen's date of birth is private, the Third Court of Appeals looked to the supreme court's rationale in *Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts v. Attorney General of Texas*, 354 S.W.3d 336 (Tex. 2010). *Paxton v. City of Dallas*, No. 03-13-00546-CV, 2015 WL 3394061, at *3 (Tex. App.—Austin May 22, 2015, pet. denied) (mem. op.). The supreme court concluded public employees' dates of birth are private under section 552.102 of the Government Code because the employees' privacy interest substantially outweighed the negligible public interest in disclosure.¹ *Texas Comptroller*, 354 S.W.3d at 347-48. Based on *Texas Comptroller*, the court of appeals concluded the privacy rights of public employees apply equally to public citizens, and thus, public citizens' dates of birth are also protected by common-law privacy pursuant to section 552.101. *City of Dallas*, 2015 WL 3394061, at *3. Upon review, we find the information we have marked satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Accordingly, the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

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 section 552.024 or section 552.1175 of the Government Code.² Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(2). We note section 552.117(a)(2) is applicable to personal cellular telephone numbers, provided the cellular telephone service is not paid for by a governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision No. 506 at 5-6 (1988) (section 552.117 not applicable to cellular telephone numbers paid for by governmental body and intended for official use). In this instance, we are unable to determine whether the individual whose information is at issue is a currently licensed peace officer as defined by article 2.12. Thus, we must rule conditionally. To the extent the individual whose information is at issue is a currently licensed peace officer as defined by

¹Section 552.102(a) 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).

²The Office of the Attorney General will raise mandatory exceptions on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

article 2.12 and the cellular telephone service is not paid for by a governmental body, the department must withhold the cellular telephone number we have marked under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code. However, to the extent the individual at issue is no longer a licensed peace officer as defined by article 2.12, the department may not withhold the marked cellular telephone number under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code.

To the extent the information we noted does not pertain to a currently licensed peace officer, section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code may apply. Section 552.117(a)(1) excepts from disclosure the home address and telephone number, emergency contact information, social security number, and family member information of current or former employees or officials of a governmental body who request this information be kept confidential under section 552.024 of the Government Code. *See Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(1)*. As noted above, section 552.117 is applicable to personal cellular telephone numbers, provided the cellular telephone service is not paid for by a governmental body. *See ORD 506 at 5-6*. Whether a particular item of information is protected by section 552.117(a)(1) must be determined at the time of the governmental body's receipt of the request for the information. *See Open Records Decision No. 530 at 5 (1989)*. Thus, information may be withheld under section 552.117(a)(1) only on behalf of a current or former employee or official who made a request for confidentiality under section 552.024 prior to the date of the governmental body's receipt of the request for information. Information may not be withheld under section 552.117(a)(1) on behalf of a current or former employee or official who did not timely request under section 552.024 the information be kept confidential. Therefore, if the employee whose information is at issue timely requested confidentiality under section 552.024 of the Government Code and the cellular telephone service is not paid for by a governmental body, the department must withhold the cellular telephone number we have marked under section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code. Conversely, if the employee at issue did not timely request confidentiality under section 552.024 or the cellular telephone service is paid for by a governmental body, the department may not withhold the information at issue under section 552.117(a)(1).

Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator's license, driver's license, motor vehicle title or registration, or personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release. *See Gov't Code § 552.130*. Accordingly, the department must withhold the motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

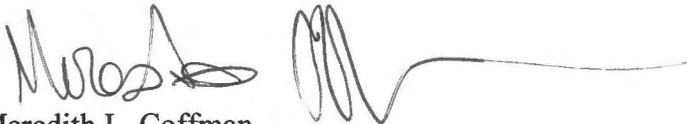
In summary, to the extent the requested information is identical to the information previously requested and ruled upon, the department must continue to rely on Open Records Letter No. 2015-19971 as a previous determination, and withhold or release the previously ruled upon information in accordance with it. The department must withhold the information you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with

section 414.009 of the Government Code. The department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. To the extent the individual whose information is at issue is a currently licensed peace officer as defined by article 2.12 and the cellular telephone service is not paid for by a governmental body, the department must withhold the cellular telephone number we have marked under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code. If the employee whose information is at issue is no longer a licensed peace officer, timely requested confidentiality under section 552.024 of the Government Code, and the cellular telephone service is not paid for by a governmental body, the department must withhold the cellular telephone number we have marked under section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The department 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meredith L. Coffman', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Meredith L. Coffman
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MLC/bw

Ref: ID# 608618

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)