



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
STATE OF ILLINOIS

KWAME RAOUL  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

February 14, 2025

*Via electronic mail*



RE: FOIA Request for Review – 2025 PAC 85113

Dear [REDACTED]:

This determination letter is issued pursuant to section 9.5(c) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 ILCS 140/9.5 (West 2023 Supp.)). For the reasons that follow, the Public Access Bureau has determined that no further action is warranted in this matter.

On January 10, 2025, you submitted a FOIA request to the Northfield Police Department (Department) seeking copies of records related to report number 25-292, which concerned yourself and a named individual. On January 20, 2025, the Department provided responsive records pursuant to section 7(1)(b), 7(1)(c), and 7(1)(d)(iv) of FOIA (5 ILCS 140/7(1)(b), (1)(c), (1)(d)(iv) (West 2023 Supp.), as amended by Public Acts 103-605, effective July 1, 2024; 103-865, effective January 1, 2025). On January 24, 2025, you submitted this Request for Review contesting the extent of the Department's redactions.

In a February 10, 2025, telephone conversation with the Deputy Public Access Counselor, you stated that you specifically contest redactions of the information the named individual provided to law enforcement because, you allege, that individual has filed numerous false police reports against you and have you have right to know what the individual stated.

Section 7(1)(c) of FOIA exempts "[p]ersonal information contained within public records, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, unless the disclosure is consented to in writing by the individual subjects of the information. Section 7(1)(c) defines "[u]nwarranted invasion of personal privacy" as "the disclosure of information that is highly personal or objectionable to a reasonable person and in

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which the subject's right to privacy outweighs any legitimate public interest in obtaining the information."

The Public Access Bureau has consistently determined that disclosure of the identity of a person who complains to the police about an incident constitutes an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. *See, for example*, Ill. Att'y Gen. PAC Req. Rev. Ltr. 79728, issued February 9, 2024 ("A complainant's identity is inherently highly personal."). Where, as here, you know the identity of the complainant, providing the information that the complainant provided to the Department would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person; this is true even though you have alleged that false police reports were filed. *See, for example, Gabrielli v. U.S. Dep't of Justice*, 594 F. Supp. 309, 312–13 (N.D.N.Y. 1984) (complainant who submitted unfounded complaint retained right to privacy because to conclude otherwise could deter members of the public "from providing to law enforcement authorities what may prove to be vital information for fear that their names would be released to the parties against whom they provided information if their suspicions ultimately prove groundless.").

In addition, section 7(1)(d)(iv) of FOIA exempts from disclosure:

Records in the possession of any public body created in the course of administrative enforcement proceedings, and any law enforcement or correctional agency for law enforcement purposes, but only to the extent that disclosure would:

\* \* \*

(iv) **unavoidably disclose the identity of a confidential source, confidential information furnished only by the confidential source, or persons who file complaints with or provide information to administrative, investigative, law enforcement, or penal agencies[.]**  
(Emphasis added.)

This provision allows law enforcement agencies to protect the anonymity of persons who provide them with information. *See, e.g., Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety*, 348 Ill. App. 3d at 200-01 (names and addresses of beat meeting participants properly redacted because they provided information to police department). The plain language of section 7(1)(d)(iv) permits a law enforcement agency to withhold the identity of a member of the public who provides information to that agency. Further, witness statements and investigatory records may be withheld in their entirety if disclosure of the contents "would necessarily result in the disclosure of the identity of the source" of the information and, therefore, "redaction \* \* \* cannot be meaningfully accomplished." *Copley Press, Inc. v. City of Springfield*, 266 Ill. App 3d 421,

[REDACTED]  
February 14, 2025

Page 3

426 (1994); *see also* Ill. Att'y Gen. PAC Req. Rev. Ltr. 37032, issued October 5, 2015 (where FOIA request identified the complainant by name, redacting the complainant's name from the records would not protect his identity and therefore the records were exempt from disclosure in their entirety); Ill. Att'y Gen. PAC Req. Rev. Ltr. 17520, issued January 20, 2012 (exemption 7(1)(d)(iv) applied where requester had independent knowledge of a complainant's identity).

Your FOIA request plainly sought records concerning a named complainant, and you have further clarified that you seek the statements that that individual provided to law enforcement. However, disclosure of the requested statements would unavoidably identify that person as having provided information to the Department. Section 7(1)(d)(iv) does not contain an exception that permits disclosure of information that would unavoidably identify a complainant when the requester alleges that the complainant provided false information.

Because the requested narrative would be unavoidably attributable to that individual even if the Department redacted the complainant's name and other personally-identifying information, the requested information is exempt from disclosure pursuant to section 7(1)(c) and section 7(1)(d)(iv) of FOIA. Accordingly, this office will take no further action in this matter.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at the Springfield address listed on the first page of this letter. This letter serves to close the matter.

Very truly yours,

[REDACTED]

CHRISTOPHER R. BOGGS  
Deputy Public Access Counselor  
Public Access Bureau

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