

Judge rules in support of exotic dancers' privacy

A Pierce County judge Tuesday permanently blocked a Pierce County Jail inmate from receiving the names, addresses, phone numbers and other personal information of more than 200 exotic dancers.

STEVE MAYNARD; STAFF WRITER

Published: Feb. 13, 2013 at 12:05 a.m. PST— Updated: Feb. 13, 2013 at 7:20 a.m. PST

[3 Comments](#)

A Pierce County judge Tuesday permanently blocked a Pierce County Jail inmate from receiving the names, addresses, phone numbers and other personal information of more than 200 exotic dancers.

Superior Court Judge Ronald Culpepper ruled the dancers have “a very reasonable fear” that releasing their county license applications could put them at risk of abuse by Robert Hill, a Tacoma man with three felony convictions.

“Would a person have some reasonable concerns that release of the information to a person with Robert Hill’s history could harm them?” Culpepper said. “Yes, of course they would.”

The license applications are public records, and the judge said the public has “legitimate interest” in who’s working at strip clubs and dancers’ backgrounds. But he cited invasion of privacy as an exemption for not releasing the 215 applications to Hill.

“This is clearly a case where some protection is deserved,” Culpepper said.

The dancer who brought the lawsuit, known anonymously as Jane Doe, testified Tuesday she was concerned for her safety after the Pierce County Auditor’s Office notified her that Hill had requested her application to dance at DreamGirls at Fox’s in Parkland.

“I was worried for my safety and my identity,” Jane Doe said. “He’s a criminal, and he doesn’t need to have my information.”

Her lawyer obtained a temporary injunction blocking the release of her information, which Culpepper expanded last month for all dancers who've applied to work at Fox's. Dancers in adult-entertainment clubs are required to file for licenses with Pierce County.

Hill asked in May 2012 for color photos of adult entertainers who had applied for licenses so far that year, which the Auditor's Office released without names. Hill then returned a photo of one dancer — Jane Doe — and requested a copy of her application.

The Auditor's Office took no position on the dancers' injunction request.

Hill, 43, represented himself from jail via the courtroom's speaker phone. The jail doesn't transport inmates for civil cases.

Hill questioned Jane Doe for more than an hour, repeatedly asking for details as to what extent she researched his convictions and background.

Jane Doe grew visibly frustrated at times.

Hill is serving time for malicious mischief in the third degree and three counts of fourth-degree assault. His other convictions include intimidating a judge, criminal trespass and criminal assault. He is due to be released April 15. The injunction issued Tuesday would continue to apply to him.

Sean Small, Jane Doe's lawyer, argued that release of her license application with her address and phone number would violate her privacy rights and put her safety at risk.

Hill cited a number of reasons for wanting dancers' information. He said he wants to make stars out of local adult club dancers through his use of social media. He also said he is a "sex education advocate" and wants to overturn by referendum tougher strip club regulations that went into effect in Pierce County this year.

"In order for me to lobby the dancers, I have to be able to communicate with them," Hill said. "I'm an advocate for the industry."

Culpepper said that if dancers want Hill's help, they can contact him on his Internet site.

Steve Maynard: 253-597-8647

steve.maynard@thenewstribune.com

Read more here: <http://www.thenewstribune.com/2013/02/13/2472815/judge-rules-in-support-of-dancers.html#storylink=cpy>