Office of the Attorney General
JOHN CORNYN

January 11, 2001

Mr. Charles M. Allen, II
City of Richardson-Police Department
P.O. Box 831078
Richardson, Texas 75083-1078

OR2001-0120

Dear Mr. Allen:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 143103.

The Richardson Police Department (the "department") received a request for a specific offense report and arrest report. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.103 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.108(a)(1) excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]" Generally, a governmental body claiming an exception under section 552.108 must reasonably explain, if the information does not supply the explanation on its face, how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.108(a), (b), .301(e); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). While your explanation as to the application of section 552.108(a)(1) is unclear, the submitted materials as a whole indicate that the requested reports pertain to a pending criminal matter. Therefore, we find that release of the submitted reports would interfere with an ongoing criminal case, and therefore, the submitted reports are subject to section 552.108(a)(1).

However, information normally found on the front page of an offense report is generally considered public. *See generally* Gov't Code § 552.108(c); *Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.--Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976); Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976). Thus, the city must release the type of information that is considered to be front page offense report information, even if this information is not actually located on the front page of the

submitted report. Although section 552.108(a)(1) authorizes the city to withhold the remaining information from disclosure, you may choose to release all or part of the reports that is not otherwise confidential by law. *See* Gov't Code § 552.007.[1]

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

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[1]Because section 552.108 is dispositive of this matter, we do not address your argument regarding section 552.103 except to note that, like section 552.108, section 552.103 does not except front page offense report information. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 362 (1983), 597 (1991).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the General Services Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

E. Joanna Fitzgerald
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

EJF/er

Ref: ID# 143103

Encl: Submitted documents

cc: Ms. Tammy Cooper
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(w/o enclosures)