OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL · STATE OF TEXAS
JOHN CORNYN

May 23, 2001

Ms. Judith A. Hunter
Paralegal
City of Georgetown
P.O. Box 409
Georgetown, Texas 78627-0409

OR2001-2125

Dear Ms. Hunter:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 149178.

The City of Georgetown (the "city") received a request for reports relating to an arrest. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

First, we note that the submitted information contains an arrest warrant, the affidavit supporting the warrant, and a misdemeanor complaint. To the extent these documents have been filed with a court, they are considered public, are not subject to the section 552.108(a)(1) exception to disclosure, and must be released to the requestor. *See* Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(17); *Star-Telegram, Inc. v. Walker*, 834 S.W.2d 54, 57 (Tex. 1992).

The remainder of the information, with the exception of basic information, may be withheld under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Texas Government Code excepts from public 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." Gov't Code 552.108(a)(1). You state that the requested information concerns a pending criminal investigation and prosecution. Accordingly, we find that release of the remainder of the requested information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or

prosecution of crime, *see 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) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases). We conclude that the city may withhold the information under section 552.108(a)(1).

However, we note that section 552.108 is inapplicable to basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov't Code § 552.108(c); *see 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). Consequently, you must release basic information contained in the report in addition to the court documents. Moreover, while section 552.108(a)(1) authorizes you to withhold the remaining information from disclosure, you may choose to release all or part of the information at issue that is not otherwise confidential by law. Gov't Code §552.007.

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).

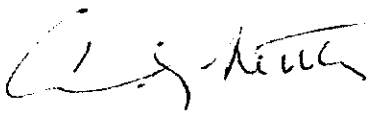
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following 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).

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,



Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/seg

Ref: ID# 149178

Encl. Submitted documents

cc: Mr. Walter Collins
114 Sotol Pass
Georgetown, Texas 78628
(w/o enclosures)