



October 31, 2002

Mr. Robert L. Dillard III  
Nichols, Jackson, Dillard, Hager & Smith  
1800 Lincoln Plaza  
500 North Akard  
Dallas, Texas 75201

OR2002-6214

Dear Mr. Dillard:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 171525.

The City of Gun Barrel City (the "city") received a request for "a copy of the offense report and/or similar documents" and a videotape related to a specified incident at a jail. You state that you are providing the requestor with "the notice to appear/offense report." You also state that the city does not possess the requested videotape.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, we do not address the required public disclosure of the requested videotape. 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.

You assert that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.103. Section 552.103(a) provides as follows:

(a) Information is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information relating to litigation of a civil or criminal nature to which the state or a political subdivision is or may be a party or to which an officer or employee of the state or a political subdivision, as a consequence of the person's office or employment, is or may be a party.

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<sup>1</sup>The Public Information Act (the "Act") applies only to information in existence at the time the governmental body receives the request for information. See Open Records Decision Nos. 452 at 2-3 (1986) (document is not within the purview of the Act if, when a governmental body receives a request for it, it does not exist), 342 at 3 (1982) (Act applies only to information in existence, and does not require the governmental body to prepare new information).

A governmental body has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show the applicability of an exception in a particular situation. The test for establishing that section 552.103(a) applies is a two-prong showing that (1) litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated, and (2) the information at issue is related to that litigation. *University of Tex. Law Sch. v. Texas Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479 (Tex. App.—Austin 1997, no pet.); *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.); Open Records Decision No. 588 (1991). Further, litigation must be pending or reasonably anticipated on the date the requestor applies to the public information officer for access. Gov't Code § 552.103(c).

To establish that litigation is reasonably anticipated, a governmental body must provide this office "concrete evidence showing that the claim that litigation may ensue is more than mere conjecture." Open Records Decision No. 452 at 4 (1986). Concrete evidence to support a claim that litigation is reasonably anticipated may include, for example, the governmental body's receipt of a letter containing a specific threat to sue the governmental body from an attorney for a potential opposing party. Open Records Decision No. 555 (1990); *see* Open Records Decision No. 518 at 5 (1989) (litigation must be "realistically contemplated"). On the other hand, this office has determined that if an individual publicly threatens to bring suit against a governmental body, but does not actually take objective steps toward filing suit, litigation is not reasonably anticipated. *See* Open Records Decision No. 331 (1982). Nor does the mere fact that an individual hires an attorney and alleges damages serve to establish that litigation is reasonably anticipated. Open Records Decision No. 361 at 2 (1983). Whether litigation is reasonably anticipated must be determined on a case-by-case basis. Open Records Decision No. 452 at 4 (1986).

In this case, you state that the information sought relates to reasonably anticipated litigation the requestor's client will bring against a city police officer who arrested the requestor's client for public intoxication. You inform us that the request is from an attorney representing the individual arrested for public intoxication. You also refer to the request letter's "inflammatory and untrue" content. However, after considering the totality of the circumstances, we find that the city has not shown that concrete steps toward litigation have been taken. Thus, we do not believe that you have established that litigation against the city was reasonably anticipated at the time the city received the records request. *See* ORD 361. Accordingly, you may not withhold any of the submitted information based on section 552.103.

You next assert that the information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108. Section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure an internal record of a law enforcement agency that is maintained for internal use in matters relating to law enforcement or prosecution if "release of the internal record or notation would interfere with law enforcement or prosecution." Generally, a governmental body claiming section 552.108(b)(1) 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(b)(1), .301(e)(1)(a); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). To claim this aspect of section 552.108 protection, however, a governmental body must meet its burden of explaining, if the requested information does not supply the explanation on its face, how and why release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement and crime prevention. Open Records Decision No. 562 at 10 (1990). Further, commonly known policies and techniques may not be withheld under section 552.108. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 531 at 2-3 (1989) (Penal Code provisions, common-law rules, and constitutional limitations on use of force are not protected under section 552.108), 252 at 3 (1980) (governmental body did not meet burden because it did not indicate why investigative procedures and techniques requested were any different from those commonly known with law enforcement and crime prevention).

You argue that the public release of the submitted information “would interfere with the future investigation, detection and prosecution of similar crimes.” However, we find that you have not explained, nor can we discern, how the public release of the submitted information would interfere with law enforcement or prosecution. Accordingly, you may not withhold the submitted information under section 552.108.

We note that some of the submitted information is subject to section 552.101. 552.101 excepts “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.”<sup>2</sup> CHRI generated by the National Crime Information Center (“NCIC”) or by the Texas Crime Information Center (“TCIC”) is confidential. Title 28, part 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations governs the release of CHRI that states obtain from the federal government or other states. Open Records Decision No. 565 (1990). The federal regulations allow each state to follow its individual law with respect to CHRI it generates. *Id.* Section 411.083 of the Government Code deems confidential CHRI that the Department of Public Safety (“DPS”) maintains, except that the DPS may disseminate this information as provided in chapter 411, subchapter F of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 411.083.

Sections 411.083(b)(1) and 411.089(a) authorize a criminal justice agency to obtain CHRI; however, a criminal justice agency may not release CHRI except to another criminal justice agency for a criminal justice purpose. *Id.* § 411.089(b)(1). Other entities specified in chapter 411 of the Government Code are entitled to obtain CHRI from DPS or another criminal justice agency; however, those entities may not release CHRI except as provided by chapter 411. *See generally id.* §§ 411.090 - .127. Thus, any CHRI generated by the federal government or another state may not be made available to the requestor except in accordance with federal regulations. *See* Open Records Decision No. 565 (1990).

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<sup>2</sup> The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception like section 552.101 on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

Furthermore, any CHRI obtained from DPS or any other criminal justice agency must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with Government Code chapter 411, subchapter F. The city must withhold the information we have marked under section 411.083 of the Government Code. We note, however, that DPS must grant the person who is the subject of the CHRI access to the CHRI. Gov't Code § 411.083(b)(3). Please note that the definition of criminal history record information does not include driving record information. *See* Gov't Code § 411.082(2)(B).

Finally, we note that some of the submitted documents contain confidential information that is not subject to release to the general public. *See* Gov't Code § 552.101, .130. However, the requestor in this instance, as a personal representative of the person about whom the information relates, has a special right of access to the information. Gov't Code § 552.023. Because some of the information is confidential with respect to the general public, if the city receives a request for this information from an individual other than the requestor or the person whom the information concerns, the city should again seek our decision.

In summary, the city must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 in conjunction with chapter 411 of the Government Code. The remainder of the submitted information must be released to the requestor.

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 Texas Building and Procurement 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. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. 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,



V.G. Schimmel  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

VGS/sdk

Ref: ID# 171525

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. Curtis B. Stuckey  
Stuckey, Garrigan & Castetter  
P.O. Box 631902  
Nacogdoches, Texas 75963-1902  
(w/o enclosures)