



OFFICE of the ATTORNEY GENERAL
GREG ABBOTT

December 30, 2002

Mr. U. H. Specht
Legal Advisor
City of Carrollton
P.O. Box 110535
Carrollton, Texas 75011-0535

OR2002-7417

Dear Mr. Specht:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 176664.

The Carrollton Police Department (the "department") received a request for information concerning Jerome P. Weaver on November 13, 2002. You assert that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have reviewed the information you submitted and considered the exception you claim.

Initially, we note certain documents contained in the information you submitted indicate they qualify as information contained in a public court record. *See* Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(17). Therefore, as prescribed by section 552.022 of the Government Code, these public court documents must be released to the requestor, unless they are confidential under other law. Section 552.108, a discretionary exception under the Public Information Act, is not considered "other law" that makes information confidential. *See* Open Records Decision No. 586 (1991) (governmental body may waive section 552.108). However, the submitted court records contain information subject to section 552.130 of the Government Code, which excepts from public disclosure information relating to a driver's license or motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state. Therefore, after redacting the excepted information, which we have marked, the department must make the court records available to the requestor.

Also, the documents you seek to withhold contain an accident report form, ST-3, governed by chapter 550 of the Transportation Code. *See* Transp. Code § 550.064 (officer's accident report). Section 550.065(b) states that, except as provided by subsection (c), accident reports are privileged and confidential. Section 550.065(c)(4) provides for the release of accident reports to a person who provides two of the following three pieces of information: (1) date

of the accident; (2) name of any person involved in the accident; and (3) specific location of the accident. *See* Transp. Code § 550.065(c)(4). Under this provision, the Department of Public Safety or another governmental entity is required to release a copy of an accident report to a person who provides the agency with two or more pieces of information specified by the statute. *Id.* In the situation at hand, the requestor has provided the department with two of the three pieces of information. Thus, the department must release the accident report, which we have marked, under section 550.065(c)(4) of the Transportation Code.

Finally, Section 552.108 states that information held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime is excepted from required public disclosure “if release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime.” Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). You inform us that the requested information pertains to a pending case. Therefore, we believe that the release of the information “would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime.” *Id.*

However, section 552.108 does not apply to basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). We believe such basic information refers to the information held to be public in *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). Thus, with the exception of the basic front page offense and arrest information, the department may withhold the requested information from disclosure based on section 552.108(a)(1). It has the discretion to release all or part of the remaining information that is not otherwise confidential by law. Gov’t Code § 552.007.

To summarize, we conclude that: (1) the department must release all public court records, with required redactions, under section 552.022 of the Government Code; (2) the department must release the accident report, which we have marked, under section 550.065(c)(4) of the Transportation Code; and (3) with the exception of basic offense and arrest information, the department may withhold the remaining information based on section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

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,



Christen Sorrell
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CHS/seg

Ref: ID# 176664

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. Duane E. Krueger
Krueger & Associates
4403 North Central Expressway, Suite 1000
Dallas, Texas 75205
(w/o enclosures)