



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 1, 2006

Mr. Trenton C. Nichols
Brown & Hofmeister, L.L.P.
740 East Campbell Road, Suite 800
Richardson, Texas 75081

OR2006-04395

Dear Mr. Nichols:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 251485.

The McKinney Police Department (the "department"), which you represent, received a request for information relating to a specified case number. You claim that the requested information is exempted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and have reviewed the information you submitted.

We initially note that the documents in Exhibit B-2 include an arrest warrant and a complaint. Article 15.26 of the Code of Criminal Procedure provides that "[an] arrest warrant, and any affidavit presented to the magistrate in support of the issuance of the warrant, is public information[.]" Crim. Proc. Code art. 15.26 (emphasis added). Article 15.04 of the Code of Criminal Procedure provides that "[t]he affidavit made before the magistrate or district or county attorney is called a 'complaint' if it charges the commission of an offense" (emphasis added). Case law indicates that a complaint can support the issuance of an arrest warrant. See *Janecka v. State*, 739 S.W.2d 813, 822-23 (Tex. Crim. App. 1987); *Villegas v. State*, 791 S.W.2d 226, 235 (Tex. App.—Corpus Christi 1990, pet. ref'd); *Borsari v. State*, 919 S.W.2d 913, 918 (Tex. App.—Houston [14 Dist.] 1996, pet. ref'd).

In this instance, the submitted complaint was presented to the magistrate who issued the submitted arrest warrant. As a general rule, the exceptions to disclosure found in the Act do not apply to information that other statutes make public. See Open Records Decision Nos. 623 at 3 (1994), 525 at 3 (1989). Therefore, the arrest warrant and the complaint, which we marked, must be released in accordance with article 15.26 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Next, we address your claims with respect to the remaining information. Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.” Gov’t Code § 552.101. This exception encompasses information that other statutes make confidential. Chapter 772 of the Health and Safety Code authorizes the development of local emergency communications districts. Sections 772.118, 772.218, and 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code are applicable to emergency 911 districts established in accordance with chapter 772. See Open Records Decision No. 649 (1996). These sections make the originating telephone numbers and addresses of 911 callers that are furnished by a service supplier confidential. *Id.* at 2. Section 772.118 applies to an emergency communication district for a county with a population of more than two million. Section 772.218 applies to an emergency communication district for a county with a population of more than 860,000. Section 772.318 applies to an emergency communication district for a county with a population of more than 20,000.

You state that Exhibit B-1 contains information that was furnished by a 911 service supplier. However, you do not inform us whether the City of McKinney is part of an emergency communication district established under section 772.118, section 772.218, or section 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code. If the city is part of such a district, then the originating telephone number and address of a 911 caller contained in Exhibit B-1 must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code. But if the city is not part of such a district, then the department may not withhold any of the information contained in Exhibit B-1 under section 552.101.

Section 552.108 of the Government Code 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[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body that claims an exception to disclosure under section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why this exception is applicable to the information at issue. See *id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A); *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state that the remaining information in Exhibit B-2 relates to a pending case. Based on your representation, we find that section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable in this instance. 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).

Section 552.108 does not except from disclosure “basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime.” Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Section 552.108(c) refers to the basic front-page information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. The department must release basic information, including a detailed description of the offense, even if this information does not literally appear on the front page of an offense or arrest report. See *Houston Chronicle*, 531 S.W.2d at 186-88; Open Records Decision No. 127 at 3-4 (1976)

(summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). The department may withhold the rest of the information in Exhibit B-2 under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

In summary: (1) the department must release the marked arrest warrant and complaint in Exhibit B-2 under article 15.26 of the Code of Criminal Procedure; (2) if the City of McKinney is part of an emergency communication district established under section 772.118, section 772.218, or section 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code, then the originating telephone number and address of a 911 caller contained in Exhibit B-1 must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code; and (3) except for the basic information that must be released under section 552.108(c), the department may withhold the rest of the information in Exhibit B-2 under section 552.108(a)(1). The rest of the submitted information must be released.

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).

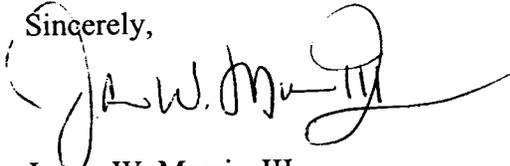
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, 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 Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 342 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 Office of the Attorney General 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.W. Morris, III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

James W. Morris, III
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JWM/eb

Ref: ID# 251485

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. Dennis L. Saucedo
1600-A Coleman Street
McKinney, Texas 75069
(w/o enclosures)