



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

July 20, 2007

Mr. Ronald J. Bounds
Assistant City Attorney
City of Corpus Christi
P.O. Box 9277
Corpus Christi, Texas 78469-9277

OR2007-09215

Dear Mr. Bounds:

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# 284328.

The City of Corpus Christi (the "city") received a request for all information pertaining to a specified incident. 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. We have also received and considered comments from the requestor. *See Gov't Code § 552.304* (providing that interested party may submit comments stating why information should or should not be released).

Initially, you inform us that a portion of the requested information is subject to a previous ruling issued by this office. On May 15, 2007, this office issued Open Records Letter No. 2007-05988 (2007), in which we ruled that a portion of the requested information was excepted from public disclosure under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. You state that the pertinent facts and circumstances have not changed since the issuance of that prior ruling. Thus, we determine that the city may continue to rely on our ruling in Open Records Letter No. 2007-05988 as a previous determination and withhold the information at issue under section 552.108(a)(1) in accordance with that decision. *See Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001)* (governmental body may rely on previous determination when the records or information at issue are precisely the same records or information that were previously submitted to this office pursuant to section 552.301(e)(1)(D); the governmental body which received the request for the records or information is the same governmental body that previously requested and received a ruling from the attorney general; the prior

ruling concluded that the precise records or information are or are not excepted from disclosure under the Act; and the law, facts, and circumstances on which the prior ruling was based have not changed since the issuance of the ruling).

We now turn to your argument regarding the information that was not at issue in the previous ruling. 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: (1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime.” Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). Generally, a governmental body claiming section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See* Gov’t Code §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You inform us that the information you seek to withhold under section 552.108 pertains to a pending criminal prosecution. Based on this representation, we agree that section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to this information. *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 note, however, that basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.108. Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Such basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Thus, with the exception of basic information, the city may withhold the submitted information from disclosure pursuant to section 552.108(a)(1).

In summary, the city may continue to rely on our decision in Open Records Letter No. 2007-05988 with respect to the information requested in that instance that is also at issue here. With the exception of basic information, the city may withhold the remaining requested information under section 552.108 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, 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*, 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 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,



M. Alan Akin
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MAA/jb

Ref: ID# 284328

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Steve Fraser
1220 Airline, Suite 130
Corpus Christi, Texas 78412
(w/o enclosures)