



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 17, 2007

Ms. Catherine Zellers
City Attorney's Office
City of Weatherford
P.O. Box 255
Weatherford, Texas 76086

OR2007-13610

Dear Ms. Zellers:

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# 292999.

The Weatherford Police Department (the "department") received a request for information related to two named individuals and two specified incidents. You state that you have released some information. You claim that the remaining requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108, 552.130, and 552.147 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

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 id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You seek to withhold the information at issue because it pertains to ongoing criminal cases. Based upon your representations and our review, we conclude that release of this

¹Although you also raised section 552.101 of the Government Code as an exception to disclosure, we note that you submitted no arguments in support of this claim. Therefore, we do not address this exception. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302.

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). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable.

We note, however, 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). Such basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*, and includes a “detailed description of the offense.” *See Houston Chronicle*, 531 S.W.2d at 187; Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Thus, the department must release basic information, which includes a detailed description of the offense, but may withhold the remaining information at issue pursuant to section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information that “relates to . . . a motor vehicle operator’s or driver’s license or permit issued by an agency of this state [or] a motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state.” Gov’t Code § 552.130. In accordance with section 552.130 of the Government Code, the department must withhold the Texas driver’s license numbers and types we have marked.

Section 552.147 provides that “[t]he social security number of a living person is excepted from” required public disclosure under the Act.² *Id.* § 552.147. Pursuant to section 552.147 of the Government Code, the department may withhold the marked social security numbers.

In summary, with the exception of basic information, which includes a detailed description of the offense, the department may withhold the information at issue pursuant to section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the marked Texas driver’s license numbers and types pursuant to section 552.130 of the Government Code. The department may withhold the marked social security numbers pursuant to section 552.147 of the Government Code. The remaining 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

²We note that section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person’s social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office under the Act.

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,



Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/mcf

Ref: ID# 292999

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Leann Wright
5121 Wakefield Lane
Wichita Falls, Texas 76310
(w/o enclosures)