



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 9, 2007

Ms. Linda Rhodes
Lake Worth City Secretary
3805 Adam Grubb
Lake Worth, Texas 76135-3509

OR2007-14730

Dear Ms. Rhodes:

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# 298333.

The City of Lake Worth Police Department (the "department") received a request for information related to a specified incident. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, 552.130, and 552.147 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses information made confidential by other statutes such as section 58.007 of the Family Code. The relevant language of section 58.007(c) reads as follows:

(c) Except as provided by Subsection (d), law enforcement records and files concerning a child and information stored, by electronic means or otherwise, concerning the child from which a record or file could be generated may not be disclosed to the public and shall be:

(1) if maintained on paper or microfilm, kept separate from adult files and records;

(2) if maintained electronically in the same computer system as records or files relating to adults, be accessible under controls that are separate and distinct from controls to access electronic data concerning adults; and

(3) maintained on a local basis only and not sent to a central state or federal depository, except as provided by Subchapter B.

Fam. Code § 58.007(c). For purposes of section 58.007, “child” means a person who is ten years of age or older and under seventeen years of age. *See* Fam. Code § 51.02(2). We note, however, that section 58.007 is not applicable to information that relates to a juvenile as a complainant, victim, witness, or other involved party; it is only applicable to juveniles listed as suspects or offenders. *See id.* § 58.007. The only juvenile listed in the submitted documents is a witness. The suspect is an individual over seventeen years of age. Therefore, section 58.007(c) of the Family Code does not apply to the submitted information. Accordingly, the department may not withhold any of the information at issue under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.007(c) of the Family Code.

You also claim that section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code excepts the submitted information from disclosure. Section 552.108(a)(1) 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.” 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 submitted information relates to an ongoing criminal investigation. Based on your representation, we conclude 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 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 submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.¹

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.

¹As we are able to make this determination, we do not address your claims under sections 552.130 and 552.147 of the Government Code.

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 "Cindy Nettles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cindy" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Nettles".

Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/mcf

Ref: ID# 298333

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. David Elser
3920 Lakewood Drive
Lake Worth, Texas 76135
(w/o enclosures)