



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 9, 2008

Ms. J. Middlebrooks
Assistant City Attorney
City of Dallas
Criminal Law and Police Section
1400 South Lamar
Dallas, Texas 75215

OR2008-07763

Dear Ms. Middlebrooks:

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# 314014.

The Dallas Police Department (the "department") received a request for the internal affairs, public integrity, and personnel records of a named officer. You indicate that some of the requested information was released, but claim that some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, 552.117, 552.130, and 552.136 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.²

¹You appear to have redacted information pursuant to a previous determination issued by this office in Open Records Decision No. 670 (2001). See ORD 670 at 6 (home addresses and telephone numbers, personal cellular telephone numbers, personal pager numbers, social security numbers, and family member information of peace officers may be withheld without necessity of requesting attorney general decision under section 552.117); see also Gov't Code § 552.301(a); Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001) (listing elements of second type of previous determination under section 552.301(a)).

²We assume that the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. See Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

Initially, we note that the submitted information contains a document that was filed with the court. A document that has been filed with a court is expressly public under section 552.022 of the Government Code and may not be withheld unless it is confidential under other law. *See* Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(17). Although you assert that this information is excepted under section 552.108 of the Government Code, this section is a discretionary exception to disclosure that protects a governmental body's interests and may be waived by the governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision No. 177 (1977) (governmental body may waive statutory predecessor to section 552.108). Therefore, section 552.108 does not constitute other law for purposes of section 552.022(a)(17). Accordingly, the department may not withhold the court-filed document, which we have marked, under section 552.108.

We now address the remaining information you have marked under section 552.108 of the Government Code. 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), 552.301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). However, section 552.108 generally is not applicable to an internal administrative investigation involving a law enforcement officer that did not result in a criminal investigation or prosecution. *See City of Fort Worth v. Cornyn*, 86 S.W.3d 320 (Tex. App. 2002, no pet.); Open Records Decision No. 562 at 10 (1990); *Morales v. Ellen*, 840 S.W.2d 519, 525-26 (Tex. App.—El Paso 1992, writ denied) (statutory predecessor not applicable to internal investigation that did not result in criminal investigation or prosecution); Open Records Decision No. 350 at 3-4 (1982). The remaining information you have marked under section 552.108 appears to pertain to an internal administrative investigation involving the named officer; however, you state that the information relates to a pending criminal investigation. Based on this representation, we conclude that the release of this 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. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref'd n.r.e.*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases).

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). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. Thus, with the exception of the basic front-page offense and arrest information, the department may withhold the remaining information you have marked under section 552.108(a)(1).³

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." This section encompasses information protected by other statutes. Chapter 772 of the Health and

³As our ruling is dispositive, we do not address your other arguments to withhold this information.

Safety Code authorizes the development of local emergency communications districts. Sections 772.118, 772.218, and 772.318 of the Health and Safety Code apply only to an emergency 9-1-1 district established in accordance with chapter 772. *See* Open Records Decision No. 649 (1996). These statutes make confidential the originating telephone numbers and addresses of 9-1-1 callers that are furnished by a service supplier. *Id.* at 2. Section 772.118 applies to emergency communication districts for counties with a population over two million. We understand you to assert that the emergency communication district here is subject to section 772.118. Therefore, to the extent the originating telephone number of the 9-1-1 caller you have marked was supplied by a 9-1-1 service supplier, this information is confidential under section 772.118 of the Health and Safety Code and must be withheld from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code; however, if this information was not provided by a 9-1-1 service supplier to the emergency communication district, this information may not be withheld under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 772.118.

Criminal history record information ("CHRI") generated by the National Crime Information Center or by the Texas Crime Information Center is confidential. Title 28, part 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations governs the release of CHRI that states obtain from the federal government or other states. Open Records Decision No. 565 (1990). The federal regulations allow each state to follow its individual law with respect to CHRI it generates. *Id.* Section 411.083 of the Government Code deems confidential CHRI that the Department of Public Safety ("DPS") maintains, except that the DPS may disseminate this information as provided in chapter 411, subchapter F of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 411.083.

Sections 411.083(b)(1) and 411.089(a) authorize a criminal justice agency to obtain CHRI, but a criminal justice agency may not release CHRI except to another criminal justice agency for a criminal justice purpose. *Id.* § 411.089(b)(1). Other entities specified in chapter 411 of the Government Code are entitled to obtain CHRI from DPS or another criminal justice agency; however, those entities may not release CHRI except as provided by chapter 411. *See generally id.* §§ 411.090-411.127. Thus, any CHRI generated by the federal government or another state may not be made available to the requestor except in accordance with federal regulations. *See* ORD 565. We note that driving record information is not made confidential by the confidentiality provisions that govern CHRI. *See* Gov't Code § 411.082(2)(B) (definition of CHRI does not include driving record information). The department must withhold the CHRI that we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code. However, we conclude you have not established that the remaining information at issue consists of CHRI for purposes of chapter 411; therefore, none of the remaining information is confidential under section 411.083, and the department may not withhold it under section 552.101 on that ground.

Section 552.101 also encompasses chapter 550 of the Transportation Code. You seek to withhold a City of Dallas Motor Vehicle Accident Report, which you indicate was completed pursuant to 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. *Id.* § 550.065(c)(4). Under this provision, the Texas Department of Transportation 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.⁴ *Id.* The requestor has not provided the department with two of the three pieces of information; thus, the department must withhold the accident report under section 550.065(b).

The submitted information contains fingerprints. Chapter 560 of the Government Code provides that a governmental body may not release fingerprint information except in certain limited circumstances. *See* Gov't Code §§ 560.001 (defining "biometric identifier" to include fingerprints), 560.002 (prescribing manner in which biometric identifiers must be maintained and circumstances in which they can be released), 560.003 (biometric identifiers in possession of governmental body exempt from disclosure under the Act). You do not inform us, and the submitted information does not indicate, that section 560.002 permits the disclosure of the submitted fingerprint information. Therefore, the department must withhold this information, which we have marked, under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 560.003 of the Government Code.

The submitted information includes a W-4 tax form. Section 552.101 encompasses federal law. Section 6103(a) of title 26 of the United States Code provides that tax return information is confidential. *See* 26 U.S.C. § 6103(a)(2), (b)(2)(A), (p)(8); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 600 (1992); Attorney General Op. MW-372 (1981). Accordingly, the department must withhold the submitted W-4 tax form under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 6103(a).

Section 552.101 also encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that (1) contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person and (2) is not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). The types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation* included information relating to sexual assault, pregnancy, mental or physical abuse in the workplace, illegitimate children, psychiatric treatment of mental disorders, attempted suicide, and injuries to sexual organs. *Id.* at 683. This office has found that the following types of information are excepted from required public disclosure under common-law privacy: some kinds of medical information or information indicating disabilities or specific illnesses, *see* Open Records Decision Nos. 470 (1987) (illness from severe emotional and job-related stress), 455 (1987) (prescription drugs, illnesses, operations, and physical handicaps); personal financial information not relating to the financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body, *see* Open Records

⁴Transp. Code § 550.0601 ("department" means Texas Department of Transportation).

Decision Nos. 600 (1992), 545 (1990); and identities of victims of sexual abuse, *see* Open Records Decision Nos. 440 (1986), 393 (1983), 339 (1982). The identity of an alleged victim of sexual harassment is also excepted from public disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. *See Morales v. Ellen*, 840 S.W.2d 519, 525 (Tex. App.— El Paso 1992, writ denied) (identity of witnesses to and victims of sexual harassment was highly intimate or embarrassing information and public did not have a legitimate interest in such information). But this office has found that the public has a legitimate interest in information relating to employees of governmental bodies and their employment qualifications and job performance. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 562 at 10 (1990), 542 at 5 (1990); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 423 at 2 (1984) (scope of public employee privacy is narrow).

You seek to withhold criminal history information of the officer at issue and the identities of prostitutes who filed complaints against the officer for sexual misconduct; however, after review of your arguments and the information at issue, we conclude that this information is of legitimate public interest. Therefore, this information is not confidential under common-law privacy. We have marked the information in the remaining documents that is confidential under common-law privacy and that the department must withhold under section 552.101.

You assert that some of the submitted information is excepted under section 552.117 of the Government Code. Section 552.117(a)(2) excepts the home addresses and telephone numbers, social security numbers, and family member information of a peace officer as defined by Article 2.12 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, regardless of whether the officer made an election under section 552.024 of the Government Code. Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(2); *see* Open Records Decision No. 622 (1994). The department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.117(a)(2). The remaining information at issue does not consist of the officer's home address, telephone number, social security number, or family member information; therefore, the department may not withhold the remaining information under section 552.117.

You assert that some of the remaining information is excepted under section 552.130 of the Government Code, which provides that information relating to a motor vehicle operator's license, driver's license, motor vehicle title, or registration issued by a Texas agency is excepted from public release. Gov't Code § 552.130(a)(1), (2). We agree that the department must withhold the Texas motor vehicle record information you have marked, as well as the information we have marked, under section 552.130.

You assert that some of the remaining information is excepted under section 552.136 of the Government Code. Section 552.136(b) states that "[n]otwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential." You inform us that "an employee's identification number is the same number used for the city credit union bank accounts." Based on this representation, we agree that the department must withhold the information marked under section 552.136.

To conclude, the department must release the information marked under section 552.022 of the Government Code. With the exception of basic information, the department may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.108 of the Government Code. The department must withhold the following information under section 552.101 of the Government Code: (1) the information you have marked under section 772.118 of the Health and Safety Code if this information was provided by a 9-1-1 service supplier to the emergency communication district; (2) the CHRI we have marked under section 411.083 of the Government Code; (3) the submitted accident report under section 550.065 of the Transportation Code; (4) the fingerprints we have marked under section 560.003 of the Government Code; (5) the W-4 tax form under section 6103(a) of title 26 of the United States Code; and (6) the information we have marked under common-law privacy. The department must withhold the information marked under sections 552.117, 552.130, and 552.136 of the Government Code.⁵ The department must release the remaining information.

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 file suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such a challenge, 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).

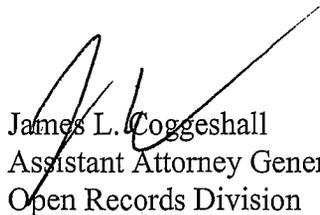
⁵We note that the submitted information contains the social security number of an individual other than the named officer. Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office under the Act.

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can challenge 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,



James L. Coggeshall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JLC/jh

Ref: ID# 314014

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Tanya Eiserer
The Dallas Morning News
P.O. Box 655237
Dallas, Texas 75265
(w/o enclosures)