



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 25, 2008

Mr. Gregory Alicie
Open Records Specialist
Baytown Police Department
3200 North Main Street
Baytown, Texas 77521

OR2008-08624

Dear Mr. Alicie:

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# 313995.

The Baytown Police Department (the "department") received a request for a specified offense report. You state that you will redact social security numbers pursuant to section 552.147 of the Government Code.¹ You claim that portions of the requested information are excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108 and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note, and you have indicated, that you have submitted information which is not responsive to the present request. This ruling does not address the public availability of the information marked as non-responsive, and you need not release such information in response to the request. *See Econ. Opportunities Dev. Corp. v. Bustamante*, 562 S.W.2d 266 (Tex. Civ. App.—San Antonio 1978, writ dism'd).

Section 552.108 of the Government Code provides in pertinent part as follows:

¹We 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.

(a) Information held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime is excepted from [required public disclosure] if:

(1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime;

(2) it is information that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime only in relation to an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication;

...

(b) An internal record or notation of a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that is maintained for internal use in matters relating to law enforcement or prosecution is excepted from [required public disclosure] if:

(1) release of the internal record or notation would interfere with law enforcement or prosecution;

(2) the internal record or notation relates to law enforcement only in relation to an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication[.]

Gov't Code § 552.108(a)-(b). Generally speaking, subsections 552.108(a)(1) and 552.108(b)(1) are mutually exclusive of subsections 552.108(a)(2) and 552.108(b)(2). Section 552.108(a)(1) protects information, the release of which would interfere with a particular pending criminal investigation or prosecution, while section 552.108(b)(1) encompasses internal law enforcement and prosecution records, the release of which would interfere with on-going law enforcement and prosecution efforts in general. In contrast, sections 552.108(a)(2) and (b)(2) protect information that relates to a concluded criminal investigation or prosecution that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication. 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 that the governmental body seeks to withhold. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977).

You state that the submitted information relates to a pending criminal investigation. Based on your representation and our review of the information at issue, we conclude that the department may withhold the information you have highlighted in orange under section 552.108(a)(1). The department may not withhold the information you have highlighted in yellow under sections 552.108(a)(2) and 552.108(b)(2).

Next, section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information that “relates to... a motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state.” Gov’t Code § 552.130(a)(2). The department must withhold the Texas license plate number you have highlighted in pink in the remaining information under section 552.130.

In summary, the department may withhold the information you have highlighted in orange under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the Texas license plate number you have highlighted in pink in the remaining information under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released.²

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). If the governmental body does not file suit over 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 challenge that decision by suing the governmental

²We note that the department would be required to withhold some of the information being released from the public to protect the requestor’s privacy. In this instance, however, the requestor has a special right of access to her own private information. *See id.* § 552.023. Should the department receive another request for these same records from a person who would not have a right of access to the information, the department should resubmit these records and request another decision. *See id.* §§ 552.301, .302.

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,



Bill Dobie
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

WJD/jh

Ref: ID# 313995

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Kaci Kovalcik
1403 Doral Court
Baytown, Texas 77520
(w/o enclosures)