



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 13, 2008

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

OR2008-11046

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# 319065.

The Baytown Police Department (the "department") received a request for incident report number 2008-22255. You state you will redact social security numbers pursuant to section 552.147 of the Government Code.¹ You claim that portions of the submitted report are excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we address your argument that the portions of the submitted information highlighted in orange and yellow are excepted under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Section 552.108 provides in pertinent part as follows:

- (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 We 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.

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

(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; [or]

(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)(1)-(2), (b)(1)-(2). 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). Subsection 552.108(a)(1) protects information, the release of which would interfere with a particular pending criminal investigation or prosecution, while subsection 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, subsections 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 the exception it claims 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 information you have highlighted in orange relates to a pending criminal investigation. Based on this representation, we find that the release of the information highlighted in orange 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.*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976) (court

delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases). Therefore, the department may withhold the orange-highlighted information under section 552.108(a)(1).²

You raise subsections 552.108(a)(2) and 552.108(b)(2) for the information you have highlighted in yellow. You do not provide any arguments explaining how the yellow-highlighted information pertains to a concluded criminal investigation or prosecution that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication. Thus, we find that you have failed to sufficiently demonstrate the applicability of sections 552.108(a)(2) and 552.108(b)(2) to the yellow highlighted information. See Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(A) (governmental body must provide comments explaining why claimed exceptions to disclosure apply). We therefore conclude that the department may not withhold the yellow-highlighted information under section 552.108(a)(2) or section 552.108(b)(2).

You claim that a portion of the remaining information is protected by common-law privacy. Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." *Id.* § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information if (1) the information contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) the information is not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex.1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be demonstrated. *Id.* at 681-82. You argue that the information you have highlighted in purple relates to the private affairs of an individual, the release of which would implicate the individual's right to privacy. Upon review, however, we find that you have not demonstrated how this information is highly intimate or embarrassing. Therefore, the department may not withhold the information you have highlighted in purple under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. As you have raised no further exceptions to disclosure for this information, it must be released.

You claim that the information you have highlighted in pink is excepted from disclosure under section 552.130 of the Government Code, which excepts from public disclosure information that relates to:

- (1) a motor vehicle operator's or driver's license or permit issued by an agency of this state; [or]
- (2) a motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state[.]

Gov't Code § 552.130(a). We agree that the department must withhold the Texas motor vehicle record information you have highlighted in pink under section 552.130.

² As our ruling for this information is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure for portions of this information.

In summary, the department may withhold the information you have highlighted in orange under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code, and must withhold the information you have highlighted in pink under section 552.130 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 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 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leah B. Wingerson".

Leah B. Wingerson
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LBW/ma

Ref: ID# 319065

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Chris Cornelius
10422 Ocean Drive
Baytown, Texas 77520
(w/o enclosures)