



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

April 22, 2009

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

OR2009-05359

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# 345343.

The Baytown Police Department (the "department") received two requests for information related to a specified incident. You claim that some of 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 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses the common-law right of privacy, which protects information if it (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. In addition, 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). Upon review, we find that the information you have highlighted in yellow is highly intimate and not of legitimate public interest.

Accordingly, the department must withhold the yellow highlighted information under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, we note that one of the requestors has a special right of access to this information. *See* Gov't Code § 552.023(a); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individual or authorized representative asks governmental body to provide information concerning that individual). Section 552.023(a) provides that “[a] person or a person’s authorized representative has a special right of access, beyond the right of the general public, to information held by a governmental body that relates to the person and that is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect that person’s privacy interests.” *See id.* Thus, this information may not be withheld from the requestor whose information is marked as private under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy.

Section 552.108(a) 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 state that the orange highlighted information relates to a pending criminal investigation. Based upon this representation, we conclude that the release of the submitted video recording 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 to the video recording and it may be withheld on that basis.

You raise section 552.130 of the Government Code for the information you have highlighted in pink. Section 552.130 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. We note, however, that because this exception protects personal privacy, the requestors have a right of access to their own Texas motor vehicle record information pursuant to section 552.023 of the Government Code. *See id.* § 552.023(a); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individual requests information concerning herself).¹ Therefore, the pink highlighted information may not be withheld under section 552.130 and must be released to both requestors.

¹Section 552.023(a) provides that “[a] person or a person’s authorized representative has a special right of access, beyond the right of the general public, to information held by a governmental body that relates to the person and that is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect that person’s privacy interests.” Gov’t Code § 552.023(a).

Section 552.147 of the Government Code provides that “[t]he social security number of a living person is excepted from” required public disclosure under the Act.² Therefore, the department may withhold the social security numbers you have highlighted in green under section 552.147.

In summary, the department must withhold the yellow-highlighted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law right to privacy, unless the requestor has a special right of access to that information under section 552.023(a) of the Government Code. The department may withhold the video recording under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code, and the green-highlighted social security numbers under section 552.147 of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information 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 information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General’s Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

Sincerely,



Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/dls

Ref: ID# 345343

Enc. Submitted documents

c: 2 Requestors
(w/o enclosures)

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.