



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

July 16, 2009

Ms. Cheryl K. Byles  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Fort Worth  
1000 Throckmorton Street  
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

OR2009-09802

Dear Ms. Byles:

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# 349089 (Fort Worth Public Information Request No. 3285-09).

The City of Fort Worth (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. You state the city has redacted social security numbers and certain Texas-issued motor vehicle record information pursuant to the previous determination issued in Open Records Letter No. 2006-14726 (2006).<sup>1</sup> See Gov't Code § 552.301(a); Open Records Decision No. 673 at 7-8 (2001) (previous determinations). You claim the remaining requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception 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."<sup>2</sup> Gov't Code § 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*

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<sup>1</sup>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.

<sup>2</sup>The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception like section 552.101 of the Government Code on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

*Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). The type 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. Generally, only information that either identifies or tends to identify a victim of sexual assault or other sex-related offense may be withheld under common law privacy. However, a governmental body is required to withhold an entire report when identifying information is inextricably intertwined with other releasable information or when the requestor knows the identity of the alleged victim. *See* Open Records Decisions Nos. 393 (1983), 339 (1982); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 440 (1986) (detailed descriptions of serious sexual offenses must be withheld).

In this instance, despite the pseudonym used by the alleged victim in the report, the requestor knows the identity of the alleged victim. Thus, the entire report is generally subject to common-law privacy. We note, however, that the requestor may be the authorized representative of the alleged victim; we must therefore rule conditionally. If the requestor is not the authorized representative of the alleged victim, then the city must withhold the submitted report in its entirety pursuant to section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. If the requestor is the authorized representative of the alleged victim, he has a right of access to the submitted report under section 552.023 of the Government Code, and the information may not be withheld pursuant to common-law privacy.<sup>3</sup> To the extent the requestor has a special right of access to the submitted report, we address your argument against disclosure.

Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code 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[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). 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 at issue. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state and provide documentation showing that the Tarrant County District Attorney’s Office objects to the release of the submitted information because it relates to a currently pending criminal prosecution. Based on these representations and our review of the submitted information, we conclude that the release of this report 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).

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<sup>3</sup> *See* Gov’t Code § 552.023(a) (person or person’s authorized representative has special right of access, beyond right of general public, to information held by governmental body that relates to person and is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect person’s privacy interests); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individual asks governmental body to provide him with information concerning himself).

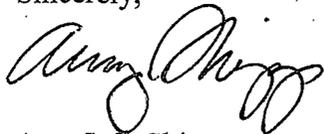
We note, however, that section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov't Code § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. See 531 S.W.2d at 186-87. The city must release basic information, including a detailed description of the offense, even if the information does not literally appear on the front page of an offense or arrest report. Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976). The city may withhold the remaining information, under section 552.108(a)(1).

In summary, if the requestor is not the authorized representative of the victim listed in the submitted report, the city must withhold the submitted report in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. If the requestor is the victim's authorized representative, then, except for basic information, the city may withhold the submitted report under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

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](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,



Amy L.S. Shipp  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

ALS/rl

Ref: ID# 349089

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)