



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

March 15, 2010

Ms. Angela M. DeLuca
Assistant City Attorney
City of Bryan
P.O. Box 1000
Bryan, Texas 77805

OR2010-03676

Dear Ms. DeLuca:

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# 377728.

The Bryan Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to report number 09-12002-6. You state the department has released some of the requested information to the requestor. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.103 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

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). Generally, a governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) 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). We note that the submitted information includes a citation. Because a copy of the citation, which we have marked, has been provided to the arrestee, we find that its release will not interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1)*. Therefore, the department may not withhold the citation under section 552.108(a)(1). You state that the remaining information relates to an open and pending criminal prosecution. Based upon your representation and our review, we conclude that the release of the remaining 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. 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 remaining information

However, as you acknowledge, basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.108. Gov't Code § 552.108(c). Such basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. See 531 S.W.2d at 186-8; see also Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). Thus, with the exception of the citation and basic information, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1).¹

You also claim the citation is excepted under section 552.103 of the Government Code. Section 552.103 provides in relevant part as follows:

(a) Information is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information relating to litigation of a civil or criminal nature to which the state or a political subdivision is or may be a party or to which an officer or employee of the state or a political subdivision, as a consequence of the person's office or employment, is or may be a party.

...

(c) Information relating to litigation involving a governmental body or an officer or employee of a governmental body is excepted from disclosure under Subsection (a) only if the litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated on the date that the requestor applies to the officer for public information for access to or duplication of the information.

Gov't Code § 552.103(a), (c). The purpose of section 552.103 is to protect the litigation interests of governmental bodies that are parties to the litigation at issue. See *id.* § 552.103(a); Open Records Decision No. 638 at 2 (1996) (section 552.103 only protects the litigation interests of the governmental body claiming the exception). A governmental body has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show section 552.103(a) is applicable in a particular situation. The test for meeting this burden is a showing that (1) litigation was pending or reasonably anticipated on the date the governmental body received the request for information, and (2) the information at issue is related to that litigation. *Univ. of Tex. Law Sch. v. Tex. Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479, 481 (Tex. App.—Austin 1997, no pet.); *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210, 212 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.); Open Records Decision No. 551 at 4 (1990). A governmental body must meet both prongs of this test for information to be excepted under section 552.103(a).

¹As our ruling is dispositive for the information subject to section 552.108(a)(1), we do not address your remaining claim against disclosure, except to note that basic information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle* is generally not excepted from public disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. Open Records Decision No. 597 (1991).

You inform us the submitted information relates to a criminal case pending in the Bryan Municipal Court. We note, however, the purpose of section 552.103 is to enable a governmental body to protect its position in litigation by forcing parties to obtain information that is related to litigation through discovery procedures. *See* ORD 551 at 4-5. Thus, information that has either been obtained from or provided to the opposing party in the litigation is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.103(a), and it must be disclosed. As discussed above, the submitted citation was provided to the arrestee; thus, the citation was seen by the opposing party to the litigation. Therefore, the submitted citation may not be withheld under section 552.103 of the Government Code. As you raise no other exception to disclosure of this information, the citation must be released to the requestor.

In summary, with the exception of the citation and basic information, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The citation and basic 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, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/dls

Ref: ID# 377728

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)