



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

January 18, 2011

Ms. LeAnn M. Quinn  
City Secretary  
City of Cedar Park  
600 North Bell Boulevard  
Cedar Park, Texas 78613

OR2011-00816

Dear Ms. Quinn:

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# 406417 (Reference Nos. 11-065 and 11-067).

The Cedar Park Police Department (the "department") received two requests for information pertaining to a specified incident. You state you are releasing some of the requested information and that you will redact certain information pursuant to Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009) and social security numbers pursuant to section 552.147 of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup> You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, 552.117, and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception 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

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<sup>1</sup>Open Records Decision No. 684 is a previous determination to all governmental bodies which authorizes withholding of ten categories of information, including Texas driver's license numbers and Texas license plate numbers under section 552.130, without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision. We note 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. See Gov't Code § 552.147.

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 claiming 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); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state, and provide a statement showing, the submitted information pertains to a criminal case that is pending prosecution. Based upon your representation, we conclude release of Exhibit C will 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) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976).

We note 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). Section 552.108(c) refers to the basic front-page information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-88. The department 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. *See* Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*).

We note that basic information also includes an identification and description of the complainant. In this instance, however, the department seeks to withhold the complainant’s identity under the common-law informer’s privilege. Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses the common-law informer’s privilege, which Texas courts have long recognized. *See Aguilar v. State*, 444 S.W.2d 935, 937 (Tex. Crim. App. 1969); *Hawthorne v. State*, 10 S.W.2d 724, 725 (Tex. Crim. App. 1928). The informer’s privilege protects the identities of persons who report activities over which the governmental body has criminal or quasi-criminal law-enforcement authority, provided that the subject of the information does not already know the informer’s identity. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 515 at 3 (1988), 208 at 1-2 (1978). The privilege protects the identities of individuals who report violations of statutes to the police or similar law-enforcement agencies, as well as those who report violations of statutes with civil or criminal penalties to “administrative officials having a duty of inspection or of law enforcement within their particular spheres.” *See* Open Records Decision No. 279 at 2 (1981) (citing 8 John H. Wigmore, *Evidence in Trials at Common Law*, § 2374, at 767 (J. McNaughton rev. ed. 1961)). The report must be of a violation of a criminal or civil statute. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 582 at 2 (1990), 515 at 4-5.

You state that the complainant reported a possible violation of section 19.02(b)(1) of the Penal Code to the department. Based on your representations, we conclude that the informer’s identifying information, which we have marked, may be withheld under section 552.101 in conjunction with the common-law informer’s privilege. With the exception of that information, basic information must be released in accordance with section

552.108(c). See ORD 127 at 3-4. The remaining information in Exhibit C may be withheld under section 552.108(a)(1).<sup>2</sup>

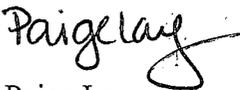
You assert some of the information in Exhibit B is excepted from disclosure under section 552.130 of the Government Code which provides that information relating to a motor vehicle title or registration issued by a Texas agency is excepted from public release. Gov't Code § 552.130(a)(2). Accordingly, the department must withhold the vehicle identification number you have marked in Exhibit B under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, with the exception of basic information, the department may withhold Exhibit C under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. In releasing basic information, the department may withhold the identifying information of the complainant, which we have marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. The department must withhold the vehicle identification number you have marked in Exhibit B under section 552.130 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](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,



Paige Lay  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

PL/vb

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<sup>2</sup>As our ruling for this information is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure.

Ref: ID# 406417

Enc. Submitted documents

c: 2 Requestors  
(w/o enclosures)