



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

January 17, 2012

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

OR2011-16215A

Dear Ms. DeLuca:

This office issued Open Records Letter No. 2011-16215 (2011) on November 3, 2011. We have examined this ruling and determined that Open Records Letter No. 2011-16215 is incorrect. Where this office determines that an error was made in the decision process under sections 552.301 and 552.306 of the Government Code, and that error resulted in an incorrect decision, we will correct the previously issued ruling. Consequently, this decision serves as the correct ruling and is a substitute for Open Records Letter No. 2011-16215. *See generally* Gov't Code § 552.011 (providing that Office of the Attorney General may issue a decision to maintain uniformity in application, operation, and interpretation of the Public Information Act (the "Act")). Your request was assigned ID# 444514.

The City of Bryan (the "city") received a request for all information pertaining to report number 06-0200716. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.¹

Initially, we note a portion of the submitted information, which we have marked, is not responsive to the instant request because it does not relate to the specified report number. This ruling does not address the public availability of non-responsive information, and the city is not required to release non-responsive information in response to this request.

¹We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

Next, we note that the city has redacted portions of the submitted information. Pursuant to section 552.301 of the Government Code, a governmental body that seeks to withhold requested information must submit to this office a copy of the information, labeled to indicate which exceptions apply to which parts of the copy, unless the governmental body has received a previous determination for the information at issue or has statutory authorization to withhold the information in question without requesting a decision under the Act. *See id.* §§ 552.301(a), .301(e)(1)(D). We understand the city has redacted social security numbers under section 552.147 of the Government Code.² It also appears the city has redacted a driver's license number under section 552.130 of the Government Code pursuant to Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009). Open Records Decision No. 684 is a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold ten categories of information, including a Texas driver's license number under section 552.130 of the Government Code, without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision. However, on September 1, 2011, the Texas legislature amended section 552.130 to allow a governmental body to redact the information described in subsections 552.130(a)(1) and (a)(3) without the necessity of seeking a decision from the attorney general. *See Gov't Code* § 552.130(c). If a governmental body redacts such information, it must notify the requestor in accordance with section 552.130(e). *See id.* § 552.130(d), (e). Thus, the statutory amendments to section 552.130 of the Government Code supercede Open Records Decision No. 684 on September 1, 2011. Therefore, a governmental body may only redact information subject to subsections 552.130(a)(1) and (a)(3) in accordance with section 552.130, not Open Records Decision No. 684. You do not assert, nor do our records indicate, that the city is authorized to withhold any of the remaining redacted information without first seeking a ruling from this office. *See id.* § 552.301(a); Open Records Decision No. 673 (2000) (previous determinations). As such, this type of information must be submitted in a manner that enables this office to determine whether the information comes within the scope of an exception to disclosure. Because we are able to discern the nature of the redacted information, we will address its public availability. In the future, the city should refrain from redacting responsive information that it submits to this office in connection with a request for an open records ruling, unless the information is the subject of a previous determination under section 552.301 of the Government Code or may be withheld pursuant to section 552.147(b) of the Government Code. *See Gov't Code* §§ 552.301(e)(1)(D), .302. Failure to do so may result in the presumption the redacted information is public. *See id.* § 552.302.

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 information protected by other statutes, such as article 61.03 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Chapter 61 of the Code of Criminal

²Section 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 an attorney general decision under the Act. *See Gov't Code* § 552.147(b).

Procedure deals with intelligence information pertaining to street gangs. Article 61.02 provides in part that

(a) Subject to Subsection (b), a criminal justice agency or a juvenile justice agency shall compile criminal information into an intelligence database for the purpose of investigating or prosecuting the criminal activities of criminal combinations or criminal street gangs.

(b) A law enforcement agency in a municipality with a population of 50,000 or more or in a county with a population of 100,000 or more shall compile and maintain in a local or regional intelligence database criminal information relating to a criminal street gang as provided by Subsection (a). The information must be compiled and maintained in accordance with the criminal intelligence systems operating policies established under 28 C.F.R. Section 23.1 et seq. and the submission criteria established under Subsection (c).

Crim. Proc. Code art. 61.02(a), (b). Article 61.03 provides in relevant part:

(a) A criminal justice agency may release on request information maintained under [Chapter 61 of the Code of Criminal Procedure] to:

- (1) another criminal justice agency;
- (2) a court; or
- (3) a defendant in a criminal proceeding who is entitled to the discovery of the information under Chapter 39.

Crim. Proc. Code art. 61.03(a). We note chapter 61 of the Code of Criminal Procedure does not make confidential all references to suspected gang activity or involvement. Rather, this chapter protects information that is specifically compiled and maintained in a database that is created under specific state and federal guidelines. *See id.* art. 61.02(b). You do not represent, and the documents do not reflect, that the gang information in report number 06-0200716 was obtained from an intelligence database as prescribed by chapter 61 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Therefore, the gang information in report number 06-0200716 is not confidential under article 61.03.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses information protected by chapter 411 of the Government Code, which deems confidential criminal history record information (“CHRI”) generated by the National Crime Information Center or by the Texas Crime Information Center. CHRI means “information collected about a person by a criminal justice agency that consists of identifiable descriptions and notations of arrests, detentions, indictments, informations, and other formal criminal charges and their dispositions.” Gov’t Code § 411.082(2). Title 28, part 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations governs the release

of CHRI that states obtain from the federal government or other states. *See* Open Records Decision No. 565 (1990). The federal regulations allow each state to follow its individual law with respect to CHRI it generates. *Id.* at 10-12. Section 411.083 of the Government Code deems confidential CHRI that the Texas Department of Public Safety (“DPS”) maintains, except that DPS may disseminate this information as provided in chapter 411, subchapter F of the Government Code. *See* Gov’t Code § 411.083. Sections 411.083(b)(1) and 411.089(a) authorize a criminal justice agency to obtain CHRI; however, a criminal justice agency may not release CHRI except to another criminal justice agency for a criminal justice purpose. *See id.* § 411.089(b)(1). Other entities specified in chapter 411 of the Government Code are entitled to obtain CHRI from DPS or another criminal justice agency; however, those entities may not release CHRI except as provided by chapter 411. *See generally id.* § 411.090-.127. Furthermore, any CHRI obtained from DPS or any other criminal justice agency must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with Government Code chapter 411, subchapter F. Upon review, we find a portion of the submitted information, which we have marked, constitutes CHRI and must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code and federal law.

Section 552.108 of the Government Code 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) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]

...

(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[.]

Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1), (b)(1). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) or 552.108(b)(1) must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), (b)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977).

You acknowledge report number 06-0200716 pertains to a closed criminal case that resulted in a conviction. Thus, we conclude the city has not established the submitted information pertains to a pending criminal case. Thus, we find you have failed to demonstrate the

applicability of section 552.108(a)(1) to the submitted information, and no portion of this information may be withheld on that basis.

Section 552.108(b)(1) is intended to protect “information which, if released, would permit private citizens to anticipate weaknesses in a police department, avoid detection, jeopardize officer safety, and generally undermine police efforts to effectuate the laws of this State.” *City of Fort Worth v. Cornyn*, 86 S.W.3d 320, 327 (Tex. App.—Austin 2002, no pet.). To prevail on its claim that section 552.108(b)(1) excepts information from disclosure, a governmental body must do more than merely make a conclusory assertion that releasing the information would interfere with law enforcement. Instead, the governmental body must meet its burden of explaining how and why release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement and crime prevention. *See* Open Records Decision No. 562 at 10 (1990) (construing statutory predecessor). In addition, generally known policies and techniques may not be withheld under section 552.108. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 531 at 2-3 (1989) (Penal Code provisions, common law rules, and constitutional limitations on use of force are not protected under law enforcement exception), 252 at 3 (1980) (governmental body did not meet burden because it did not indicate why investigative procedures and techniques requested were any different from those commonly known). The determination of whether the release of particular records would interfere with law enforcement is made on a case-by-case basis. *See* Open Records Decision No. 409 at 2 (1984) (construing statutory predecessor).

In this instance, you have submitted an affidavit from a city police department officer stating the information in report number 06-0200716 “could be used for retaliation against witnesses, gang members and/or officers involved in this investigation” or “to determine how to better conceal their criminal activity or overcome undercover officers or informants.” The city police department officer also submits a list of specific information that would result in police department tactics being discovered or would result in retaliatory attacks. Thus, you argue release of this report would interfere with law enforcement. Based on these arguments and our review, we agree portions of the submitted information, which we have marked, are protected by section 552.108(b)(1) and may be withheld on that basis. However, we find you have failed to establish how public access to the remaining information would interfere with law enforcement. Accordingly, the city may not withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides that information relating to a motor vehicle operator’s license, driver’s license, motor vehicle title, or registration issued by a Texas agency, or an agency of another state or country, is excepted from public release.³ Gov’t Code § 552.130(a)(1), (2). Upon review, we find the information you have redacted pursuant to section 552.130 and the information we have marked contain Texas motor

³The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

vehicle record information. Thus, the city must withhold this information under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, the city must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code and federal law. The city may withhold the information we have marked under section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code. The city must withhold the information you have redacted pursuant to section 552.130 and the information we have marked 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, 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,



Sarah Casterline
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

SEC/ag

Ref: ID# 444514

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)