



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

January 9, 2012

Mr. David K. Walker
County Attorney
Montgomery County
207 West Phillips, 1st Floor
Conroe, Texas 77301

OR2012-00366

Dear Mr. Walker:

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# 446413.

The Montgomery County Sheriff’s Department (the “sheriff”) received a request for a specified incident report. You claim the submitted 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 552.108 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 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).

We note that the submitted information includes a citation. Because a copy of the citation has been provided to the individual who was cited, we find that release of the citation will not interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Gov’t Code*

§ 552.108(a)(1). Therefore, the sheriff may not withhold the citation under section 552.108(a)(1).

You state the remaining information relates to a pending criminal case. Based on this representation, we conclude that the release of this 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. 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).

However, 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 Houston Chronicle*, 531 S.W.2d at 186-88. The sheriff must release basic information, even if the information does not literally appear on the front page of an offense or arrest report. *See Open Records Decision No. 127 at 3-4 (1976)* (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). Thus, with the exception of the citation and basic information, the sheriff may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

We note that the citation contains information that is subject to section 552.130 of the Government Code.¹ Section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information that relates to a motor vehicle operator's license, driver's license, motor vehicle title, registration, or a personal identification document issued by a Texas agency. *See Gov't Code § 552.130(a)*. Upon review, we find the sheriff must withhold the information we have marked in the citation under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, with the exception of basic information and the citation, the sheriff may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The sheriff must withhold the information we have marked in the citation under section 552.130 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, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free,

¹The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987)*.

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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paige Lay".

Paige Lay
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

PL/ag

Ref: ID# 446413

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)