



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

April 3, 2013

Mr. Todd E. Fitts  
Attorney for the City of Marshall  
110 West Fannin Street  
Marshall, Texas 75670

OR2013-05284

Dear Mr. Fitts:

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# 483204.

The Marshall Police Department (the "department"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident and the death of a named individual. You claim 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. We have also received and considered comments from the Harrison County Criminal District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney's office"). *See* Gov't Code § 552.304 (interested third party may submit comment stating why information should or should not be released).

Initially, we note the submitted information includes a custodial death report. Article 49.18(b) of the Code of Criminal Procedure provides the attorney general shall make the custodial death report available to any interested person, with the exception of any portion of the report that the attorney general determines is privileged. *See* Code Crim. Proc. art. 49.18(b). The report was revised in May 2006 and now consists of four pages and an attached summary of how the death occurred. The Office of the Attorney General has determined the four-page report and summary must be released to the public but any other documents submitted with the revised report are confidential under article 49.18(b). Although you claim the submitted custodial death report and summary is protected by sections 552.103 and 552.108 of the Government Code, these exceptions to disclosure found in the Act do not generally apply to information that other statutes make public. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 623 at 3 (1994), 525 at 3 (1989). The department must release this information, which we have marked, pursuant to article 49.18(b) of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Next, we note the submitted information includes a court document, which is subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code. Section 552.022(a)(17) provides for the required public disclosure of “information that is also contained in a public court record” unless it is “made confidential under [the Act] or other law[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.022(a)(17). Although you raise sections 552.103 and 552.108 of the Government Code, these are discretionary exceptions and do not make information confidential under the Act. *See id.* § 552.007; *Dallas Area Rapid Transit v. Dallas Morning News*, 4 S.W.3d 469, 475-76 (Tex. App.—Dallas 1999, no pet.) (governmental body may waive Gov’t Code § 552.103); Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 177 at 3 (1977) (statutory predecessor to Gov’t Code § 552.108 subject to waiver). As such, sections 552.103 and 552.108 do not make information confidential for the purposes of section 552.022. Therefore, the marked court document may not be withheld under section 552.103 or section 552.108. As you raise no further exceptions to disclosure, the court document must be released.

Section 552.108(a)(1) 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). You and the district attorney’s office state the remaining information pertains to an active criminal investigation. Based on these representations and our review, we find release of the information at issue 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) (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). Thus, we conclude section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable in this instance.

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). Such basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-87; Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Thus, with the exception of the basic information, the department may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1).<sup>1</sup>

In summary, the department must release the custodial death report we have marked pursuant to article 49.18(b) of the Code of Criminal Procedure and the court document we have marked pursuant to section 552.022(a)(17) of the Government Code. With the exception of

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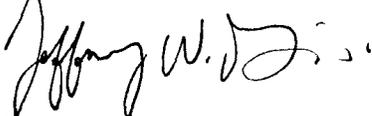
<sup>1</sup>As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure except to note section 552.103 of the Government Code does not generally except from disclosure the same basic information that must be released under section 552.108(c). *See* Open Records Decision No. 597 (1991).

the basic information, which must be released, the department may withhold the remaining information 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, toll free at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey W. Giles  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JWG/dls

Ref: ID# 483204

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)