



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

April 29, 2014

Ms. Linda Pemberton
Paralegal
City of Killeen
P.O. Box 1329
Killeen, Texas 76540-1329

OR2014-07081

Dear Ms. Pemberton:

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# 521211 (Killeen ID No. W012673).

The Killeen Police Department (the "department") received a request for all calls for service to the requestor's address resulting from complaints from neighbors. You state you have released some of the requested information. You claim 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 information.

Section 552.108(a)(2) 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 . . . it is information that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime only in relation to an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication[.]" Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(2). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(2) must demonstrate the requested information relates to a criminal investigation that concluded in a final result other than a conviction or deferred adjudication. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A) (governmental body must provide comments explaining why exceptions raised should apply to information requested). You state the submitted information pertains to concluded investigations where no criminal charges are anticipated. Therefore, we agree section 552.108(a)(2) is applicable to the submitted information.

We note, however, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure “basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime.” *Id.* § 552.108(c). Section 552.108(c) refers to the basic “front-page” information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle Publishing 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). See Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed to be public by *Houston Chronicle*). We note basic information includes, among other items, an identification and description of the complainant and a detailed description of the offense. ORD 127. Therefore, with the exception of basic information, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code.

You assert portions of the basic information are protected under section 552.101 of the Government Code. Section 552.101 excepts from public disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.” Gov’t Code § 552.101. This exception encompasses the informer’s privilege, which has long been recognized by Texas courts. 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 from disclosure the identities of persons who report activities over which the governmental body has criminal or quasi-criminal law-enforcement authority, provided the subject of the information does not already know the informer’s identity. See Open Records Decision No. 208 at 1-2 (1978). The informer’s 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.” Open Records Decision No. 279 at 1-2 (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 (1988). The privilege excepts the informer’s statement only to the extent necessary to protect that informer’s identity. Open Records Decision No. 549 at 5 (1990).

You state the remaining information reveals the identity of complainants who reported possible violations of section 545.302 of the Transportation Code as well as section 16.77 of the City of Killeen Code of Ordinances, both of which you state are punishable by fine. There is no indication the subject of the complaint knows the identity of the complainants in the report. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the department may withhold the complainants’ identifying information, which we have marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer’s privilege. However, we find none of the remaining basic information identifies an informer; thus, the department may not withhold it under section 552.101 on this basis.

In summary, with the exception of basic information, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code. The

department may withhold the information we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. The remaining 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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Pearle
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MAP/tch

Ref: ID# 521211

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)