



OFFICE *of the* ATTORNEY GENERAL
GREG ABBOTT

December 18, 2002

Ms. Angela M. DeLuca
Assistant City Attorney
City of College Station
P.O. Box 9960
College Station, Texas 77842

OR2002-7249

Dear Ms. DeLuca:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 174172.

The City of College Station Police Department (the "department") received a request for fourteen categories of information relating to Officer LeeAnn Carpenter. You state that you have released information responsive to categories twelve and thirteen. You also state that you have withheld some of the responsive information pursuant to a previous determination issued by this office. *See* Open Records Decision No. 670 (2001) (allowing governmental body to withhold personal information of a peace officer as defined by section 552.117(2) without first seeking an opinion from this office); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 673 at 6 (2001) (explaining previous determinations in general). You claim that the remaining requested 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 note initially that the submitted information contains court documents subject to section 552.022(a)(17) of the Government Code. Information filed with a court is generally a matter of public record and may not be withheld from disclosure unless it is made expressly confidential under other law. Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(17); *Star-Telegram, Inc. v. Walker*, 834 S.W.2d 54 (Tex. 1992). You argue that the requested information is excepted from release under sections 552.103 and 552.108 of the Government Code, which are discretionary exceptions under the Public Information Act. Discretionary exceptions are intended to protect only the interests of the governmental body, as distinct from exceptions which are intended to protect information deemed confidential by law or the interests of third parties. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (governmental body may waive litigation exception, section 552.103), 177 (1977) (governmental body may waive

statutory predecessor to section 552.108); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 522 at 4 (1989) (discretionary exceptions in general). Discretionary exceptions therefore do not constitute “other law” that makes information confidential. Thus, you must release exhibits C-26 and C-27, which we have marked, under section 552.022(a)(17).

We now consider your arguments against release of the remaining requested information. Section 552.108 excepts from required public 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 that raises section 552.108 must reasonably explain, if the requested information does not supply an explanation on its face, how and why section 552.108 is applicable to that information. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.301(e)(1)(A); *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977); Open Records Decision No. 434 at 2-3 (1986).

You state that the submitted information relates to a pending DWI prosecution in which Officer Carpenter was the arresting officer, and you have provided a letter from the Brazos County Attorney’s Office in support of your claim. *See* Open Records Decision No. 372 at 4 (1983) (law enforcement exception may be invoked by any proper custodian of information relating to an incident allegedly involving criminal conduct that remains under active investigation or prosecution). You also explain that the submitted information could be used at trial to attack the credibility of the arresting officer, whose records are at issue, in the case being prosecuted. Based upon the representations in your brief and in the submitted letter from the Brazos County Attorney, we conclude that the release of the submitted 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. Civ. 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). Therefore, you may withhold the submitted information pursuant to section 552.108 of the Government Code. As we are able to make this determination, we do not address your arguments regarding section 552.103 with respect to the submitted information.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov’t Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the

governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

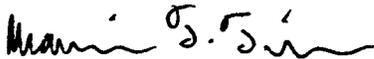
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Maverick F. Fisher
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MFF/seg

Ref: ID# 174172

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. Cameron Reynolds
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(w/o enclosures)