



OFFICE of the ATTORNEY GENERAL
GREG ABBOTT

July 15, 2003

Ms. Traci S. Briggs
Assistant City Attorney
City of Killeen
402 North 2nd
Killeen, Texas 76541-5298

OR2003-4896

Dear Ms. Briggs:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 184440.

The Killeen Police Department (the "Department") received a request for "all reports" involving a named individual, to include information relating to assault incidents occurring in August 2002, October 2002, and January 2003. You assert the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We reviewed the information you submitted and considered the exception you claim.

Initially, we address the potential applicability of section 552.101 of the Government Code. Section 552.101 excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." This provision encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information when (1) it contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) the public has no legitimate interest in the information. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976), *cert. denied*, 430 U.S. 931 (1977). When a governmental entity compiles criminal history information pertaining to a particular individual, the compiled information takes on a character that implicates the individual's right of privacy in a manner that the same information in an uncompiled state does not. *See United States Dep't of Justice v. Reporters Comm. for Freedom of the Press*, 489 U.S. 749 (1989); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 616 at 2-3 (1993). In this case, the requestor has asked the Department to compile criminal history information pertaining to the named individual, thereby implicating the individual's right to privacy. *See id.* Thus, to the extent it exists, the Department must withhold information

identifying the named individual as a suspect, an arrestee, or a defendant under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy and *Reporters Committee*.

Next, we address your claim under section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code, which excepts information concerning an investigation that concluded in a result other than conviction or deferred adjudication from required public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(2). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(2) must demonstrate that the requested information relates to a criminal investigation that has concluded in a final result other than a conviction or deferred adjudication. You inform us that the information at issue pertains to investigations that concluded, but that did not result in a conviction or deferred adjudication. Therefore, we conclude section 552.108(a)(2) applies to the submitted information.

However, section 552.108 does not except basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov't Code § 552.108(c). We believe such basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle Publishing Company 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), which includes a detailed description of the offense. *See* Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered basic information). Thus, with the exception of the basic front page offense information, the Department may withhold the information we have marked from disclosure based on section 552.108 of the Government Code.

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 Dep't of Pub. 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,



Christen Sorrell
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CHS/seg

Ref: ID# 184440

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Ms. Tiffany N. Hurst
5706 Greengate #D
Killeen, Texas 76543
(w/o enclosures)