ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

July 12, 2004

Ms. Shelly O'Brien
Assistant District Attorney
Dallas County
133 North Industrial Boulevard, LB-19
Dallas, Texas 75207-4399

OR2004-5679

Dear Ms. O'Brien:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 204910.

The Dallas County District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney") received a request for any information related to a specified case. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note that the submitted information contains an arrest warrant and its corresponding affidavit. The Seventy-eighth Legislature amended article 15.26 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which became effective September 1, 2003. Article 15.26 states "[t]he arrest warrant, and any affidavit presented to the magistrate in support of the issuance of the warrant, is public information." Crim. Proc. Code art. 15.26. We note that the exceptions found in the Public Information Act (the "Act") do not apply to information that is made public by other statutes. *See* Open Records Decision No. 525 (1989) (statutory predecessor). Therefore, we have marked the arrest warrant and affidavit that must be released under the amended statute.

We also note that the remaining submitted information consists of a completed investigation made of, for, or by the district attorney. Section 552.022(a)(1) of the Government Code thus provides that this information is not excepted from required disclosure under the Act, except as provided by section 552.108, or unless the information is expressly confidential under other law. Because information subject to section 552.022(a)(1) may be withheld as

provided by section 552.108, we will address your section 552.108 assertion for the remaining submitted information.

Section 552.108 of the Government Code states in pertinent part:

> (a) Information held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime [is excepted from required public disclosure] if:
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> . . .
>
> (4) it is information that:
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> (A) is prepared by an attorney representing the state in anticipation of or in the course of preparing for criminal litigation; or
>
> (B) reflects the mental impressions or legal reasoning of an attorney representing the state [and]
>
> (b) An internal record or notation of a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that is maintained for internal use in matters relating to law enforcement or prosecution [is excepted from required public disclosure] if:
>
> . . .
>
> (3) the internal record or notation:
>
> (A) is prepared by an attorney representing the state in anticipation of or in the course of preparing for criminal litigation; or
>
> (B) reflects the mental impressions or legal reasoning of an attorney representing the state.
>
> (c) This section does not except from [required public disclosure] information that is basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime.

When a request essentially seeks the entire prosecution file, the information is excepted from disclosure in its entirety pursuant to the holding in *Curry v. Walker*, 873 S.W.2d 379 (Tex. 1994) (discovery request for district attorney's entire litigation file may be denied because decision of what to include in file necessarily reveals prosecutor's mental impressions or legal reasoning). In this instance, we agree that the records request

encompasses the district attorney's entire case file. *Curry* thus provides that the release of the information would reveal the district attorney's mental impressions or legal reasoning. Thus, we find that subsections 552.108(a)(4)(B) and (b)(3)(B) of the Government Code apply to the remaining submitted information.

We note, however, that 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). We believe such basic information refers to the 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). In Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976), this office summarized the types of information made public pursuant to *Houston Chronicle. See* Open Records Decision No. 127 at 4 (1976). This information must be released, whether or not the information is found on the front page of an offense report. The remaining submitted information may be withheld under section 552.108. As we are able to make this determination, we need not address your remaining arguments.

In summary, we conclude that: 1) the arrest warrant and affidavit we have marked must be released under article 15.26 of the Code of Criminal Procedure; and 2) with the exception of the basic offense and arrest information, the district attorney may withhold the remaining submitted information 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

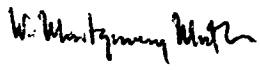
fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

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,



W. Montgomery Meitler
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

WMM/krl

Ref: ID# 204910

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Ms. Valerie Felner
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(w/o enclosures)