



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

December 5, 2005

Ms. Catherine Zellers
City Attorney's Office
City of Weatherford
P.O. Box 255
Weatherford, Texas 76086

OR2005-10875

Dear Ms. Zellers:

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# 240593.

The City of Weatherford (the "city") received a request for information pertaining burglaries at a specified address. You claim that some of the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.108(a) excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if: (1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime." Generally, 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* Gov't Code §§ 552.108(a)(1), (b)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state that incident report number 200526593 relates to a pending criminal investigation. Based upon this representation, we conclude that the release of incident report number 200526593 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).

However, 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). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. Thus, with the exception of the basic front page offense and arrest information, the city may withhold incident report number 200526593 from disclosure based on section 552.108(a)(1). We note that the city has the discretion to release all or part of this information that is not otherwise confidential by law. Gov't Code § 552.007.

Next, we note that portions of the information contained in submitted incident report number 200341919 are subject to sections 552.130 and 552.147 of the Government Code.¹ Section 552.130 excepts from disclosure information that relates to a driver's license or motor vehicle title or registration issued by an agency of this state. Gov't Code § 552.130. Accordingly, the city must withhold the Texas motor vehicle information we have marked pursuant to section 552.130. Section 552.147² provides that "[t]he social security number of a living person is excepted from" required public disclosure under the Act. Therefore, the city must also withhold the social security numbers contained in incident report number 200341919 under section 552.147.³

In summary, other than basic information, the city may withhold incident report number 200526593 pursuant to section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The city must withhold the Texas motor vehicle record information and social security numbers in incident report number 200341919 in accordance with sections 552.130 and 552.147 of the Government Code, respectively. The remaining submitted information must be released.

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

¹The Office of the Attorney General will raise mandatory exceptions like sections 552.130 and 552.147 on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. See Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

²Added by Act of May 23, 2005, 79th Leg., R.S., S.B. 1485, ch. 397, 2005 Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 1091 (Vernon) (to be codified at Tex. Gov't Code § 552.147).

³We note that section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office under the Act.

benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within ten 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, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, 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 Office of the Attorney General 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. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within ten calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Robert B. Rapfogel
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

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Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Roger W. Phillips
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Weatherford, Texas 76086
(w/o enclosures)