



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

June 5, 2009

Mr. William P. Chesser  
City Attorney  
City of Brownwood  
P.O. Box 1389  
Brownwood, Texas 76804

OR2009-07735

Dear Mr. Chesser:

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# 345355.

The City of Brownwood (the "city") received a request for reports pertaining to a specific address during a specified time period. You state that some of the requested information has been released to the requestor. You claim that the submitted 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 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision."<sup>1</sup> Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that (1) contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person and (2) is not of legitimate concern to the public. See *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 683-85 (Tex. 1976). The type of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation* included

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<sup>1</sup>The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. See Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

information relating to sexual assault, pregnancy, mental or physical abuse in the workplace, illegitimate children, psychiatric treatment of mental disorders, attempted suicide, and injuries to sexual organs. *Id.* at 683. Generally, only information that either identifies or tends to identify a victim of sexual assault or other sex-related offense must be withheld under common-law privacy. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 440 (1986), 393 (1983), 339 (1982). However, a governmental body is required to withhold an entire report when identifying information is inextricably intertwined with other releasable information or when the requestor knows the identity of the alleged victim. *See* ORD 393, 339; *see also* ORD 440 (detailed descriptions of serious sexual offenses must be withheld). In this instance, the submitted information indicates that the requestor knows the identity of the alleged sexual assault victim listed in a portion of the submitted information, which we have marked. Thus, withholding only the victim's identifying information from the requestor would not preserve the victim's common-law right to privacy. Accordingly, to protect the victim's privacy, the marked information must be withheld in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.<sup>2</sup>

Next, we will address your contention that the remaining information, consisting of report number 09-000555, is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. Section 552.108(a)(1) excepts from 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). Generally, a governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You inform us and have provided a representation from a detective with the city's police department that report number 09-000555 relates to a pending criminal case that is being considered for prosecution by the county attorney's office. Based upon these representations and our review, we conclude that the release of report number 09-000555 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.*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976) (per curiam) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is generally applicable to report number 09-000555.

We note that basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.108. Gov't Code § 552.108(c). Such basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-8; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed

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<sup>2</sup>As our ruling is dispositive with respect to the marked information, we need not address your argument against its disclosure.

public by *Houston Chronicle*). Thus, with the exception of basic information, which must be released, the city may withhold report number 09-000555 under section 552.108(a)(1).

In summary, the city must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. With the exception of basic information, which must be released, the city may withhold report number 09-000555 under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

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.oag.state.tx.us/open/index\\_orl.php](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php), 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 must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

Sincerely,



Laura E. Ream  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

LER/dls

Ref: ID# 345355

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)