



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

April 5, 2013

Mr. Zachariah T. Evans
Counsel for the City of Balch Springs
Akers Law Firm, L.L.P.
6618 Sitio Del Rio, Building E, Suite 102
Austin, Texas 78730

OR2013-05485

Dear Mr. Evans:

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# 483504.

The Balch Springs Police Department (the "department"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident, including the arrest report, jail cell video recording, and protection order. You state the department either has released or will release some of the requested information to the requestor. You claim some of 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 552.108(a) of the Government Code 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[.]" Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must reasonably explain how and why release of the requested information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You submit correspondence from the department's chief of police stating the information at issue relates to a pending criminal investigation by the department. Based upon this representation and our review, we conclude release of the information at issue 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) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the information at issue.

As you acknowledge, 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 front-page information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*, and includes, among other items, a detailed description of the offense. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-87; Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). The department must release basic information, even if the information does not literally appear on the front page of an offense or arrest report. Although you state you have released the submitted arrest report cover page and Magistrate’s Order for Emergency Protection, we note this information does not contain information sufficient to satisfy the requirement that basic information be released. *See* ORD 127. Accordingly, we determine the department must release a sufficient portion of the information at issue to satisfy the required release of basic information pursuant to *Houston Chronicle*. The department may withhold the remaining information you seek to withhold under section 552.108(a)(1).

We note portions of the remaining information are subject to section 552.130 of the Government Code.¹ Section 552.130 provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator’s or driver’s license or permit, a motor vehicle title or registration, or a personal identification document issued by an agency of Texas or another state or country is excepted from public release. Gov’t Code § 552.130(a). We conclude the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.130.

In summary, with the exception of basic information, the department may withhold the information at issue under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The department must release the remaining information.²

¹The 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).

²We note the information being released contains the requestor’s social security number, to which the requestor has a right of access under section 552.023 of the Government Code. *See generally* Gov’t Code § 552.023(a) (person or person’s authorized representative has special right of access, beyond right of general public, to information held by governmental body that relates to person and is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect person’s privacy interests). 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. *Id.* § 552.147(b). Thus, if the department receives another request for this same information from a person who does not have such a right of access, section 552.147(b) authorizes the department to redact the requestor’s social security number.

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, 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, toll free at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lindsay E. Hale". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lindsay E. Hale
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LEH/tch

Ref: ID# 483504

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)