



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 13, 2014

Mr. Juan R. Molina
Counsel for the City of Mercedes
Law Office of Juan R. Molina
P.O. Box 190
Weslaco, Texas 78596

OR2014-14163

Dear Mr. Molina:

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# 532739.

The City of Mercedes (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for records pertaining to a specified incident. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses information protected by other statutes. The relevant language of section 58.007 of the Family Code reads as follows:

(c) Except as provided by Subsection (d), law enforcement records and files concerning a child and information stored, by electronic means or otherwise,

¹Although you also raise section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege for the submitted information, you provide no argument explaining how this doctrine is applicable to the information at issue. Therefore, we assume you no longer assert this doctrine. See Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302.

concerning the child from which a record or file could be generated may not be disclosed to the public and shall be:

- (1) if maintained on paper or microfilm, kept separate from adult files and records;
- (2) if maintained electronically in the same computer system as records or files relating to adults, be accessible under controls that are separate and distinct from controls to access electronic data concerning adults; and
- (3) maintained on a local basis only and not sent to a central state or federal depository, except as provided by Subchapters B, D, and E.

...

(e) Law enforcement records and files concerning a child may be inspected or copied by a juvenile justice agency as that term is defined by Section 58.101, a criminal justice agency as that term is defined by Section 411.082, Government Code, the child, and the child's parent or guardian.

...

(j) Before a child or a child's parent or guardian may inspect or copy a record or file concerning the child under Subsection (e), the custodian of the record or file shall redact:

- (1) any personally identifiable information about a juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness who is not the child[.]

Fam. Code § 58.007(c), (e), (j)(1). Juvenile law enforcement records relating to conduct that occurred on or after September 1, 1997 are confidential under section 58.007. Section 58.007 allows the review or copy of juvenile law enforcement records by a child's parent or guardian. *Id.* § 58.007(e). However, any personally identifiable information concerning another juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness must be redacted. *Id.* § 58.007(j)(1). Section 58.007(j)(2) provides that information subject to any other exception to disclosure under the Act or other law must also be redacted. *See id.* § 58.007(j)(2).

The submitted documents pertain to juvenile delinquent conduct occurring after September 1, 1997; therefore, the submitted information is generally confidential under section 58.007. However, the requestor may be a parent of one of the juvenile offenders at

issue. Therefore, we must rule conditionally. If the requestor is not a parent of one of the juvenile offenders at issue, then the city must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.007(c) of the Family Code. If the requestor is a parent of one of the juvenile offenders, information pertaining to the requestor's child may not be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code on that ground. *See id.* § 58.007(e). However, the personally identifiable information concerning any other juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness must be redacted pursuant to section 58.007(j)(1). *Id.* § 58.007(j)(1). In addition, because you assert that the submitted information is excepted under section 552.108 of the Government Code, we must address whether the information at issue is excepted under that section. *See id.* § 58.007(j)(2).

Section 552.108(a)(1) 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 . . . 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 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 state the submitted information relates to an ongoing criminal investigation. Based upon this representation and our review, we find 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).

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*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-88; Open Records Decision No. 127 at 3-4 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). Thus, with the exception of basic information, you may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1). However, the city may not release as basic information any personally identifiable information concerning any juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness other than the juvenile offender to whom the requestor is a parent. *See* Fam. Code § 58.007(j)(1).

In summary, if the requestor is not a parent of one of the juvenile offenders at issue, then the city must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.007(c) of the Family Code. If the requestor is a parent of one of the juvenile offenders, then with the exception of basic information, which must be released, the city may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. However, pursuant to section 58.007(j)(1) of the Family Code, the city may not release as basic information any personally identifiable information concerning any

juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness other than the juvenile offender to whom the requestor is a parent.

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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N. A. Ybarra". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Nicholas A. Ybarra
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

NAY/bhf

Ref: ID# 532739

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)