



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

April 2, 2015

Mr. Bradley B. Young  
Counsel for the City of Granite Shoals  
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Austin, Texas 78746

OR2015-06310

Dear Mr. Young:

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# 558467.

The City of Granite Shoals (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.103, and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

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(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). Section 552.108 may be invoked by the proper custodian of information relating to a pending investigation or prosecution of criminal conduct. *See Open Records Decision No. 474 at 4-5 (1987)*. Where a governmental body has custody of information relating to a pending case of a law enforcement agency, the custodian of the records may withhold the information if it provides this office with a demonstration that the information relates to the pending case and a representation from the law enforcement agency that it wishes to have the information

withheld. You state, and provide documentation reflecting, the Burnet County Attorney's Office (the "county attorney's office") objects to release of the submitted information because it relates to a pending criminal prosecution. Based on these representations and our review, we conclude the release of the submitted information 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 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 submitted information.

Section 552.108, however, 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; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 127 at 3-4 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). We note basic information does not include the identities of witnesses or other involved parties, but does include the identities of complainants. *See* ORD 127 at 3-4. We also note basic information does not include information subject to section 552.130 of the Government Code. *See id.* Thus, with the exception of basic information, the city may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code on behalf of the county attorney's office.<sup>1</sup>

You seek to withhold from the basic information the complainant's identifying information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege. Section 552.101 excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses the common-law informer's privilege, which Texas courts have long recognized. *See Aguilar v. State*, 444 S.W.2d 935, 937 (Tex. Crim. App. 1969). The informer's privilege protects from disclosure the identities of persons who report activities over which the governmental body has criminal or quasi-criminal law-enforcement authority, provided the subject of the information does not already know the informer's identity. *See* Open Records Decision No. 208 at 1-2 (1978). The informer's privilege protects the identities of individuals who report violations of statutes to the police or similar law-enforcement agencies, as well as those who report violations of statutes with civil or criminal penalties to "administrative officials having a duty of inspection or of law enforcement within their particular spheres." Open Records Decision No. 279 at 1-2 (1981) (citing 8 John H. Wigmore, *Evidence in Trials at Common Law*, § 2374, at 767 (J. McNaughton Rev. Ed. 1961)). The report must be of a violation of a criminal or civil statute. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 582 at 2 (1990), 515 at 4 (1988).

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<sup>1</sup>As our ruling is dispositive, we need address your remaining arguments against disclosure of this information, except to note basic information is generally not excepted from public disclosure under section 552.103. Open Records Decision No. 597 (1991).

You state portions of the basic information identify a complainant who reported a violation of criminal law to the city's police department. You do not indicate the subject of the complaint knows the identity of the complainant. Based upon your representations and our review, we conclude the city may withhold the complainant's identifying information, which we have marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege.

In summary, with the exception of basic information, which generally must be released, the city may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code on behalf of the county attorney's office. In releasing the basic information, the city may withhold the complainant's identifying information, which we have marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with the common-law informer's privilege.

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](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,



Lee Seidlits  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CLS/som

Ref: ID# 558467

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)