



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 15, 2015

Ms. Cathy Cunningham  
Counsel for the City of Winnsboro  
Boyle & Lowry, L.L.P.  
4201 Wingren Drive, Suite 108  
Irving, Texas 75062-2763

OR2015-19161

Dear Ms. Cunningham:

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# 584761.

The City of Winnsboro (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for twelve categories of information pertaining to a specified incident. You claim 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.

Initially, we note the requestor seeks tangible items in the possession of the city's police department (the "department") pertaining to the specified incident. The Act applies to "public information," which is defined in section 552.002 of the Government Code. Section 552.002 provides, in pertinent part:

(a) In this chapter, "public information" means information that is written, produced, collected, assembled, or maintained under a law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business:

- (1) by a governmental body;
- (2) for a governmental body and the governmental body:

(A) owns the information;

(B) has a right of access to the information; or

(C) spends or contributes public money for the purpose of writing, producing, collecting, assembling, or maintaining the information; or

(3) by an individual officer or employee of a governmental body in the officer's or employee's official capacity and the information pertains to official business of the governmental body.

Gov't Code § 552.002(a). This office has ruled tangible physical items are not "information," as that term is contemplated under the Act. *See* Open Records Decision No. 581 (1990). Thus, tangible items in the possession of the department are not public information for purposes of section 552.002 of the Government Code and the Act does not require the city to make such items available to the requestor. *See* Gov't Code § 552.021.

Next, we note the requestor seeks some information through the date of the response of the instant request. The Act does not require a governmental body to answer general questions, perform legal research, or create information that did not exist when the request was received. *See Econ. Opportunities Dev. Corp. v. Bustamante*, 562 S.W.2d 266 (Tex. Civ. App.—San Antonio 1978, writ dismissed); Open Records Decision Nos. 605 at 2 (1992), 563 at 8 (1990), 555 at 1-2 (1990). However, a governmental body must make a good-faith effort to relate a request to any responsive information that is within its possession or control. Open Records Decision No. 561 at 8-9 (1990). In this instance, the city has submitted information for our review. Therefore, we assume the city has made a good-faith effort to locate any information responsive to the request at issue, and we will address the claimed exceptions for 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). In this instance, you assert the submitted information pertains to an ongoing criminal investigation and prosecution. Based on your representation, we conclude the 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). Therefore, we agree that section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the submitted information.

However, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about a crime. Gov't Code § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*, 531 S.W.2d at 186–87. *See* Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered basic information). Thus, with the exception of basic information, the city may withhold the submitted information 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.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,



Britni Fabian  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

BF/bhf

Ref: ID# 584761

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)