



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 14, 2015

Mr. Ron G. MacFarlane, Jr.
Counsel for City of Cedar Hill
The McFarlane Firm, P.C.
400 East Royal Lane, Suite 290
Irving, Texas 75039

OR2015-26275

Dear Mr. MacFarlane:

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# 596889.

The City of Cedar Hill (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified report. 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.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision."¹ Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides as follows:

- (a) [T]he following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under [the Act] and may be disclosed only for purposes consistent

¹The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

with this code and applicable federal or state law or under rules adopted by an investigating agency:

- (1) a report of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect made under this chapter and the identity of the person making the report; and
- (2) except as otherwise provided in this section, the files, reports, records, communications, audiotapes, videotapes, and working papers used or developed in an investigation under this chapter or in providing services as a result of an investigation.

...

(k) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), an investigating agency, other than the [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services] or the Texas Juvenile Justice Department, on request, shall provide to the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of a child who is the subject of reported abuse or neglect, or to the child if the child is at least 18 years of age, information concerning the reported abuse or neglect that would otherwise be confidential under this section. The investigating agency shall withhold information under this subsection if the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of the child requesting the information is alleged to have committed the abuse or neglect.

(l) Before a child or a parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of a child may inspect or copy a record or file concerning the child under Subsection (k), the custodian of the record or file must redact:

...

- (2) any information that is excepted from required disclosure under [the Act], or other law[.]

Fam. Code § 261.201(a), (k), (l)(2). We note the submitted report was used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect. *See id.* § 261.001(1), (4) (defining “abuse” and “neglect” for purposes of Family Code ch. 261); *see also id.* § 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of this section as person under 18 years of age who is not and has not been married or who has not had the disabilities of minority removed for general purposes). Upon review, we find the submitted report is generally confidential under section 261.201 of the Family Code. We note, however, the requestor is a representative of the child victim listed in the report, who is now an adult. In this instance, the submitted information may not be withheld from this requestor under section 261.201(a).

Id. § 261.201(k). However, section 261.201(l)(2) states any information that is excepted from required disclosure under the Act or other law may still be withheld from disclosure. *Id.* § 261.201(l)(2). You raise section 552.108 of the Government Code as an exception to disclosure. Therefore, we will address the applicability of this section to the submitted report.

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(c)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state the submitted information relates to a pending criminal investigation. Based upon this representation, 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). Accordingly, we conclude section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code is generally applicable to the submitted information.

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, which must be released, the city may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.²

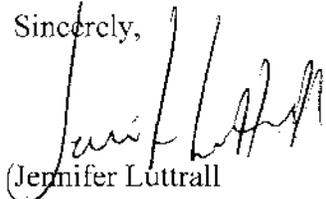
This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

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

²Because the requestor has a right of access to certain information that otherwise would be excepted from release under the Act, the city must again seek a decision from this office if it receives a request for this information from a different requestor.

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 "Jennifer Luttrall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Jennifer Luttrall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JL/akg

Ref: ID# 596889

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)