



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 1, 2016

Mr. Miguel Salinas
Staff Attorney
Brownsville Independent School District
1900 Price Road
Brownsville, Texas 78521-2417

OR2016-12419

Dear Mr. Salinas:

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# 612564 (Ref. No. 8451).

The Brownsville Independent School District (the "district") received a request for 1) a list of all vendors from whom the district purchased food for a specified school year and how much those vendors were paid and 2) purchasing records for the vendor from whom the district bought meat that was processed in Mexico.¹ 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 some of the requested information may have been the subject of a previous ruling from this office. In Open Records Letter No. 2016-09649 (2016), this office ruled except for the marked information subject to section 552.022(a)(3) of the Government Code, which must be released, the district may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. We have no indication the law, facts, or

¹We note the requestor modified her request. *See* Gov't Code § 552.222(b) (governmental body may communicate with requestor for purposes of clarifying or narrowing request); *see also* *City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 304 S. W.3d 380, 387 (Tex. 2010) (holding that when governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification or narrowing of unclear or overbroad request for public information, ten-day period to request attorney general ruling is measured from date request is clarified or narrowed).

circumstances upon which the prior ruling was based have changed. Accordingly, to the extent the requested information is identical to the information previously requested and ruled upon, the district must continue to rely on Open Records Letter No. 2016-09649 as a previous determination, and withhold or release the previously ruled upon information in accordance with it. *See* Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001) (so long as law, facts, and circumstances on which prior ruling was based have not changed, first type of previous determination exists where requested information is precisely same information as was addressed in a prior attorney general ruling, ruling is addressed to same governmental body, and ruling concludes that information is or is not excepted from disclosure). However, to the extent the information in the current request is not encompassed by the prior ruling, we will consider the exception you raise.

Next, we note some of the submitted information is subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code. Section 552.022(a) provides, in relevant part:

(a) [T]he following categories of information are public information and not excepted from required disclosure unless made confidential under this chapter or other law:

...

(3) information in an account, voucher, or contract relating to the receipt or expenditure of public or other funds by a governmental body;

Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(3). Portions of the submitted information consist of invoices relating to the expenditure of public funds subject to section 552.022(a)(3) of the Government Code. This information must be released unless it is made confidential under the Act or other law. You seek to withhold the information at issue under section 552.108 of the Government Code. However, section 552.108 is a discretionary exception and does not make information confidential under the Act. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 663 at 5 (1999) (waiver of discretionary exceptions), 177 at 3 (1977) (statutory predecessor to Gov't Code § 552.108 subject to waiver). Therefore, the district may not withhold the information subject to section 552.022(a)(3), which we have marked, under section 552.108. However, we note some of this information is subject to section 552.136 of the Government Code, which can make information confidential under the Act.² Therefore, we will consider the applicability of section 552.136 to the information subject to section 552.022. Further, we will also

²The 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).

consider your argument under section 552.108 for the information not subject to section 552.022(a)(3).

Section 552.136(b) of the Government Code provides, “[n]otwithstanding any other provision of [the Act], a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential.” Gov’t Code § 552.136(b); *see id.* § 552.136(a) (defining “access device”). Upon review, we find the district must withhold the account numbers and routing numbers we have marked in the information subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code under section 552.136 of the Government Code.

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: (1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]” *Id.* § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must reasonably explain how and why the release of the information at issue 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, 710 (Tex. 1977). You state, and provide documentation showing, the information not subject to section 552.022(a)(3) of the Government Code relates to a pending criminal investigation with the district’s police department. Based on this representation and our review, 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, 186-87 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975) (delineating law enforcement interests present in active cases), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Accordingly, the district may withhold the information not subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

In summary, the district must withhold the account numbers and routing numbers we have marked in the information subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code under section 552.136 of the Government Code. The district may withhold the information not subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The district must release the remaining information.

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 'MLC', followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line that extends to the right.

Meredith L. Coffman
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MLC/bw

Ref: ID# 612564

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)