



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

August 10, 2016

Ms. Amy M. Casey
City Clerk
City of Belton
P.O. Box 120
Belton, Texas 76513

OR2016-18009

Dear Ms. Casey:

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# 628483.

The Belton Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified address during a specified period of time.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 representative sample of information.²

¹We note the department sought and received clarification of the information requested. *See* Gov't Code § 552.222(b) (providing if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify request); *see also* *City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 304 S.W.3d 380, 387 (Tex. 2010) (holding that when a governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification or narrowing of an unclear or overbroad request for information, ten-day period to request an attorney general ruling is measured from the date the request is clarified or narrowed).

²We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

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 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, and have provided an affidavit showing, the submitted information pertains to an active criminal investigation. 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). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the submitted information.

However, we note 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 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). We note basic information includes, among other items, the identity of the complainant. *See* ORD 127 at 3-4. Thus, with the exception of the basic information, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.”³ Gov’t Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person and (2) not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be demonstrated. *See id.* at 681-82. In Open Records Decision No. 393 (1983), this office concluded generally, only information that either identifies or tends to identify a victim of sexual assault or other sex-related offense may be withheld under common-law privacy. ORD 393 at 2; *see* Open Records Decision No. 339 (1982); *see also Morales v. Ellen*, 840 S.W.2d 519 (Tex. App.—El Paso 1992, writ denied) (identity of witnesses to and victims of sexual harassment was highly intimate or embarrassing information and public did not have a legitimate interest in such information); Open Records Decision No. 440 (1986) (detailed descriptions of serious sexual offenses must be withheld). Upon review, we find the basic

³The 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).

information we have marked satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Accordingly, the department must withhold the basic information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

In summary, with the exception of basic information, which must be released, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. In releasing basic information, the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

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,



Nicholas A. Ybarra
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

NAY/bw

Ref: ID# 628483

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)