



May 25, 2000

Ms. Lamis A. Safa
Assistant City Attorney
City of Houston
P.O. Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

OR2000-2076

Dear Ms. Safa:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 135738.

The City of Houston (the "city") received a request for information related to incident number 001155400K. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and have reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.108 of the Government Code states that information held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime is excepted from required public disclosure "if release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime." Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). You inform us that the requested information pertains to a pending investigation and prosecution. We therefore believe that the release of the information "would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime." *Id.* Therefore, the city may withhold the submitted offense report and audiotapes, except as noted below.

Section 552.108 is inapplicable to basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov't Code § 552.108(c). We believe such basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.--Houston [14th Dist] 1975), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Thus, you must release the type of information that is considered to be front page offense report information, even if that information is not actually on the

front page of the offense report. Gov't Code § 552.108(c); *see* Open Records Decision No.127 (1976) (summarizing the types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*).¹

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for

¹You assert that section 552.101 of the Government Code exempts from disclosure certain information found in the offense report, and that section 552.130 exempts additional information. Information that is protected under these provisions is not "basic information," and thus it may be withheld from disclosure pursuant to section 552.108(a)(1). Therefore, we do not address your claims under sections 552.101 and 552.130.

contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carla Gay Dickson".

Carla Gay Dickson
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CGD/ljp

Ref: ID# 135738

Encl. Submitted documents

cc: Mr. Michael Brooks
200 Highway 90-A, Suite #1
Richmond, Texas 77469
(w/o enclosures)