



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 5, 2012

Mr. Peter Scott
Assistant City Attorney
City of Wichita Falls
Office of the City Attorney
P.O. Box 1431
Wichita Falls, Texas 76307

OR2012-08581

Dear Mr. Scott:

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# 455654 (City ID# 147, 149).

The City of Wichita Falls (the "city") received two requests for information related to a specified officer-involved shooting. You state the city has released some information to the requestors. You claim the remaining requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, and 552.119 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, you state a portion of the submitted information was the subject of a previous request for information, as a result of which this office issued Open Records Letter No. 2012-02977 (2012). In that ruling, we determined the city may withhold the submitted dash cam videos under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. We have no indication there has been any change in the law, facts, or circumstances on which the previous ruling was based. Accordingly, we conclude the city may rely on Open Records Letter No. 2012-02977 as a previous determination and withhold the identical information

in accordance with that ruling. *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 prior attorney general ruling, ruling is addressed to same governmental body, and ruling concludes that information is or is not excepted from disclosure). As we are able to make this determination, we do not address your arguments under section 552.119 of the Government Code. However, we will address your arguments against disclosure of the remaining information not subject to Open Records Letter No. 2012-02977.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 of the Government Code encompasses section 143.089 of the Local Government Code. You advise the City of Wichita Falls is a civil service city under chapter 143 of the Local Government Code. Section 143.089 of the Local Government Code contemplates two different types of personnel files, a police officer's civil service file that the civil service director is required to maintain and an internal file that the police department may maintain for its own use. Local Gov't Code § 143.089(a), (g). In cases in which a police department investigates a police officer's misconduct and takes disciplinary action against a police officer, it is required by section 143.089(a)(2) of the Local Government Code to place all investigatory records relating to the investigation and disciplinary action, including background documents such as complaints, witness statements, and documents of like nature from individuals who were not in a supervisory capacity, in the police officer's civil service file maintained under section 143.089(a) of the Local Government Code. *Abbott v. City of Corpus Christi*, 109 S.W.3d 113, 122 (Tex. App.—Austin 2003, no pet.). All investigatory materials in a case resulting in disciplinary action are "from the employing department" when they are held by or in possession of the department because of its investigation into a police officer's misconduct, and the police department must forward them to the civil service commission for placement in the civil service personnel file. *Id.* Chapter 143 of the Local Government Code prescribes the following types of disciplinary actions: removal, suspension, demotion, and uncompensated duty. *See* Local Gov't Code §§ 143.051-.055. Such records are subject to release under the Act. *See id.* § 143.089(f); Open Records Decision No. 562 at 6 (1990).

However, a document relating to a police officer's alleged misconduct may not be placed in his civil service personnel file if there is insufficient evidence to sustain the charge of misconduct. Local Gov't Code § 143.089(b). Further, information that reasonably relates to a police officer's employment relationship with the police department and that is maintained in a police department's internal file pursuant to section 143.089(g) is confidential and must not be released. *City of San Antonio v. San Antonio Express-News*, 47 S.W.3d 556 (Tex. App.—San Antonio 2000, pet. denied); *City of San Antonio v. Tex. Attorney Gen.*, 851 S.W.2d 946, 949 (Tex. App.—Austin 1993, writ denied).

You advise the portion of exhibit two labeled "IA Report" relates to an internal affairs investigation that resulted in no disciplinary action. You further advise the information labeled "IA Report" is maintained in the city police department's internal file. Based on your representations and our review, we agree the information you have labeled "IA Report" is confidential pursuant to section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code and must be withheld under section 552.101 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 . . . 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). You state, and have provided documentation showing, the remaining information pertains to an open criminal investigation. Based on your 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 (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 remaining 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). Thus, with the exception of the basic information, the city may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

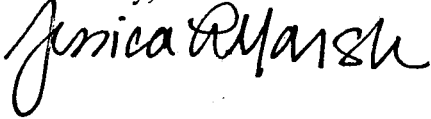
In summary, the city may rely on Open Records Letter No. 2012-02977 as a previous determination and withhold or release any previously ruled upon information that is also responsive to this request in accordance with the prior ruling. The city must withhold the information it has labeled "IA Report" under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 143.089(g) of the Local Government Code. With the exception of basic information, the city may withhold the remaining 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.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, 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 must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Marsh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jessica Marsh
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JM/bs

Ref: ID# 455654

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestors
(w/o enclosures)