



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

August 17, 2015

Ms. Sylvia McClellan  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Dallas  
Criminal Law and Police Section  
1400 South Lamar Street  
Dallas, Texas 75215

OR2015-16991

Dear Ms. McClellan:

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# 581157 (DPD ORR# 2015-10932).

The Dallas Police Department (the "department") received a request for information regarding a specified police report number. We understand the department will continue to rely on Open Records Letter No. 2015-09435 for a portion of the requested information. *See* Open Records Decision No. 673 at 6-7 (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 information is or is not excepted from disclosure). 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.

The department acknowledges, and we agree, the department did not comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(b), (e). A governmental body's failure to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption the requested information is public and must be released unless a governmental body demonstrates a compelling reason to withhold information from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166

S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ) (governmental body must make compelling demonstration to overcome presumption of openness pursuant to statutory predecessor to section 552.302); Open Records Decision No. 319 (1982). This statutory presumption can generally be overcome when information is confidential by law or third-party interests are at stake. See Open Records Decision Nos. 630 at 3 (1994), 325 at 2 (1982).

The department claims section 552.108 of the Government Code for the submitted information. However, this exception is discretionary in nature. It serves to protect a governmental body's interests and may be waived; as such, it does not constitute a compelling reason to withhold information. See *Simmons*, 166 S.W.3d at 350 (section 552.108 is not compelling reason to withhold information under section 552.302); 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 section 552.108 subject to waiver). Thus, the department may not withhold the submitted information under section 552.108 based on its own interest. However, the interests of a governmental body under sections 552.103 and 552.108 of the Government Code other than the agency that failed to comply with section 552.301 can provide a compelling reason to withhold information from disclosure. See Open Records Decision No. 586 at 2-3 (1991). Because you inform us, and provide documentation showing, the Dallas County District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney's office") objects to the release of the information at issue, we will consider whether the department may withhold the submitted information on behalf of the district attorney's office.

Section 552.108(a) 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[.]" 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 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). The department provides a letter from the district attorney's office in which the district attorney's office objects to release of the submitted information because release would interfere with a pending prosecution. Based on this representation, we conclude the release of the submitted information 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). Thus, the

department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code on behalf of the district attorney's office.<sup>1</sup>

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](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,



Kristi L. Godden  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

KLK/cz

Ref: ID# 581157

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

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<sup>1</sup>As our ruling is dispositive, we do not address the district attorney's office's argument under section 552.103, except to note basic information generally may not be withheld from public disclosure under section 552.103. See Open Records Decision No. 597 at 2-3 (1991).