



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

April 7, 2016

Ms. Linda Pemberton
Paralegal
Office of the City Attorney
City of Killeen
P.O. Box 1329
Killeen, Texas 76540-1329

OR2016-07840

Dear Ms. Pemberton:

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# 611367 (ORR# W018621).

The Killeen Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. 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 the submitted information includes court-filed documents. Section 552.022(a)(17) of the Government Code provides for required public disclosure of "information that is also contained in a public court record[,]" unless the information is expressly made confidential under the Act or other law. Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(17). The department seeks to withhold the information at issue under section 552.108 of the Government Code. However, this section is a discretionary exception to disclosure that protects a governmental body's interests and does not make information confidential under the Act. *See id.* § 552.007; Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 177 at 3 (1977) (statutory predecessor to section 552.108 subject to waiver). Therefore, the department may not withhold the court-filed documents, which we have marked, under section 552.108. We also note common-law privacy is not applicable to information contained in public court records. *See Austin Chronicle Corp. v. City of*

Austin, No. 03-08-00596-CV, 2009 WL 483232 (Tex. App.—Austin Feb. 24, 2009, no pet.) (mem. op., not designated for publication); *see also Cox Broadcasting Corp. v. Cohn*, 420 U.S. 496 (1975) (action for invasion of privacy cannot be maintained where information is in public domain); *Star-Telegram v. Walker*, 834 S.W.2d 54 (Tex. 1992) (law cannot recall information once in public domain). However, because section 552.130 of the Government Code makes information confidential for purposes of section 552.022, we will address its applicability to the court-filed document subject to section 552.022(a)(17).¹ Further, we will address the department’s argument against disclosure of the remaining information.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator’s license, driver’s license, motor vehicle title or registration, or personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.130. Accordingly, the department must withhold the motor vehicle record information, which we have marked, under section 552.130 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 the remaining information relates to an active investigation or prosecution. 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 remaining information.

However, we note, and you acknowledge, 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 department may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

¹The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision No. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

In summary, the department must release the marked court-filed documents pursuant to section 552.022(a)(17) of the Government Code; however, in releasing these documents, the department must withhold the marked motor vehicle record information under section 552.130 of the Government Code. With the exception of the basic information, which must be released, the department 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.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,



Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/som

Ref: ID# 611367

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)