



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 19, 2016

Mr. Thomas M. Gilliland  
Public Information Officer  
Harris County Sheriff's Office  
1200 Baker Street  
Houston, Texas 77002

OR2016-23519

Dear Mr. Gilliland:

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# 630963 (HCSO File No. 14SO6001243).

The Harris County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received four requests from one requestor for the personnel files of three named peace officers. 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.

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, 710 (Tex. 1977). In this instance, the requested information consists of personnel file records pertaining to the named peace officers. Section 552.108 is generally not applicable to purely administrative records that do not involve the investigation or prosecution of crime. See *City of Fort Worth v. Cornyn*, 86 S.W.3d 320, 327 (Tex. App.—Austin 2002, no pet.); *Morales v. Ellen*, 840 S.W.2d 519, 525-26 (Tex. App.—El Paso 1992, writ denied) (statutory predecessor to section 552.108 not applicable to internal investigation that did not result in criminal

investigation or prosecution); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 350 at 3-4 (1982). However, you inform us, and provide documentation demonstrating, the requested information relates to an ongoing criminal case involving the officers whose personnel file records are at issue. Further, you state the release of the information at issue would interfere with the investigation or prosecution of crime. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude 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, the sheriff's office may withhold the submitted 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](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,



Ian Lancaster  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

IML/akg

Ref: ID# 630963

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)