



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 7, 2016

Ms. Kristie L. Lewis  
Staff Attorney  
Houston Police Department  
1200 Travis, 21st Floor  
Houston, Texas 77002-6000

OR2016-27048

Dear Ms. Lewis:

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# 636778 (OR# 16-7227).

The Houston Police Department (the "department") received a request for six categories of information pertaining to narcotics field drug testing used by the department. 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 contains a peace officer's Texas Commission on Law Enforcement ("TCOLE") identification number. Section 552.002(a) of the Government Code defines "public information" as information that is written, produced, collected, assembled, or maintained under a law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business:

- (1) by a governmental body;
- (2) for a governmental body and the governmental body:
  - (A) owns the information;
  - (B) has a right of access to the information; or

(C) spends or contributes public money for the purpose of writing, producing, collecting, assembling, or maintaining the information; or

(3) by an individual officer or employee of a governmental body in the officer's or employee's official capacity and the information pertains to official business of the governmental body.

Gov't Code § 552.002(a). In Open Records Decision No. 581 (1990), this office determined certain computer information, such as source codes, documentation information, and other computer programming, that has no significance other than its use as a tool for the maintenance, manipulation, or protection of public property is not the kind of information made public under section 552.021 of the Government Code. We understand an officer's TCOLE identification number is a unique computer-generated number assigned to peace officers for identification in TCOLE's electronic database and may be used as an access device number on the TCOLE website. Accordingly, we find the officer's TCOLE identification number in the submitted information does not constitute public information under section 552.002 of the Government Code. Therefore, the TCOLE identification number is not subject to the Act and need not be released to the requestor.<sup>1</sup>

Next, we note the department has redacted portions of the submitted information. Pursuant to section 552.301 of the Government Code, a governmental body that seeks to withhold requested information must submit to this office a copy of the information, labeled to indicate which exceptions apply to which parts of the copy, unless the governmental body has received a previous determination for the information at issue. *Id.* § 552.301(a), (e)(1)(D). The department does not assert, nor does our review of our records indicate, the department has been authorized to withhold the redacted information without seeking a ruling from this office. *Id.* § 552.301(a); Open Records Decision No. 673 (2000). As such, this information must be submitted in a manner that enables this office to determine whether the information comes within the scope of an exception to disclosure. In this instance, we are unable to discern the nature of the redacted information. Therefore, the department has failed to comply with section 552.301 of the Government Code as to this information, and this information is presumed public under section 552.302 of the Government Code. Accordingly, the department must release this redacted information.

Section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “[a]n internal record or notation of a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that is maintained for internal use in matters relating to law enforcement or prosecution ... if ... release of the internal record or notation would interfere with law enforcement or prosecution[.]” Gov't Code § 552.108(b)(1); *see* Open Records Decision No. 531 at 2 (1989). Section 552.108(b)(1) is intended to protect “information which, if released, would permit private citizens to

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<sup>1</sup>As we are able to make this determination, we need not address your argument against disclosure of this information.

anticipate weaknesses in a police department, avoid detection, jeopardize officer safety, and generally undermine police efforts to effectuate the laws of this State.” See *City of Fort Worth v. Cornyn*, 86 S.W.3d 320 at 327 (Tex. App.—Austin 2002, no pet.). This office has concluded section 552.108(b)(1) excepts from public disclosure information relating to the security or operation of a law enforcement agency. See, e.g., Open Records Decision Nos. 531 (release of detailed use of force guidelines would unduly interfere with law enforcement), 252 (1980) (section 552.108 of the Government Code is designed to protect investigative techniques and procedures used in law enforcement), 143 (1976) (disclosure of specific operations or specialized equipment directly related to investigation or detection of crime may be excepted). Section 552.108(b)(1) is not applicable, however, to generally known policies and procedures. See, e.g., ORDs 531 at 2-3 (Penal Code provisions, common law rules, and constitutional limitations on use of force not protected), 252 at 3 (governmental body failed to indicate why investigative procedures and techniques requested were any different from those commonly known).

You state the submitted information pertains to the department’s Narcotic Division’s techniques, training, and procedures. You assert release of this information “would give suspects a tactical advantage and allow them to be more able to plan and carry out criminal activity as well as avoid or hinder investigation and apprehension.” You further contend the release of the information “would permit private citizens to anticipate weaknesses in the department, avoid detection, jeopardize officer safety, and generally undermine police efforts[.]” Based on your representations and our review, we agree release of some of the information at issue would interfere with law enforcement. Therefore the department may withhold the information we have marked under section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code. However, we find you have failed to demonstrate release of the remaining information at issue would interfere with law enforcement and crime prevention. Accordingly, the department may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.108(b)(1).

Section 552.102(a) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “information in a personnel file, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.”<sup>2</sup> Gov’t Code § 552.102(a). The Texas Supreme Court held section 552.102(a) excepts from disclosure the dates of birth of state employees in the payroll database of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. *Tex. Comptroller of Pub. Accounts v. Attorney Gen. of Tex.*, 354 S.W.3d 336 (Tex. 2010). Upon review, the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.102(a) of the Government Code.

Section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code applies to records a governmental body holds in an employment capacity and excepts from public disclosure the current and former home addresses and telephone numbers, emergency contact information, social security number,

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<sup>2</sup>The Office of the Attorney General will raise mandatory exceptions on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. See Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

and family member information of a peace officer, regardless of whether the peace officer made an election under section 552.024 or section 552.1175 of the Government Code to keep such information confidential. Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(2). Section 552.117(a) is also applicable to personal cellular telephone numbers, provided the cellular telephone service is not paid for by a governmental body. *See* Open Records Decision No. 506 at 5-6 (1988) (section 552.117 not applicable to cellular telephone numbers paid for by governmental body and intended for official use), 670 at 6 (2001) (section 552.117(a)(2) excepts from disclosure peace officer's cellular telephone or pager number if officer pays for cellular telephone or pager service). Section 552.117(a)(2) applies to peace officers as defined by article 2.12 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Accordingly, if the individuals whose information is at issue are currently licensed peace officers, the department must withhold the information we marked under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code; however, the marked cellular telephone numbers may only be withheld if the cellular telephone service is not paid for by a governmental body.

If the individuals at issue are not licensed peace officers, then the marked information may be protected by section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code. Section 552.117(a)(1) applies to records a governmental body holds in an employment capacity and excepts from disclosure the home addresses and telephone numbers, emergency contact information, social security numbers, and family member information of current or former officials or employees of a governmental body who request that this information be kept confidential under section 552.024 of the Government Code. Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(1). As noted above, section 552.117(a) is applicable to personal cellular telephone numbers, provided the cellular telephone service is not paid for by a governmental body. *See* ORD 670 at 6. Whether a particular piece of information is protected by section 552.117(a)(1) must be determined at the time the request for it is made. *See* Open Records Decision No. 530 at 5 (1989). Therefore, a governmental body must withhold information under section 552.117 on behalf of a current or former official or employee only if the individual made a request for confidentiality under section 552.024 prior to the date on which the request for this information was made. Accordingly, if the individuals whose information is at issue timely requested confidentiality pursuant to section 552.024 of the Government Code, the information we have marked must be withheld under section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code; however, the marked cellular telephone numbers may only be withheld if the cellular telephone service is not paid for by a governmental body.

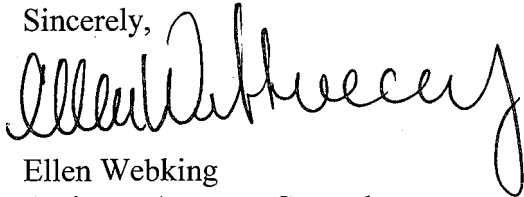
In summary, the TCOLE identification number in the submitted information is not subject to the Act and need not be released to the requestor. The department may withhold the information we have marked under section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.102(a) of the Government Code. If the individuals whose information is at issue are currently licensed peace officers, the department must withhold the information we marked under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code; however, the marked cellular telephone numbers may only be withheld if the cellular telephone service is not paid for by a

governmental body. If the individuals at issue are not licensed peace officers, and if the individuals whose information is at issue timely requested confidentiality pursuant to section 552.024 of the Government Code, then the information we marked must be withheld under section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code; however, the marked cellular telephone numbers may only be withheld if the cellular telephone service is not paid for by a governmental body. The department must release the remaining information.

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,



Ellen Webking  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

EW/bw

Ref: ID# 636778

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)