



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 22, 2017

Mr. Clark T. Askins
Counsel for City of La Porte
Askins & Askins P.C.
P.O. Box 1218
La Porte, Texas 77572-1218

OR2017-05899

Dear Mr. Askins:

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# 649752.

The City of La Porte (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for all of the La Porte Police Department's (the "department") police general orders, policies, guidelines, codes of conduct, and job performance expectations. You state you have released some information. 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(b) 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 (1) release of the internal record or notation would interfere with law enforcement or prosecution[.]" Gov't Code § 552.108(b)(1). This section is intended to protect "information which, if released, would permit private citizens to anticipate weaknesses in a police department, avoid detection, jeopardize officer safety, and generally undermine police efforts to effectuate the laws of this State." *City of Fort Worth v. Cornyn*, 86 S.W.3d 320, 327 (Tex. App.—Austin 2002, no pet.). This office has concluded this provision protects certain kinds of information, the disclosure of which might compromise the security or operations of a law enforcement agency. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 531 at 3-4 (1989) (detailed guidelines regarding police department's use of force policy), 508 at 3-4 (1988) (information relating to future transfers of prisoners), 413 (1984) (sketch showing security measures for forthcoming execution). However, to claim this aspect of section 552.108 protection a governmental body must meet its burden of explaining how and why release of the information at issue would interfere with law enforcement and crime prevention.

Open Records Decision No. 562 at 10 (1990). Further, commonly known policies and techniques may not be withheld under section 552.108. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 531 at 2-3 (former section 552.108 does not protect Penal Code provisions, common-law rules, and constitutional limitations on use of force), 252 at 3 (1980) (governmental body did not meet burden because it did not indicate why investigative procedures and techniques submitted were any different from those commonly known with law enforcement and crime prevention). To prevail on its claim that section 552.108(b)(1) excepts information from disclosure, a law-enforcement agency must do more than merely make a conclusory assertion that releasing the information would interfere with law enforcement. The determination of whether the release of particular records would interfere with law enforcement is made on a case-by-case basis. Open Records Decision No. 409 at 2 (1984).

You seek to withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(b)(1). You state the information at issue relates to the department's policies and procedures for investigating crimes and enforcing criminal laws. You assert release of the information at issue would compromise the security and operation of the department, as well as the safety of individual police officers. You also assert the submitted information, if released, could help individuals to devise strategies to defeat police tactics. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude the city may withhold the information we marked under section 552.108(b)(1) of the Government Code. However, we find the city has not demonstrated the release of the remaining information would interfere with law enforcement or crime prevention and may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.108(b)(1). As you raise no further exceptions to disclosure, the city 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, 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Michelle Case" with a stylized flourish at the end.

D. Michelle Case
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

DMC/eb

Ref: ID# 649752

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)