



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

November 16, 2017

Ms. Monica Solko
City Secretary
City of Lake Worth
3805 Adam Grubb Drive
Lake Worth, Texas 76135-3509

OR2017-26223

Dear Ms. Solko:

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# 690532 (Ref. No. 2017-61).

The City of Lake Worth (the "city") received a request for information related to specified citations. You state you have released some information to the requestor. 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 the requestor's fingerprints, the public availability of which is governed by sections 560.001, 560.002, and 560.003 of the Government Code. Section 560.003 of the Government Code provides, "[a] biometric identifier in the possession of a governmental body is exempt from disclosure under [the Act]." Gov't Code § 560.003; *see id.* § 560.001(1) ("biometric identifier" means retina or iris scan, fingerprint, voiceprint, or record of hand or face geometry). Section 560.002 of the Government Code provides, however, "[a] governmental body that possesses a biometric identifier of an individual . . . may not sell, lease, or otherwise disclose the biometric identifier to another person unless . . . the individual consents to the disclosure[.]" *Id.* § 560.002(1)(A). Thus, as the individual whose fingerprints are at issue, the requestor has a right of access to her fingerprints under section 560.002(1)(A). Although you assert section 552.108 of the Government Code to withhold this information, a statutory right of access prevails over the Act's general exceptions to public disclosure. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 613 at 4 (1993) (exceptions in Act cannot impinge on statutory right of access to information), 451 (1986) (specific statutory right of access provisions overcome

general exception to disclosure under the Act). Because section 552.108 is a general exception under the Act, the requestor's statutory access under section 560.002 prevails and the city may not withhold the requestor's fingerprints under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Therefore, the city must release the fingerprints at issue to this requestor pursuant to section 560.002 of the Government Code.

Next, we note the remaining information includes court-filed documents that are subject to section 552.022(a)(17) of the Government Code. 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 it is "made confidential under [the Act] or other law[.]" Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(17). Although you raise section 552.108 for this information, this section is a discretionary exception and does not make information confidential under the Act. *See id.* § 552.007; Open Records Decision No. 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). Therefore, the city may not withhold the court-filed documents, which we have marked, under section 552.108. However, we will address your argument under section 552.108 against disclosure of the remaining 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 (Tex. 1977). You state the remaining information pertains to a pending criminal investigation or prosecution. We note, however, the remaining information includes an appearance bond. Copies of this appearance bond were provided to the arrestee. We find you have not explained how releasing this information, which has already been provided to the arrestee, would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1)*. Accordingly, the appearance bond may not be withheld under section 552.108(a)(1). However, based on your representation and our review, we conclude the release of the remaining 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 77 (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. 976). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the remaining information.

However, 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). Accordingly, with the exception of the appearance bond and basic

information, the city may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

In summary, the city must release the requestor's fingerprints pursuant to section 560.002 of the Government Code and the marked court-filed documents pursuant to section 552.022(a)(17) of the Government Code. With the exception of the appearance bond and basic information, which must be released to this requestor, the city may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.¹

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,



Tim Neal
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

TN/tdw

Ref: ID# 690532

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹We note the requestor has a right of access to some of the information being released in this instance. See Gov't Code §§ 552.023(a), 560.002(1)(A); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individuals request information concerning themselves). Thus, if the city receives another request for this information from a different requestor, the city must again seek a ruling from this office.