



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 11, 2019

Mr. Evan D. Reed
Assistant City Attorney
City of El Paso
P.O. Box 1890
El Paso, Texas 79950-1890

OR2019-03962

Dear Mr. Reed:

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# 749784 (ORR# 18-1026-9961).

The El Paso Police Department (the "department") received a request for investigative records related to two named officers and specified case numbers. We understand the department will redact public citizens' dates of birth pursuant to Open Records Letter No. 2016-07970 (2016).¹ The department states it is releasing some of the requested information. The department claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions the department claims 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 this exception is applicable to the information at issue. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). Most of the information the department seeks to withhold

¹Open Records Letter No. 2016-07970 authorizes the department to withhold public citizens' dates of birth under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy without requesting a ruling from this office.

relates to internal affairs investigations and the remaining information the department seeks to withhold on this basis consists of offense reports related to an incident that occurred in 2000. We note section 552.108 is generally not applicable to the records of an internal affairs investigation that is purely administrative in nature and does not involve the investigation or prosecution of crime. *See City of Fort Worth v. Cornyn*, 86 S.W.3d 320 (Tex. App.—Austin 2002, no pet.); *Morales v. Ellen*, 840 S.W.2d 519 (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). The department does not inform us the submitted information relates to a specific ongoing criminal investigation or prosecution by the department, nor has the department explained why release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. Thus, the department may not withhold any portion of the internal affairs investigations under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. Further, the criminal offense reports relate to investigations of incidents for which the statutes of limitations are three years or less. *See, e.g.*, Penal Code § 22.01(b)(1) (assault against public servant is felony of third degree); Crim. Proc. Code art. 12.01(7) (felony indictment may be presented within three years and not afterward) More than three years have elapsed since the events giving rise to the information at issue. The department does not inform this office any criminal charges were filed within the limitations periods. Thus, we find the department has failed to demonstrate the release of the submitted information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). Accordingly, the department may not withhold any portion of the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.” Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses information made confidential by other statutes, such as chapter 611 of the Health and Safety Code. Section 611.002 pertains to mental health records and provides, in pertinent part,

(a) Communications between a patient and a professional, and records of the identity, diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment of a patient that are created or maintained by a professional, are confidential.

(b) Confidential communications or records may not be disclosed except as provided by Section 611.004 or 611.0045.

Health & Safety Code § 611.002(a)-(b); *see id.* § 611.001 (defining “patient” and “professional”). Section 611.001 defines a “professional” as (1) a person authorized to practice medicine, (2) a person licensed or certified by the state to diagnose, evaluate or treat mental or emotional conditions or disorders, or (3) a person the patient reasonably believes is authorized, licensed, or certified. *See id.* § 611.001(2). Sections 611.004 and 611.0045 provide for access to mental health records only by certain individuals. *See id.* §§ 611.004, .0045; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 565 (1990). Upon review, we find portions of

the submitted information, which we marked, consist of mental health records that are subject to chapter 611 of the Health and Safety Code. Accordingly, the department must withhold the marked mental health records under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 611.002 of the Health and Safety Code.

We note some of the remaining information is subject to sections 552.102, 552.117, and 552.130 of the Government Code.² 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.” 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). Accordingly, the department must withhold the employees’ dates of birth we marked under section 552.102(a) of the Government Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. Types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. Additionally, this office has concluded some kinds of medical information are generally highly intimate or embarrassing. *See* Open Records Decision No. 455 (1987). However, this office has concluded the public has a legitimate interest in information that relates to public employees and their conduct in the workplace. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 470 at 4 (1987) (job performance does not generally constitute public employee’s private affairs), 444 at 3 (1986) (public has obvious interest in information concerning qualifications and performance of government employees), 405 at 2 (1983) (manner in which public employee’s job was performed cannot be said to be of minimal public interest). Upon review, we find some of the remaining information, which we have marked, satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Therefore, the department must withhold the information we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, we find the department has not demonstrated any of the remaining information at issue is highly intimate or embarrassing and not of legitimate public concern. Thus, the department may not withhold any portion of the remaining information under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy.

²The 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).

Section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure the home address, home telephone number, emergency contact information, and social security number of a peace officer, as well as information that reveals whether the peace officer has family members, regardless of whether the peace officer complies with sections 552.024 and 552.1175 of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(2). Section 552.117(a)(2) applies to peace officers as defined by article 2.12 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. We have marked information under section 552.117 that consists of the personal information of peace officers who were employed by the department and the information is held in the employment context. In this instance, however, it is unclear whether the individuals whose information is at issue are currently licensed peace officers as defined by article 2.12 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Accordingly, to the extent the individuals whose information is at issue are currently licensed peace officers as defined by article 2.12, the department must withhold the information we marked under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code. Conversely, to the extent the individuals whose information is at issue are no longer licensed peace officers as defined by article 2.12, then the department may not withhold the marked information under section 552.117(a)(2).

If the information we marked under section 552.117 pertains to individuals who are no longer licensed peace officers, then the marked information may be subject to section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code. Section 552.117(a)(1) excepts from disclosure the home address and telephone number, emergency contact information, social security number, and family member information of a current or former employee of a governmental body who requests this information be kept confidential under section 552.024 of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 552.117(a)(1). Whether a particular item of information is protected by section 552.117(a)(1) must be determined at the time of the governmental body's receipt of the request for the information. *See* Open Records Decision No. 530 at 5 (1989). Thus, information may be withheld under section 552.117(a)(1) only on behalf of a current or former employee who made a request for confidentiality under section 552.024 prior to the date of the governmental body's receipt of the request for the information. Information may not be withheld under section 552.117(a)(1) on behalf of a current or former employee who did not timely request under section 552.024 the information be kept confidential. Therefore, to the extent the individuals at issue are no longer licensed peace officers as defined by article 2.12 and to the extent these individuals timely requested confidentiality under section 552.024 of the Government Code, the department must withhold the marked information under section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code. Conversely, to the extent the individuals at issue are no longer licensed peace officers as defined by article 2.12 and did not timely request confidentiality under section 552.024, the department may not withhold the marked information under section 552.117(a)(1).³

³Regardless of the applicability of section 552.117 of the Government Code, we note section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office. *See* Gov't Code § 552.147(b).

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 we marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

Section 552.139 of the Government code provides, in part, "a photocopy or other copy of an identification badge issued to an official or employee of a governmental body" is confidential. *Id.* § 552.139(b)(3). Therefore, the department must withhold the copy of the identification card issued to an employee of a governmental body, which we have marked, under section 552.139 of the Government Code.

In summary, the department must withhold the marked mental health records under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 611.002 of the Health and Safety Code. The department must withhold the employees' dates of birth we marked under section 552.102(a) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the information we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. To the extent the individuals whose information is at issue are currently licensed peace officers as defined by article 2.12 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the department must withhold the information we marked under section 552.117(a)(2) of the Government Code. To the extent the individuals at issue are no longer licensed peace officers as defined by article 2.12 and to the extent these individuals timely requested confidentiality under section 552.024 of the Government Code, the department must withhold the marked information under section 552.117(a)(1) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the motor vehicle record information we marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The department must withhold the copy of the identification card issued to an employee of a governmental body, which we marked, under section 552.139 of the Government Code. The department must release the remaining information.⁴

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

⁴The information being released contains social security numbers. Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office. *See* Gov't Code § 552.147(b).

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, appearing to read "Claire Morris Sloan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/som

Ref: ID# 749784

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)