



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 14, 2019

Mr. Kevin Bailey
Assistant City Attorney
City of Midland
P.O. Box 1152
Austin, Texas 79702

OR2019-16121

Dear Mr. Bailey:

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# 770696 (ID# M026190-032719; ID# M0026747-052219).

The City of Midland (the "city") received two requests for information pertaining to a specified incident.¹ You state the city released some information. You claim the submitted information is either not subject to release pursuant to chapter 1701 of the Occupations Code or excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note the submitted information includes police officers' body worn camera recordings. Body worn cameras are subject to chapter 1701 of the Occupations Code. Chapter 1701 provides the procedures a requestor must follow when seeking a body worn camera recording. Section 1701.661 provides, in relevant part, the following:

¹We note the city received an initial request for the same information from the first requestor on March 20, 2019. In response to the initial request, the city informs us it responded to the requestor within five business days and then withheld certain information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code, pursuant to the previous determination this office issued to the department in Open Records Letter No. 2016-26326 (2016). Subsequently, the first requestor made another request for the same information on March 27, 2018.

(a) A member of the public is required to provide the following information when submitting a written request to a law enforcement agency for information recorded by a body worn camera:

- (1) the date and approximate time of the recording;
- (2) the specific location where the recording occurred; and
- (3) the name of one or more persons known to be a subject of the recording.

Occ. Code § 1701.661(a). In this instance, the requestors do not provide the requisite information under section 1701.661(a). As the body worn camera recordings at issue were not properly requested pursuant to chapter 1701 of the Occupations Code, our ruling does not reach this information and it need not be released. However, pursuant to section 1701.661(b), a “failure to provide all the information required by [s]ubsection (a) to be part of a request for recorded information does not preclude the requestor from making a future request for the same recorded information.” *Id.* § 1701.661(b).

Next, we note the submitted information includes a CR-3 accident report. Section 552.101 of the Government Code exempts from 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 subject to chapter 550 of the Transportation Code. Section 550.065 applies only to a written report of an accident required under section 550.061, 550.062, or 601.004. Transp. Code § 550.065(a)(1). Chapter 550 requires the creation of a written report when the accident resulted in injury to or the death of a person or damage to the property of any person to the apparent extent of \$1,000 or more. *Id.* §§ 550.061 (operator’s accident report), .062 (officer’s accident report). An accident report is privileged and for the confidential use of the Texas Department of Transportation or a local governmental agency of Texas that has use for the information for accident prevention purposes. *Id.* § 550.065(b). However, a governmental entity shall release an accident report in accordance with subsections (c) and (c-1). *Id.* § 550.065(c), (c-1). Section 550.065(c) provides a governmental entity shall release an accident report to a person or entity listed under this subsection. *Id.* § 550.065(c).

In this instance, the first requestor is a person listed under section 550.065(c). Thus, the first requestor has a statutory right of access to the accident report under section 550.065(c). However, the second requestor has not demonstrated he is a person listed under section 550.065(c). Thus, the submitted accident report is confidential under section 550.065(b) with respect to the second requestor, and the city must withhold it from the second requestor under section 552.101 of the Government Code. However, section 550.065(c-1) requires the city to create a redacted accident report that may be requested by any person. *Id.* § 550.065(c-1). The redacted accident reports may not include the information listed in

subsection (f)(2). *Id.* Therefore, the second requestor has a right of access to the redacted accident report. Although you assert section 552.108 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 requestors' statutory access under sections 550.065(c) and 550.065(c-1) prevails, and the city may not withhold the information under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Thus, the city must release the accident report in its entirety to the first requestor pursuant to section 550.065(c) of the Transportation Code, and must release the redacted accident report to the second requestor pursuant to section 550.065(c-1) of the Transportation Code.

Next, we note the remaining information contains search warrants. 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 the information is made confidential under the Act or other law. Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(17). Although the city seeks to withhold this information under section 552.108 of the Government Code, this section is a discretionary exception and does not make information confidential under the Act. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 663 at 5 (1999) (waiver of discretionary exceptions), 177 at 3 (1977) (statutory predecessor to Gov't Code § 552.108 subject to waiver). As such, section 552.108 does not make information confidential for the purposes of section 552.022. Accordingly, the city may not withhold the submitted search warrants under section 552.108. However, because section 552.130 of the Government Code makes information confidential for purposes of section 552.022, we will address its applicability to the submitted search warrants subject to section 552.022(a)(17).² Further, we will address your argument against disclosure of the remaining information.

Section 552.108(a) 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: (1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime." Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). Generally, 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 at issue relates to an open criminal investigation, and release of the information would interfere with the investigation and prosecution of the case. Based upon this representation, we conclude the release of the remaining information at issue would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle*

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).

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, 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). Section 552.108(c) refers to the basic information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. See 531 S.W.2d at 186-187; see also Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Accordingly, with the exception of basic information, the city may withhold the remaining information at issue under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

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 city must withhold the motor vehicle information we marked in the submitted search warrants under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

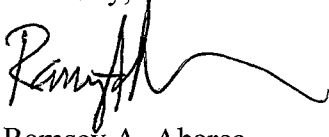
In summary, as the body worn camera recordings at issue were not properly requested pursuant to chapter 1701 of the Occupations Code, our ruling does not reach this information and it need not be released. The city must release the submitted CR-3 accident report in its entirety to the first requestor pursuant to section 550.065(c) of the Transportation Code. The city must withhold the submitted CR-3 accident report from the second requestor under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 550.065(b) of the Transportation Code, but must release the redacted accident report to the second requestor pursuant to section 550.065(c-1) of the Transportation Code. With the exception of the search warrants and basic information, which must be released, the city may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The city must withhold the information we marked in the submitted search warrants under section 552.130 of the Government Code. 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, appearing to read "Ramsey A. Abarca", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ramsey A. Abarca
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

RAA/mo

Ref: ID# 770696

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)