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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 2, 2019

Ms. P Armstrong
Assistant City Attorney
Criminal Law and Police Section
City of Dallas
1400 South Lamar, 6th Floor, 6W
Dallas, Texas 75215

OR2019-18219

Dear Ms. Armstrong:

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# 773267 (ORR# D009592).

The Dallas Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident that involves a named individual. The department claims some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.103 and 552.108 of the Government Code on behalf of the Dallas County District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney's office").¹ We have considered the claimed exceptions and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note some of the submitted information is not responsive to the request for information because it was created after the department received the request. This ruling does not address the public availability of any information that is not responsive to the request, and the department is not required to release this information in response to this request.

¹The department acknowledges it did not comply with section 552.301 of the Government Code in requesting this decision. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e). Nonetheless, the need of a governmental body, other than the governmental body that failed to timely seek an open records decision, to withhold information under section 552.108 of the Government Code can provide a compelling reason sufficient to overcome the presumption of openness. *See* Open Records Decision NO. 586 (1991).

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). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must explain how and why the release of the information at issue 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, 710 (Tex. 1977). The department has submitted correspondence from the district attorney’s office objecting to the release of the responsive information marked under section 552.108(a)(1) because it relates to a pending criminal investigation or prosecution. Based on this representation, we conclude the release of this 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 177, 186-87 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975) (delineating law enforcement interests 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) of the Government Code is generally applicable to the responsive information marked on that ground.²

We note the requestor is with the Kaufman County Community Supervision and Corrections Department. Section 411.089(a) of the Government Code provides “[a] criminal justice agency is entitled to obtain from the [Texas Department of Public Safety (“DPS”)] any criminal history record information [(“CHRI”)] maintained by [DPS] about a person.” *See* Gov’t Code § 411.089(a). In addition, section 411.087(a)(2) of the Government Code provides the following:

(a) [A] person, agency, department, political subdivision, or other entity that is authorized by this subchapter or Subchapter E-1 to obtain from [DPS CHRI] maintained by [DPS] that relates to another person is authorized to:

...

(2) obtain from any other criminal justice agency in this state [CHRI] maintained by that criminal justice agency that relates to that person.

Id. § 411.087(a)(2). CHRI is defined as “information collected about a person by a criminal justice agency that consists of identifiable descriptions and notations of arrests, detentions, indictments, informations, and other formal criminal charges and their dispositions.” *See id.* § 411.082(2). However, a criminal justice agency that receives CHRI from another criminal justice agency pursuant to section 411.087(a)(2) may only receive such information for a criminal justice purpose. *See id.* §§ 411.083(c), .087(b); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 655 (1997) (discussing limitations on release of criminal history record

²As our ruling is dispositive, we do not address the other argument of the department to withhold this information.

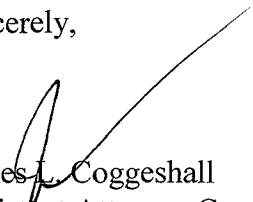
information). Thus, to the extent the requestor represents a "criminal justice agency," the requestor is authorized to obtain CHRI concerning the named individual from the department pursuant to section 411.087(a)(2) of the Government Code, but only for a criminal justice purpose. *See* Gov't Code §§ 411.083(c), .087(a)(2).

We understand the requestor represents a criminal justice agency as defined by section 411.082 and intends to use the CHRI at issue for a criminal justice purpose. A statutory right of access prevails over the Act's general exceptions to public disclosure, including sections 552.103 and 552.108 of the Government Code. *See* 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). Thus, the department must release the CHRI concerning the named individual. The department may withhold the remaining responsive information it has marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code on behalf of the district attorney's office. The department must release the remaining responsive 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,



James L. Coggeshall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JLC/gw

Ref: ID# 773267

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)