



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 23, 2020

Mr. Adam Anderson
Assistant City Attorney
Montgomery County
501 North Thompson, Suite 300
Conroe, Texas 77301

OR2020-23986

Dear Mr. Anderson:

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# 845363 (PIR No. 20PIA203).

The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for the employee files pertaining to two specified officers. You claim some of the submitted information is not subject to the Act. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, 552.115, 552.117, and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, you note, and we agree, the submitted information contains peace officers' Texas Commission on Law Enforcement ("TCOLE") identification numbers. Section 552.002(a) of the Government Code defines "public information" as information that is written, produced, collected, assembled, or maintained under a law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business:

- (1) by a governmental body;
- (2) for a governmental body and the governmental body:
 - (A) owns the information;
 - (B) has a right of access to the information; or

(C) spends or contributes public money for the purpose of writing, producing, collecting, assembling, or maintaining the information; or

(3) by an individual officer or employee of a governmental body in the officer's or employee's official capacity and the information pertains to official business of the governmental body.

Gov't Code § 552.002(a). In Open Records Decision No. 581 (1990), this office determined certain computer information, such as source codes, documentation information, and other computer programming, that has no significance other than its use as a tool for the maintenance, manipulation, or protection of public property is not the kind of information made public under section 552.021 of the Government Code. We understand an officer's TCOLE identification number is a unique computer-generated number assigned to peace officers for identification in TCOLE's electronic database and may be used as an access device number on the TCOLE website. Accordingly, we find the officers' TCOLE identification numbers in the submitted information do not constitute public information under section 552.002 of the Government Code. Therefore, the TCOLE identification numbers are not subject to the Act and need not be released to the requestor.

Section 552.108(a) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “[information 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). We note section 552.108 is generally not applicable to records of an internal 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, 525-26 (Tex. Civ. 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). The submitted information includes the personnel files of the named peace officers. However, you state this information pertains to a criminal prosecution and release of the information at issue would interfere with the prosecution. Based upon this representation, we conclude the release of the submitted 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 (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 and the sheriff's office may withhold it on that basis.

In summary, the submitted TCOLE identification numbers are not subject to the Act and need not be released to the requestor. The sheriff's office may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

Britni Ramirez
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

BR/jxd

Ref: ID# 845363

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)