



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

November 3, 2020

Ms. L. Carolyn Nivens
Counsel for City of Seabrook
Ross, Banks, May, Cron & Cavin, P.C.
7700 San Felipe, Suite 550
Houston, Texas 77063

OR2020-27528

Dear Ms. Nivens:

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# 852350 (ORR 2020-565).

The City of Seabrook (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note the submitted information includes officers' Texas Commission on Law Enforcement ("TCOLE") identification numbers. Section 552.002(a) of the Government Code defines "public information" as the following:

[I]nformation 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 the officers' TCOLE identification numbers are unique computer-generated numbers assigned to peace officers for identification in TCOLE's electronic database, and may be used as an access device number on the TCOLE website. Thus, we find the officers' TCOLE numbers do not constitute public information under section 552.002 of the Government Code. Therefore, the officers' TCOLE numbers are not subject to the Act and need not be released to the requestor.

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[.]” *Id.* § 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). The city states the remaining information pertains to an active criminal investigation or prosecution. Based on this representation, we conclude the release of the information at issue 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.

However, we note 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). We note basic information includes, among other items, a detailed description of the offense and the identities of the complainants, but does not include the identities of any witnesses or victims who are not complainants, motor vehicle record information encompassed by section 552.130 of the Government Code, or dates of birth. *See* ORD 127 at 3-4. Thus, with the exception of the basic information, which must be

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

In summary, the officers' TCOLE numbers are not subject to the Act and need not be released to the requestor. With the exception of the basic information, which must be released, the city 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,

Amy Shipp
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

ALS/jm

Ref: ID# 852350

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹ As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure of this information.