March 11, 2021

Mr. Austin R. Beck  
Counsel for the City of Helotes  
Davidson Troilo Ram Garza, PC  
601 Northwest Loop 410, Suite 100  
San Antonio, Texas 78216

Dear Mr. Beck:

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# 870025.

The City of Helotes (the “city”), which you represent, received a request for a specified incident report. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim 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 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 submitted information pertains to an active criminal investigation. Based on your representation and our review, we conclude 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, we conclude section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the submitted information.

However, we note, and you acknowledge, 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). Thus, with the exception of the basic information, the city may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.\footnote{We note the requestor has a right of access to some of the information being released in this instance. See Gov’t Code § 552.023(a) (governmental body may not deny access to person to whom information relates or person’s agent on ground that information is considered confidential by privacy principles); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individuals request information concerning themselves). If the city receives another request for this information from an individual without such a right of access, we note section 552.1175(f) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact information under section 552.1175(b), without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office, including the home addresses and telephone numbers, emergency contact information, social security number, date of birth, and family member information of certain individuals who properly elect to keep this information confidential. See Gov’t Code § 552.1175(b), (f). If a governmental body redacts such information, it must notify the requestor in accordance with section 552.1175(h). See id. § 552.1175(g), (h).}

Finally, you ask us to issue a previous determination permitting the city to withhold information subject to section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code without the necessity of requesting an attorney general opinion. See Gov’t Code § 552.301(a) (allowing governmental body to withhold information subject to previous determination); Houston Chronicle v. Mattox, 767 S.W.2d 695, 698 (Tex. 1989) (acknowledging this office has authority under section 552.301 of the Government Code to decide what constitutes a previous determination); Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001) (describing the two types of previous determinations). We note section 552.011 of the Government Code states “[t]he attorney general shall maintain uniformity in the application, operation, and interpretation” of the Act, chapter 552 of the Government Code. Gov’t Code § 552.011. Pursuant to this legislative mandate, section 552.011 grants the attorney general the authority to “prepare, distribute, and publish any materials, including detailed and comprehensive written decisions and opinions, that relate to or are based on” the Act. Id. We further note the Act requires governmental bodies to promptly release public information requested under the Act within a reasonable time, without delay. Id. § 552.221(a); Open Records Decision No. 664 at 5 (2000).

With the foregoing in mind and upon due consideration, we issue this ruling, which constitutes a previous determination allowing the city to withhold certain information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code without the necessity of first requesting an attorney general decision, so long as the city has not previously received a request for the information from the same requestor in the manner described below. See ORD 673. This decision is intended to encourage the prompt release of requested public information by increasing the efficiency of the review process under the Act by clearly identifying information the city may withhold under the circumstances delineated below. See Gov’t Code §§ 552.011, .221; Open Records Decision Nos. 684 (2009), 673.

Accordingly, the city may withhold certain information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code without the necessity of first requesting a ruling from this office in the following circumstances:

1. the city makes a good faith determination that the information at issue relates to the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime,
and the release of the information would interfere with the
detection, investigation, or prosecution of an open or pending
criminal matter;

2. the city will release at least the basic information about an arrested
person, an arrest, or a crime (the “releasable information”) from the
requested information;

3. the city will produce the releasable information to the requestor
pursuant to the requirements of the Act within five business days
after the date the request for information was received;

4. the city will provide the requestor with the notice included in
Appendix A of this ruling when the city responds to the request
pursuant to the requirements of this previous determination; and

5. the city has not previously received a request for the same
information from the same requestor after the city has provided the
requestor with the releasable information.

See Gov’t Code § 552.011. If any of the above circumstances change—or any other law,
facts, or circumstances involving the requestor or the status of the requested information
changes—the city may not rely upon this ruling as a previous determination to withhold
the information at issue. See ORD 673 at 7. Additionally, the city may not rely on this
previous determination in response to requests in which basic information is not
responsive. For example, no basic information is at issue in a request for only a dashboard
camera video recording or 9-1-1 call audio recording. Thus, the city may not rely upon
this previous determination in response to those types of requests. Furthermore, this
previous determination does not apply to situations in which other law may require some
or all of the information at issue to be disclosed. See, e.g., Crim. Proc. Code arts. 2.1396
detailing right of access to videos made in connection with various types of driving while
intoxicated offenses), 2.29 (detailing right of access to written report to law enforcement
agency of alleged violation of Penal Code section 32.51); Gov’t Code §§ 411.081-.1410
detailing rights of access to criminal history record information), 560.002(1)(A) (detailing
rights of access to fingerprints and other biometric identifiers); Transp. Code §§ 550.065
detailing rights of access to crash report forms), 724.018 (detailing right of access to blood
or breath specimen analysis results). We also note this previous determination does not
permit the disclosure of basic information in those instances in which the entirety of the
information at issue must be withheld. See, e.g., Fam. Code §§ 58.008 (detailing
circumstances under which certain information related to juvenile offenders must be
withheld in its entirety), 261.201 (detailing circumstances under which certain information
related to investigations of child abuse or neglect must be withheld in its entirety); Open
Records Decision No. 393 (1983) (stating, because the identifying information of a sexual
assault victim was inextricably intertwined with other releasable information, the county
attorney’s office was required to withhold the information in its entirety). We further note
this previous determination does not permit the city to withhold citations; DIC-24 statutory
warnings; DIC -25 notices of suspension; criminal trespass warnings; notices of code
violations; triplicate forms; or information subject to section 552.007 or section 552.022 of
the Government Code, other than information subject to section 552.022(a)(1). See Gov’t Code §§ 552.007, .022(a)(1)-(18), .108(a)(1). However, the use of this previous determination does not preclude the city from withholding information pursuant to other statutory authority or previous determinations that apply to the city. See, e.g., id. §§ 552.1175(f), .130(c), .136(c), .147(b); ORD 684.

If the city’s use of this previous determination does not fall within all of the circumstances delineated above, the requirements of the Act apply, including section 552.301 of the Government Code, and deadlines under the Act run from the date the city received the initial written request for information. See Gov’t Code § 552.301(a); Mattox, 767 S.W.2d at 698. Consequently, misapplication of this previous determination may result in the presumption the requested information is public. See Gov’t Code § 552.302. Thus, if the city is unsure as to the applicability of this previous determination to information responsive to a request for information, the city should request a ruling from this office. Additionally, this office may modify or withdraw this previous determination for any reason, including, but not limited to, misapplication of this previous determination. See id. § 552.011; Mattox, 767 S.W.2d at 698; see also Open Records Decision Nos. 485 at 3 (1987), 673 at 5. Finally, if the city later requests a ruling from this office in response to a second request for the same information from the same requestor, the city should notify this office it relied upon this previous determination in its response to the initial request.

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,

Gerald Arismendez
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

GAA/gw

Ref: ID# 870025

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)
Appendix A

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Dear M:

NOTICE:

On [date], we received your public information request for [description of information requested], dated [date request received] (the “request”). In order to promote governmental efficiency and encourage the prompt release of information, as required by the Public Information Act, we have relied upon Open Records Letter No. 2020-##### (2020) in responding to your request. We do so within five business days of your request.

The city has made a good faith determination the information you requested:

- deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime and the release of the records would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of an open or pending criminal matter.

This information is subject to section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The city has also determined you have not previously requested this information. Therefore, pursuant to the previous determination granted by the Office of the Attorney General in Open Records Letter No. 2020-#####, the city is releasing some information to you, and is withholding the remaining responsive information subject to section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

Please note, we are withholding the following specified types of information:

- Incident report (except basic information)
- Witness/suspect interview(s)
- Video recording(s)
- Audio recording(s)
- Other [specify documents withheld]:

If you have questions regarding the use of this previous determination, please call the city at XXX-XXX-XXXX, or for more information concerning your rights and the responsibilities of the city, please visit the Office of the Attorney General’s website at https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/108-previous-determination, or call the Office of the Attorney General’s Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. You may also review general information about the Public Information Act, including the types of information included in basic information, in the

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2 If you request this information a second time, the city must request a ruling from the Office of the Attorney General (the “OAG”) in order to withhold the information. See Open Records Letter No. 2020-#####.