



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 1, 2022

Ms. Raika Rowe
Public Information Attorney
Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission
P.O. Box 13127
Austin, Texas 78711-3127

OR2022-06172

Dear Ms. Rowe:

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# 935901.

The Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (the "commission") received a request for information pertaining to a specified investigation. You state the commission will release some information to the requestor. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information, a portion of which is a representative sample.¹

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information made confidential by other statutes. Section 5.48 of the Alcoholic Beverage Code provides as follows:

- (a) "Private records," as used in this section, means all records of a permittee, licensee, or other person other than the name, proposed location, and type of permit or license sought in an application for an original or renewal permit or license, or in a periodic report relating to the importation, distribution, or sale of alcoholic beverages required by the commission to be regularly filed by a permittee or licensee.

¹ We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

(b) The private records of a permittee, licensee, or other person that are required or obtained by the commission or its agents, in connection with an investigation or otherwise, are privileged unless introduced in evidence in a hearing before the commission or before a court in this state or the United States.

Alco. Bev. Code § 5.48. The term “privileged” in this statute has been construed to mean “confidential” for purposes of the Act. Attorney General Opinion JM-1235 at 2 (1990); Open Records Decision Nos. 186 (1978), 62 (1974). Thus, section 5.48 makes confidential any records required or obtained by the commission, with the exception of “the name, proposed location, and type of permit or license sought in an application for an original or renewal permit or license” and “a periodic report relating to the importation, distribution, or sale of alcoholic beverages required by the commission to be regularly filed by a permittee or licensee.” Alco. Bev. Code § 5.48.

The commission explains the information submitted as Exhibit C consists of application records for commission licenses or permits. Additionally, the commission states the information submitted as Exhibit D consists of private records that were obtained by the commission in connection with the specified investigation. The commission states none of the information at issue has been introduced as evidence in a hearing before the commission or before a court in Texas or the United States. Based on the commission’s representations and our review, we agree the information at issue constitutes private records under section 5.48 of the Alcoholic Beverage Code. Accordingly, with the exception of the name, proposed location, and type of permit sought in the relevant applications, which the commission states will be released, the commission must withhold Exhibit C and Exhibit D under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 5.48 of the Alcoholic Beverage Code.

Section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information concerning an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(2). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(2) must demonstrate the requested information relates to a criminal investigation that has concluded in a final result other than a conviction or deferred adjudication. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A) (governmental body must provide comments explaining why exceptions raised should apply to information requested). The commission states the information submitted as Exhibit B pertains to a closed investigation by the commission’s Enforcement Division that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication. Based on this representation, we agree section 552.108(a)(2) is applicable to Exhibit B.

However, we note section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. *Id.* § 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 commission may withhold Exhibit B under section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code.

In summary, with the exception of the name, proposed location, and type of permit sought in the relevant applications, the commission must withhold Exhibit C under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 5.48 of the Alcoholic Beverage Code. With the exception of the basic information, the commission may withhold Exhibit B under section 552.108(a)(2) 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,

D. Michelle Case
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

DMH/jxd

Ref: ID# 935901

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)