



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 28, 2022

Mr. Cary L. Bovey  
Counsel for the City of Brenham  
Bovey & Cochran PLLC  
2251 Double Creek Drive, Suite 204  
Round Rock, Texas 78664

OR2022-08957

Dear Mr. Bovey:

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# 937145 (COB ID# 21-12-31).

The City of Brenham (the “city”), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident.<sup>1</sup> 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.

Initially, we note, and you acknowledge, the city has not complied with the time periods prescribed by section 552.301 of the Government Code in seeking an open records decision from this office. Gov’t Code § 552.301. When a governmental body fails to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301, the information at issue is presumed public and must be released unless there is a compelling reason to withhold it. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ) (governmental body must make compelling demonstration to overcome presumption of openness pursuant to statutory predecessor to section 552.302). The need of a governmental body, other than the governmental body that failed to timely seek an open

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<sup>1</sup> We note the city received an initial request for the same information from this requestor on December 9, 2021. In response to the initial request, the city informs us it released basic information to the requestor within five business days and withheld certain information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code, pursuant to the previous determination this office issued to the city in Open Records Letter No. 2017-19337 (2017). Subsequently, the requestor made a second request for the same information on December 14, 2021.

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). Because you inform us, and provide documentation showing, the Washington County Attorney's Office (the "county attorney's office") objects to the release of the information at issue, we will consider whether the city may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108 of the Government Code on behalf of the county attorney's office.

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). Section 552.108 may be invoked by the proper custodian of information relating to a pending investigation or prosecution of criminal conduct. *See* Open Records Decision No. 474 at 4-5 (1987). Where a governmental body has custody of information that would otherwise qualify for exception under section 552.108 as information relating to the pending case of another law enforcement agency, the custodian of the records may withhold the information if it provides this office with a demonstration the information relates to the pending case and a representation from the law enforcement agency that it wishes to have the information withheld. The county attorney's office objects to the release of the information at issue because it relates to a pending criminal investigation, and release of the information would interfere with the investigation and prosecution of the case. Based upon this 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, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the submitted 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). Thus, with the exception of basic information, which must be released to this requestor, the city may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code on behalf of the county attorney's office.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> We note the requestor has a right of access to the information at issue pursuant to section 58.008(d) of the Family Code. *See* Fam. Code § 58.008(d) (parent or child may inspect information otherwise confidential under section 58.008(b) of the Family Code); *but see id.* § 58.008(e)(2) (providing any information excepted from required disclosure under the Act or other law must be withheld from disclosure). If the city receives another request for this information from a different requestor, the city must again seek a ruling from this office. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302; Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001).

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,

Gerald A. Arismendez  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

GAA/mo

Ref: ID# 937145

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)